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Effectiveness of homoeopathy in the prevention of nutritional problems in public health: A review

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Abstract

Nutritional problems are major issues in public health caused by either deficiency in the intake or excessive consumption, along with social causes like contamination of food or food intoxications or accidental food poisoning. Homoeopathic approach for nutritional problems in public health can be prevented and managed effectively by Primary prevention with general nutritional Preventive measures along with anti-miasmatic remedies and control of worm infestations, Secondary prevention is Curative by giving Homoeopathic indicated individualized remedy and tissue salts along with treating respiratory and diarrheal diseases which are major causes in malnutrition. Tertiary prevention is Rehabilitative it will be with proper food supplements and may need palliative Homoeopathic treatment. In this article, repertory, literature, and some article review has been done the result showed Nutritional problems in Public Health can be prevented and managed effectively with Homoeopathy.

Keywords: Homoeopathy, public health, nutritional problems, PEM, vitamin-a, homoeopathic prevention

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

According to the 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2020' report, 189.2 million people are undernourished in India and 34.7 percent of the children aged under five in India are stunted. It further reports that 20 percent of India's children under the age of 5 suffer from wasting, meaning their weight is too low for their height.

National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 data released for 22 states and Union territories indicates a worrying trend for malnutrition. The 2019-20 Sustainable Development Goals Index has also indicated poor performance on the goal of Zero Hunger. India falls under the 'serious hunger' category as per the 2020 Global Hunger Index, with 14% of the population being undernourished.

India has many programs to prevent nutritional problems starting from distribution of Folic acid tablets for adolescent girls, RCH programs for pregnant women, pre-schooling and protein-rich food supplements for under 5 age children in Anganwadis in ICDS program, Mid-day meal program for school children and many more POSHAN Abhiyaan's target is ended hunger 25% by 2020. Vit –A prophylaxis under National Blindness control program, But Homoeopathic intervention is not there in any national programs.

2. Methodology

Books, articles review and reportorial approach, application of Homoeopathic principals with modern preventive measures

Eligibility criteria: Articles were selected based on the homoeopathic treatment given in nutritional problems. Data analyzed and outcome of study considered for the review, Literature reviews done in various books of Homoeopathy, various Repertories selected for the rubrics related to nutritional problems.

3. Major Nutritional disorders in Public Health:

1. Low Birth weight,
2. Protein Energy Malnutrition (PEM),
3. Vitamin A deficiency,
4. Nutritional Anemia,
5. Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD),
6. Fluorosis etc.

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Among these, Protein-energy malnutrition and Vitamin A deficiency are common in children, Nutritional Anemia and Low birth weight babies should be targeted in pregnant women, Iodine Deficiency Disorder and Fluorosis are endemic and all age groups are affected.

In this article, an attempt has been done how Homoeopathic

approach will help in the prevention of some Nutritional disorders in Public Health. Common nutritional problems discussed are PEM and Vitamin A deficiency

4. Discussion on outcome from an article review

Table 1: Review of articles on Homoeopathic treatment in Nutritional disorders

Sl.no	Title	publication Author's Name	Study design	Assessment/outcome of study
1	Malnutrition and homeopathic management	National Health Portal of India Mar 11, 2016 published by: Zahid created/validated by: dr. Esvara das last updated on: march 11, 2016	---	Constitutional approach and also Homoeopathic Biochemical supplements will help in the treatment of Malnutrition.
2	The effect of nutritional and homeopathic treatments versus exclusive nutritional treatments in patients with obesity or overweight	Biomedical and Pharmacology journal November 05, 2014 del XXXesignXXXs XXXesignXXX gómez maría paola1 peña XXXesignXXXs erik misael2 and ruvalcaba ledezma jesús carlos3	A quasi-experimental study was conducted among 30 people aging over 18 with obesity or overweight and 30 women with unique nutritional treatment, randomly selected.	The use of a nutritional treatment accompanied by a constitutional homeopathic treatment is better for weight loss than an exclusive nutritional treatment, the working hypothesis is accepted
3	Alfalfa – A multicentric clinical verification study	PS Chakraborty1, Subhash Kaushik1, SS Nain2, Pramodji Singh3, VG Prasad4, Darshan Singh5, KC Das6, Ojit Singh7, PK Pradhan8, R Bavaskar8, L Debata9, MK Rai10	A total of 169 patients from all age groups and both sexes were enrolled from the OPDs of respective institutes	Alfalfa in clinical conditions like anorexia, depression, irritability, lethargy, were verified during the study, it may be concluded that the drug symptoms were amply verified.
4	Exploring the role of homoeopathy in the management of malnutrition in children in the age group of 1 to 4 years: a pilot study	Journal of Integrated Standardised Homoeopathy vol.1 September 2018 Sujata C. Goda*MD (Hom)1, Neena B. Ambekar, MD (Hom)2 Prashant Tamboli, MD (Hom)3 Devangini Broker MD (Hom)4	Experimental non-control XXXesign 100 samples(n),	Indicated Homoeopathic remedies helped in the management of malnutrition. Weight gain of 100 gms/month was a sure indication of registration of the remedy. Weight gain was significant when there was a reduction in the infection rate. Homoeopathic medicines helped in reducing the rate of infections, this being another indication of registration of the remedy. The growth spurt was seen equally in both genders, as there was an increase in height and weight. A significant change in height requires a longer time as compared to weight.
5	Miasmatic perspective in nutritional deficiency disorders	International Journal of Homoeopathic Sciences 2021; 5(1): 351-356 Dr. P Dastagiri and Dr. Nirmala Pratap	The clinical signs and symptoms of nutritional deficiency disorders are correlated with the existing Homoeopathic literature	A thorough understanding of miasms makes easier to treat the innumerable type of chronic diseases, especially Nutritional Deficiency disorders.
6	Homeopathic Remedies and Dietary Supplements in 2018: Weighing Benefits and Risks	Relias media/143649 MONOGRAPH December 1, 2018	Article reviews, case reports	Homeopathic treatments follow the premise that small doses treat or potentially cure illness while high doses of the same substance can cause illness
7	Statistical Assessment of the Effectiveness of Homoeopathic Medicine Ferrum metallicum 6X in Increasing the Haemoglobin Concentration of Thirty Paediatric Iron Deficiency Anaemia Patients Using Paired 't-Test	International Journal of Health Sciences and Research Year: 2018 Month: December Volume: 8 Issue: 12 Pages: 50-54 Dr. H. Venkatesan	30 patients were included in the study	by using the Homoeopathic medicine Ferrum metallicum 6X the Haemoglobin concentration of IDA affected children can be increased by which the Disease load in the common population may be controlled effectively

According to Table no.1, a total of 07 articles were studied in that 01 articles published by Indian government official website, constitutional and bio-chemic remedies were helpful in the treatment of malnutrition and this is validated

by a senior homoeopath. 04 articles showed, by using homoeopathy medicines is effective in nutritional problems like malnutrition, obesity, and iron deficiency anemia. An approach like constitutional, miasmatic, and specific

remedies have shown effective improvement in nutritional problems. 01 article showed the benefits of homoeopathic medicines taken along with food supplements. 01 article shows nutritional problems are true chronic diseases

involving miasms.

5. Rubrics selected for PEM and Vitamin A deficiency in various levels of prevention

Table 2: Homoeopathic levels of prevention in PEM

Levels of prevention	Primary prevention	Secondary Prevention	Tertiary prevention
Homoeopathic mode of intervention	1)Miasmatic treatment 2)Constitutional treatment 3)Homoeopathic Specific remedy (Genus Epidemicus)	1) Symptomatic treatment 2) Bio-chemic remedies 3) Constitutional treatment 4) Intercurrent miasmatic tretment	1) Specific remedies 2) pathological prescription 3) Palliative treatment
Miasm	Anti-Psoric remedies	Psora, Sycosis, or syphilitic miasm	All the three miasms
Rubrics with Remedies	generalities; GROWTH affected, disorders of (81): generalities; EMACIATION; worm complaints, in (8): generalities; EMACIATION; appetite; good, with; children, in (22): clinical; CACHEXIA, emaciation; dentition agg. (3): 3Kreos., nux-v., op. generalities; HEREDITARY diseases (63): 3Sulph., 4SYPH., 3Teucr., 4TUB. generalities; INHERITANCE, bad (56):, 3Sulph., 4SYPH., 3Teucr., 4TUB. clinical; TUBERCULOSIS; hereditary (18), 4TUB. clinical; DEFICIENCIES, genetic (1): ol-j. clinical; INFLUENZA; prophylactic (4): 2ars., ars-i., influ., nux-v. clinical; TUBERCULOSIS; prophylaxis for (5): bac., dros., form-ac., sulph., tub. generalities; WORM complaints; children, in (48) generalities; WORM complaints; lumbricoides, roundworms (60) generalities; WORM complaints; taeniae, tapeworms (80) generalities; WORM complaints; hookworms (4): 3Carbn-chl., 3Card-m., 3Chen-a., 3Thymol.	clinical; CACHEXIA, emaciation; cough, with (9) generalities; EMACIATION; diarrhea; with (44): generalities; SWELLING; glands, liver, spleen etc.; emaciation, with (28): generalities; EMACIATION; clinical; extending; downward (8): calc., cench., gaert., 3Lyc., 2nat-m., psor., 2sanic., sars. generalities; EMACIATION; extending; upward (4): 3Abrot., am-m., arg-n., nat-m. BERI-BERI (39): 4BOERH clinical; CACHEXIA, emaciation; fever; after bilious or intermittent (12): 3Aran., 3Ars., canth., 3Chin., 2cory., 3Eup-per., 3Ferr., 3Lach., 3Lyc., 3Nat-m., 3Puls., 3Sep. stomach; APPETITE; ravenous, canine, excessive; marasmus, in (23): Generalities; GROWTH affected, disorders of (81) generalities; BONES; malnutrition, from (2): 3Sil	generalities; EMACIATION; diet and medicines, in spite of (1): generalities; EMACIATION; progressive (54) generalities; EMACIATION; rapid (27): generalities; EMACIATION; shriveled or wilted appearance (13) generalities; EMACIATION; skeleton, like (10): generalities; EMACIATION; syphilitic (10): clinical; TERMINAL diseases (22):

5.1 Vitamin -A deficiency

Epidemiology: Nearly 70,000 children below 3 years are becoming permanently blind only due to vitamin A deficiency every year in India.

5.2 Causes

1. Low dietary intake of vitamin A
2. Infectious diseases which prevent absorption and utilization of vitamin A, aggravate the condition
3. All causes of PEM are also the causes of nutritional blindness like maternal malnutrition, infections, high

parity, smoking in the mother, etc.

Homoeopathic approach: Along with Homoeopathy constitutional treatment vit -A rich food supplement should be advised, for the complications of vit-A remedies selected according to symptom similarity.

Dr. Norton in his book 'Ophthalmic diseases and Therapeutics' has given homoeopathic therapeutics in various disease conditions of Eye based on pathology and clinical experience. xerophthalmia, corneal ulcer, and blindness therapeutics are given.

Table 3: Homoeopathic levels of prevention in Vitamin –A Deficiency

Levels of prevention	Primary prevention	Secondary Prevention	Tertiary prevention
Mode of intervention in homoeopathy	1) Miasmatic treatment 2) Constitutional treatment	1) Symptomatic treatment 2) Bio-chemic remedies	1) Specific remedies 2) pathological prescription 3) Palliative treatment
Miasm	All the 3psora.sycosis and Syphilitic miasm	All the 3psora.sycosis and Syphilitic miasm	Predominant Syphilitic miasm
Rubrics	-	Ocular symptoms vision; LOSS of vision, blindness; night (42): eyes; DRYNESS; lids (71) vision; LOSS of vision, blindness; evening; sunset, after (1): eyes; DRYNESS (242): eyes; DRYNESS; sand, as from (3): eyes; SPOTS, specks; cornea (65): eyes; ULCERS; cornea (109): skin; DRYNESS; rough (16) Extra ocular symptoms skin; DRYNESS; rough (16) generalities; DEVELOPMENT arrested (90): mind; ANOREXIA nervosa (46): generalities; DEVELOPMENT arrested; nutritional complaints, from (23):	eyes; OPACITY; cornea (103): eyes; ULCERS; destruct eyes; ULCERS; perforating, cornea (9): 3Apis, 3Calc., hep., 4KALI-BI., 4MERC-C., 3Merc-i-f., 3Nit-ac., 3Podo., 3Sil. ive, cornea (6): eyes; SPOTS, specks; scars, cornea (19): vision; LOSS of vision, blindness; eyes; SPOTS, specks; sunken, cornea (1): 3Ip. inflammation, from (2) vision; LIQUID on cornea, as of (1): caps.

6. Discussion

Prevention of disease in all levels is modern concept of community medicine; this concept of prevention can be applied in homoeopathy on the basis of classification of disease and theory of miasms given by Hahnemann. There are many approaches are used in homoeopathic treatment like Classical homoeopathy, pathological prescription, Tatopathy, biochemic and mother tincture prescription etc, if we use accordingly we can do promotion of health and prevention of diseases and also management of cases, in broader way health is preserved according aphorism 4 of Organon of medicine. Homoeopaths can become true preserver of health if they know maintaining and fundamental cause of disease and how to remove effectively, in case of Nutritional problems until unless food supply and diet corrections treatment is not complete only with homoeopathic remedies. General preventive measures should be taken along with Homoeopathic treatment in Protein Energy Malnutrition (PEM) and vitamin –A deficiency.

7. Strengths of Homoeopathic System in the prevention of Nutritional problems in Public Health

1. Homoeopathy treatment is based on Individualized medicine considering the constitution i.e mental, emotional and physical makeup of the patient. The holistic approach will help the vital force 4 to flow harmoniously, and this is also true for nutritional problems as homoeopathy treats the patient not the disease.
2. Supplementing foods and Vitamins are modes of treating nutritional problems in conventional medicine but according to Hahnemann classification of disease Nutritional problems comes under ‘Indisposition’ which can be corrected with nutritional supplements and another category comes under ‘true chronic

- miasmatic diseases’ which should be treated with anti-miasmatic remedies based on the law of similia.
3. Homeopathic medicines are effective in curative, preventive, and promotive care without any adverse effects as homoeopathic medicines are potentized and the minimum dose are capable to stimulate the autoregulatory and self-healing process in the body.
 4. Cost-effective: Preparation of Homoeopathic medicines requires very less raw materials, dispensing and distribution of homoeopathic medicine is easier compared to conventional medicine, a small quantity of homoeopathic dilution will cover a large population.
 5. Mass distribution of Homoeopathic medicine also can be done with the application of ‘Genus Epidemicus ’considering nutritional problems as endemic and epidemic disorders in the given population.
 6. Supplementary therapy with foods and vitamins should be given continuously, it is seen that whenever supplement is stopped, the disorder reappear gradually and sometimes adverse effect of supplement is seen and it is costly low socio-economic people cannot afford meanwhile nutritional problems are seen in poor population for this problem homoeopathic constitutional approach will solve this issue since the problem is dealt at the fundamental miasmatic level by giving homoeopathic similimum in the form of potentized medicine leading to correction in the malabsorption and mal-assimilation indirectly correcting metabolism errors of the constitution and maintaining the nutritional status of a person more efficiently for a long-lasting.
 7. Homoeopathic management of Nutritional problems in public health can be done with taking general preventive Measures along with proper homoeopathic remedies according to levels of prevention and proper food intake concerning Table no-4 and 5

Table 4: General preventive Measure in PEM and Vit-A

Level of prevention	Protein Energy Malnutrition (PEM)	vitamin –A deficiency
Primary prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balanced diet (should provide 2200 kcal/day) for pregnant mothers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutritional care of the pregnant mother by promoting the consumption of green leafy vegetables or other vitamins A-rich foods (Thus, measures are taken much before the child is born). Promotion of breastfeeding as long as possible.
1) Health promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper ANC and neonatal care Diet during lactation extra 550 kcals per day during the first 6 months and 400 kcals, later age Promotion of correct breastfeeding practices Frequent feeds to a growing child and good weaning practices. Advise adopting proper family planning methods and spacing of births Improvement in the living condition Supplementary feeding program for mothers and children (ICDS-scheme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper weaning of young infants and feeding of growing children with fruits, carrots, and vegetables. Health education (Nutrition education) of mothers about hazards of vitamin A deficiency among children and their easy prevention. Food fortification, i.e. addition of vitamin A to salt, sugar, tea, margarine, dried skimmed milk, and Vanaspati (Dalda). This helps in covering the people of all the age groups including children.
2) Specific protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The daily requirement of proteins is 1 g/kg body weight for adults. Animal sources: Meat, milk, egg white, fish, cheese, etc. All these animal proteins contain all the essential amino acids. Vegetable sources: cereals, pulses, beans, nuts, oil-seed cakes, etc. Fortification of food, for example, milk fortified with protein and vitamin A, iodine in salt, vitamin A, D, E, K in cooking oil, etc. Proper Deworming Constitutional remedy Anti-miasmatic remedy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eye screening: Under the school eye screening program, each child is screened for refractive error Administration of 5 mega doses of vitamin A concentrate, orally, to all children between 9 months and 3 years, under the National Vitamin A Prophylaxis Program, which is a component of the National Program for Prevention and Control of Blindness. However, it can be extended up to 5 years. Thus, the child is ‘almost immunized’

		against xerophthalmia. 2 lakhs IU = 110 mg of retinol palmitate in oil; 1 spoon of 2 ml capacity, holds 2 L IU of vitamin A, is supplied along with the bottle of vitamin A syrup.
Secondary Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By maintaining of ‘Road to Health’ Growth chart card ▪ Preventing Respiratory and Diarrheal diseases ▪ Homoeopathic remedy help in PEM Abrotanum, Argentum nitricum, Baryta Carbonicum, Calcarea carbonicum, Calcarea Phosphoricum, Chamomilla, Cina, Iodum, Magnesia Carbonica, Natrum Muriaticum, Psorinum, Silacea, Sulphur, Tuberculinum., etc 	<p>History of night blindness</p> <p>Clinical examination of eyes for the manifestations of xerophthalmia</p> <p>‘Rose-Bengal Dye’ test. This consists of the application of 1 percent of this dye to conjunctivae. The development of pink colored stain on the conjunctiva indicates conjunctival xerosis.</p> <p>Treatment consists of oral administration of 2,00,000 IU of vitamin A concentrate soon after the diagnosis followed by another dose of 2,00,000 IU on the next day and a third dose after 1 to 4 weeks (WHO). The dosage is the same irrespective of age and sex, except among infants and women of the reproductive age group (15–45 yrs). Infants require 1,00,000IU once in 3 to 6 months till 1 year of age and women (15–45yrs) require 1,00,000 IU daily for 2 weeks.</p> <p>Children suffering from acute respiratory infection, Diarrhea, and Measles should be given a prophylactic dose of vitamin A 2,00,000 IU orally as soon as the diagnosis is made of vitamin A deficiency.</p>
Early diagnosis and treatment		
Tertiary Prevention 1) Disability limitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limiting the development of further disability by giving intensive treatment ▪ Hospitalization if necessary, Children weighing less than 60% for age with edema, severe dehydration, diarrhea, Hypothermia, Shock, infection (Klebsiella, Salmonella, H. influenzae, Streptococcus, Staphylococcus, Malaria etc.), jaundice, bleeding, electrolyte imbalance, congestive cardiac failure secondary to over hydration etc. Should be treated according to Homoeopathic principles. ▪ Nutritional rehabilitation is purely mother oriented. ▪ The mother is educated to make simple modifications in the child’s diet, with the locally available foods, without external supplement, within their economic constraints. ▪ Increase the amount of calories by giving energy dense foods like ‘paratha’ instead of chapathi, by adding ghee, jaggery or oil to food. ▪ National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) Hyderabad has recommended the following mixture for PEM: Wheat – 40 g; Roasted Bengal gram – 16 g; Roasted groundnuts – 10g; Jaggery – 20 g; Total – 86 g. This mixture per day provides 11.3 g of proteins and 330 kcals of energy. ▪ Homoeopathic remedies like Alfalfa and Bio-chemic tissue remedies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education for blind, • Surgical correction if needed • Homoeopathic CMS eye drops
2) Rehabilitation		

Table 5: List of food items rich in Protein[#] and Vitamin- A*

Source of Food	Protein in foods	(gm of protein /100gm)	Vitamin- A	(µg of carotene / 100 gm of edible portion)
Plant source	Cereals	6-13	Green leafy vegetables	5500
	Pulses	21-28	Carrot	1890
	Vegetables	1-4	Tomato ripe	350
	Fruits	1-3	Mango	2743
	Nuts	4.5-29	Papaya	666
	Soybeans	43.2	Coriander	6918
Animal Source	Milk	3.2-4.3	Ghee (buffalo)	900
	Meat	18-26	Egg-yolk	600
	Egg	13	Milk	160
	fish	15-23	Butter	3200
			Ghee (cow)	2000
			Cod liver oil	10,000

Source: Nutrition and Health, Park’s Textbook of Preventive and Social Medicine, 26th Edition

* ICMR (1990)

8. Conclusion

Homoeopathy will be effective if it is included in national programs like ICDS and RCH where nutritional problems in public health can be targeted for core population like mother

and children. With the cost effectiveness and easily admissible property of homoeopathic medicine can reach large number of population and in large it will help in the development of the country. In this regards there is a need to

develop pilot projects, research grants, strategy planning and policy making in Government level.

9. Conflict of Interest: None

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