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Efficacy of homoeopathic doctrine of signature in the treatment of *paederus* dermatitis: A case report

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Abstract

Paederus dermatitis is a rare and peculiar type of irritant contact dermatitis caused by a Rove beetle belonging to the genus *Paederus*. This insect does not bite or sting, but releases a coelomic fluid when accidentally brushed or crushed on the skin. If not washed immediately, the chemical leads to form blisters on that exposed area. Doctrine of signature is the relation between the external physical characters of the drug substances and the signs and symptoms of the medicines produced during pathogenetic trial on healthy human beings. In Homoeopathy, the Doctrine of signature is one of the sources of *Materia medica*. Even though Doctrine of Signature is a source, every homoeopath should take the case thoroughly and use repertorization to prescribe the simillimum.

Case Summary: A Male aged 27 years, came with complaints of Blisters on the neck due to crushing the Rove beetle (Nairobi fly) on his neck. After considering Doctrine of Signature along with detailed case taking and repertorization, he was prescribed CANTHARIS 200. The Blisters and the scar marks got completely reduced in a very short span of time. This shows that Homoeopathic management with the help of doctrine of signature and repertorization can treat the rare conditions like *paederus* dermatitis.

Keywords: *Paederus* dermatitis, rove beetle, doctrine of signature, homoeopathy, *Materia medica*, cantharidin, pederine

Introduction

Paederus dermatitis, also known as blister beetle dermatitis or dermatitis is a peculiar irritant contact dermatitis characterized by erythematobullous lesions or "blisters of sudden onset" on the exposed areas of the body [5]. The disease is caused by a Rove Beetle belonging to the genus called "*Paederus*" [1]. The genus, *Paederus* belongs to the family called "Staphylinidae", order called "Coleoptile", class called "Insecta" and consists of over 622 species which are distributed worldwide [7]. *Paederus* beetles have been associated with outbreaks of symptoms like dermatitis in various countries such as Australia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Nigeria, Kenya, Iran, Uganda, Okinawa, Sierra Leone, Central Africa, Argentina, Brazil, France, Venezuela and India. The incidence of cases are reported to be greater during the last quarter of the year, the period that immediately follows after the rainy season [4].

The Adults of these kind of beetles are usually 7-10 mm long and 0.5 mm wide, which is the size around one and half times that of a mosquito. They have a black head, lower abdomen and elytra (this structure covers the wings and first three abdominal segments) and a red thorax and upper abdomen. This beetle does not bite or sting, but when accidentally brushed against or crushing the beetle over the skin provokes the release of its coelomic fluid which contains highly poisonous substances such as cantharidin or pederin, a potent vesicant.¹ The compound "Cantharidin" is found in the haemolymph of the beetle and then released when the insect is crushed on surface of the skin. A number of these insects secrete the caustic fluid via their leg joints when they are disturbed or crushed ("reflex bleeding"). The lesions are characteristically linear.

Once "Pederin or Cantharidin" is on the skin from the initial contact of the beetle, it may also be spread on any other location on the skin. "Mirror-image" or "Kissing Love bite" like lesions, where any two skin areas come in contact. Severe cases, in addition of occurring more extensive blistering, may also demonstrate other additional symptoms such as fever, neuralgia, arthralgia and vomiting. Washing the hands and the skin thoroughly with a soap and water is strongly recommended, if there is any contact with a rove beetle. The clinical features of *Paederus* dermatitis are Extensive Blistering, Erythema, Vesicles and Pustules,

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Result

1. Sulph - 14/8.
2. Canth - 13/8.
3. Merc - 11/6.
4. Phos - 11/6.
5. Sep - 10/6.

Selection of remedy with potency

Cantharis 200

Intervention with justification

First prescription: On 30 December 2022, Cantharis 200, water dose for every 3 hours was given. Basis of prescription: Cantharis is selected on the basis of individualization, symptom totality with the consultation of *Materia medica* and the Doctrine of signature. As Cantharis

is prepared from Tincture or trituration of living Spanish fly which is of *paederus* (family), Coleoptera (order) and Insecta (class). As of doctrine of signature, this family insects will produce coelomic fluid called Cantharidin and pederin when crushed on skin, causes blisters, burning, intense itching on the affected part. Cantharidin, in many sources taken as aphrodisiac because it has properties which causes excess sexual desire. Thus, overall, as the symptoms matches to Cantharis according to repertorization and also Doctrine of Signature, Cantharis is selected as a perfect remedy.

Follow up and outcomes

Follow-up of the patient was assessed for every 6 hours and later on for every day. The date wise detailed follow-ups are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Time line including follow-up of the case

Date	Symptoms	Medicine with Doses	Justification
31 December 2022	1. Redness and Blisters got reduced by 80%. 2. Pain reduced by 80%. 3. Sexual desire slightly reduced.	1. Cantharis 200, Water dose every 10 hours.	As there was improvement noted, <i>Cantharis 200</i> was continued.
01 January 2023	1. Blisters got completely reduced. 2. Pain reduced completely. 3. Sexual desire reduced completely.	1. Cantharis 200 C, 1 dose.	No recurrence of the eruptions is seen and all his mentals are improved. Therefore, the same medicine was continued.
02 January 2023	1. No new complaints. Patient is physically and mentally healthy.	No medication	The symptoms are cured completely, so the treatment is stopped.

Result

The Erythematous blisters on the neck got reduced from the 2nd water dose and itching burning sensations got completely reduced without any scar marks along with his

irritation, mental sexual excitement with excessive sexual desire by the end of the treatment. Cantharis 200C showed a marked improvement.

Case report of *Paederus* Dermatitis



Fig 1: 30/12/2022

Fig 2: 30/12/2022

Fig 3: 31/12/2022



Fig 4: 01/01/2023

Fig 5: 02/01/2023

Discussion

The Patient presented with the complaints of reddish blisters with sudden onset on the right side of his neck. This case was treated with individualized homoeopathic medicine along with the doctrine of signature, which showed complete recovery without any recurrence in the follow up period. Dr. Vishal Deshpande presented an article of "Homoeopathic Management of Insect Bite: A Case Study" in which *Apis mellifica* 200 was prescribed to treated successfully [6]. As this is a very rare condition, there are very few articles related to *Paederus* dermatitis in the field of Homoeopathy.

Conclusion

Homoeopathy is a specialized system of medicine. It treats patient as whole and not just symptoms; in which the doctrine of signature plays a significant role in prescribing the perfect remedy. A complete recovery of the blisters including the scar mark within the span of 3 days shows that Homoeopathic treatment in Acute conditions shows tremendous effect on the patients.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

Declaration of patient consent

An informed consent was received from the patient for publication of this case report, provides the identity of the patient is not revealed.

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Nil.

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