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## Utility of gunpowder in management of diabetic foot ulcer: A case report

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### Abstract

Diabetic foot ulcer is a major complication of diabetes mellitus. Innate mechanism of action occurs in wound healing, which is a stepwise repair of lost extracellular matrix that forms the largest component of the dermal skin layer but in certain cases or disorders, the wound healing process is interrupted. Diabetes mellitus is one such metabolic disorder that interrupts the normal wound healing and causes a delay in the formation of mature granulation tissue. In this study gunpowder is used to achieve wound healing process in diabetic foot ulcer. Gunpowder which is also mentioned as a war remedy can be used to achieve healing even in gangrenous stage. And the treatment outcome was assessed with Meggitt wagner classification of diabetic foot ulcer.

**Keywords:** Diabetic foot ulcer, gun powder, homoeopathy, meggitt wagner classification

### Introduction

Diabetic foot ulcer is a form of diabetic neuropathy it commonly manifests in persons who is having diabetes more than 10 yrs. Foot is the common and frequent site of complication in patients with diabetes. Diabetic foot ulcer is the major complication of diabetes mellitus, and probably the major component of diabetic foot. Wound healing is an innate mechanism of action that works reliably most of the time. Diabetes mellitus is one such metabolic disorder that impedes the normal steps of wound healing process. Many studies show a prolonged inflammatory phase in diabetic wounds, which causes a delay in the formation of mature granulation tissue and a parallel reduction in wound tensile strength<sup>[1]</sup>. In India according to WHO diabetic foot ulcer affects 15% of the diabetic patients during their lifetime. Out of 62 million diabetics in India, 25% develop DFU (Diabetic Foot Ulcer), of which 50% become infected, requiring hospitalization while 20% need amputation<sup>[1]</sup>.

Homoeopathic medicines play a major role in managing the cases of diabetic foot ulcer by increasing the wound healing mechanism and helps to improve and rejuvenate the wound which is progressing rapidly and to achieve normal wound healing process with homoeopathic medicines. In this case report gun powder is used, whenever gunpowder is indicated in a case, the keywords comes in our mind is "healing"<sup>[2]</sup>. This remedy is known by several common names such as Black powder, Brown powder, Carbon-sulphur-kali-nitricum, Poudre a canon, etc<sup>[2]</sup>.

Historically, its is a black or brown substance consisting of an intimate mechanical mixture of potassium nitrate (saltpeter; nitre), charcoal, and sulfur. Gunpowder was the first and only explosive used in gunnery and blasting, until it was eventually replaced by more powerful organic nitrogen compounds. It is now used primarily to detonate other explosives<sup>[2]</sup>. In homeopathy the inherent medicinal powers of this substance was achieved by triturating it. Usually, it is used in lower potencies such as 3x, 6x, 8x, 30ch etc<sup>[2]</sup>.

### Pathophysiology

Diabetic neuropathy is a common complication of diabetes that affects the nerves. It can result in sensory, motor, and autonomic nerve dysfunction. Sensory neuropathy can lead to loss of sensation in the feet, making it difficult for individuals to detect injuries or pressure points that can lead to ulcers.

Motor neuropathy can cause muscle weakness and deformities that affect the structure of the foot.

Autonomic neuropathy can lead to changes in sweat production and blood flow regulation, making the skin more prone to infections and poor wound healing<sup>[3]</sup>.

The prevalence of diabetes in India has remained 11.8% in the last four years, according to the national diabetes and diabetic retinopathy survey report released by Health and Family Welfare Ministry, New Delhi. Males showed a similar prevalence of diabetes 12 % as females showed 11.7%. Out of 62 million diabetics in India, 25% develop DFU's, of which 50% become infected, requiring hospitalization while 20% need amputation. DFU's contribute approximately 80% of all non-traumatic amputations in India, annually.

### Risk factors

Factors that increase a person's risk of developing diabetic foot ulcer<sup>[4]</sup> include

- Male above 50 years
- Diabetes mellitus of more than 10 years of duration
- Uncontrolled blood glucose level
- Having a family history of Diabetes mellitus and genetic factors predisposing diabetic foot ulceration
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Peripheral vascular disease
- Abnormal structure of foot
- Prolonged hypertension and smoking
- Prolonged increase in triglycerides

### Sequence of events in diabetic ulcer foot-complications<sup>[4]</sup>

- Following an injury or due to infection, an ulcer develops along with the swelling and edema of the leg - Stage of cellulitis.
- Cellulitis stage takes up a virulent course, spreads deeper and also upwards along fascial planes - Stage of spreading cellulitis.
- Secondary infection usually caused by organisms along with anaerobes and non-clostridial gas-forming organisms produce multiple abscesses-Stage of abscesses.
- Tense edema along with vascular compromise which is already existing produces ischemia and gangrenous patches of skin, toes, etc.-Stage of osteomyelitis.
- Untreated cases develop rapidly spreading cellulitis and gangrene of the limb producing septicemia and diabetic ketoacidosis - Stage of septicemia.

### Clinical features

#### The signs of diabetic neuropathy may include

- Darkened skin on the affected area.
- Diminished ability to sense hot or cold.
- Loss of hair in the area.
- Numbness.
- Pain.
- Tingling.
- Loss of vibration and touch
- Susceptible for repeated trauma<sup>[4]</sup>

#### If diabetic neuropathy leads to diabetic foot ulcers, symptoms to watch out for include

- Any changes to the skin or toenails, including cuts, blisters, calluses or sores.

- Discharge of fluid or pus.
- Foul smell.
- Pain.
- Redness.
- Skin discoloration.
- Swelling.

### Case study

#### Patient information

A middle-aged lady Mrs. B of age 48yrs, who had been suffering with diabetes mellitus since 9 yrs. developed an injury, when she went for pilgrimage on her right foot in the plantar surface including the toes. The affected skin later on developed like a boil and then started oozing out a fluid. Infection set in and initially she didn't feel any burning or pain or any other sensation, she just had a numbness feeling, later on she developed pain along with fever and was not able to walk, as she was living on her own she was not able to inspect the foot. When her daughter visited her home, she found out the severity and brought her to the clinic and the patient was already under allopathic medication for diabetes mellitus but for other illness she used to opt homoeopathic medicine.

#### Personal history

Patient was born and brought up in a middle-class family she lost both her parents when she was 12 yrs old in an accident and she was raised by her uncle and got married soon at the age of 17 yrs and have a daughter and a son. She lost her husband before 5 yrs and living on her own. At present her son is working in abroad and her daughter got married. Her daughter used to visit her weekly once and do all the needful household chores. Her son visited while she was at her pilgrim and later on she returned India and when her daughter visited her at home she found out the wound.

#### History of presenting complaints

Initially she didn't feel any burning, itching or pain. She felt a numbness and difficulty in walking, later on after 2 days found out boil like inflammation in the foot and then she thought it would resolve but when her daughter visited her she found out the boil like inflammation and thought it would resolve, but within one day, fluid started to ooze out by sparing the skin and then her daughter found out it wouldn't heal and brought her to the clinic.

**Past history:** No such episodes in the past. Tested positive for covid before one year and after cure, she took covid vaccination.

**Family history:** No relevant family history.

#### Treatment given

1. Gun powder 6x was given as a specific- 3 tablet a day. Morning 1, after lunch 1, at night 1
2. Wound dressing was done with normal saline and Gunpowder 6x tablet was grinded as a powdered form and sprinkled over the wound. This process of dressing is repeated until complete healing occurs.



**Fig 1:** Before treatment and after treatment

**Gun powder in homoeopathy:** Black gunpowder is a mixture and not a chemical component. The London police force also know it as a boil remedy- “get six penny worth of gunpowder from an oil store and take as much as wound lie on a sixpence at night and morning for four days, and the leave it off for the same time, and resume if necessary” is one prescription which has been insisted for recurrent boils from the “force” [5].

In august 1915 the recorded experience has been put in the pamphlet form, “gunpowder as a war remedy” and since then many more experiences have seen the light, principally in the pages of homoeopathic world [5].

Prevention of disease can be achieved in gunpowder by burning a thumb full of gunpowder in your bedroom or tent and small quantity in your trunk and wardrobe daily to escape from contagion, infection while travelling in most unhealthy climate and localities without danger of sickness [6].

Bite of mad dog, or snake can be treated by pouring some gunpowder on the bite and touch it with lighted match, which is a painless cautery and reliable safeguard which was practiced in ancient times [6].

### Homoeopathic philosophy

Diabetes mellitus is classified under Chronic Disease by Dr. Hahnemann §72, as it is a slowly progressive condition with irreversible pathological changes where the Vital Force fails to check the progress. Understanding the pathology, deep-seated dynamic affection in need to match it with remedies of equal depth considering the miasm it belongs [7].

Homoeopathy is the system of medicine with a holistic concept based on the Law of similar. The successful application of this Law of Similar depends entirely on the concept of Individualization and Susceptible Constitution. The concept of individualization takes into consideration the totality of the symptom which is seen on three planes- Mental(emotional), Spritual(intellectual) and physical where the disease life force manifest itself outwardly as perceivable sign and symptoms. The concept of susceptible constitution is reflected in Hahnemann ‘Theory of Chronic Diseases’ which takes into consideration the hereditary

influences and pre-disposition that play an important role in the genesis of illness [8].

A patient with an ill balanced food not suiting to his constitution will be more vulnerable to the recurring exacerbations of acute miasm than a person partaking of the food and the constitutional make up. The knowledge of the food and constitutions will be of an added advantage to a homoeopathic practitioner. He should therefore not ignore this aspect of health [9]. And so diet and regimen should be strictly followed to control diabetes and achieve healing faster.

### Outcome assessment

To assess the effectiveness of Gun powder in managing diabetic foot ulcers and to witness the wound healing mechanism. Patient is assessed as follows:

### Grading of diabetic ulcer foot [10]

#### Meggitt wagner grading system of diabetic ulcer foot

1. **Grade 0:** No skin changes.
2. **Grade 1:** Superficial ulcer.
3. **Grade 2:** Ulcer extension (involves ligaments, tendons, joint capsule or fascia, no abscess, no osteomyelitis).
4. **Grade 3:** Deep ulcer with abscess or osteomyelitis.
5. **Grade 4:** Gangrene of the portion of forefoot.
6. **Grade 5:** Extensive gangrene of foot.

### Conclusion

The patient outcome was assessed with Meggitt Wagner grading system of classification of diabetic foot ulcers to assess the change in the wound and how the healing is achieved and in this case the patient’s ulcer was in grade 2 and later on after gunpowder 6x, within 2 days the healing mechanism is achieved and the patient is under management further. Thus, it justifies the utility of gunpowder in treating diabetic foot ulcers.

**Abbreviations:** Diabetic foot ulcer (DFU), World Health Organization (WHO).

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