

Alternative adjunct to conventional dentistry- Homeopathy

Dr. Kanupriya Gupta

Senior Research Fellow, Faculty of Dental Sciences, IMS, BHU, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

Homeopathy cannot replace the mechanical arts of dentistry and there is not a homeopathic remedy that will selectively numb a tooth. However homeopathy is a useful adjunct to conventional dentistry. It may be used effectively in the place of drugs prescribed which sometimes have unpleasant side effects. Minimum intervention is the catchphrase of the moment as is applying a natural approach to dental practice.

The basic law of homeopathy is "The Law of Similars" which states that a substance can cure a disease if it produces in healthy person symptoms similar to and much milder than those of the disease. This article provides an overview of homeopathy in dentistry.

Keywords: constitutional homeopathy, homeopathy, law of similars, pathological homeopathy

Introduction

The term homeopathy comes from the Greek roots homoios, meaning similar, and pathos, meaning suffering or sickness [1]. The basic law of homeopathy is "the law of similars" [2]. It is a therapy in accordance with the energetic principles of healing, utilizing "remedies" made from plants, minerals, or animal products.

Homeopathy is a medical system that enjoys a long and rich heritage of scientific literature and a world-wide reputation for safe and effective therapeutics.

Principles of Homeopathy [3]

1) Law of Similars

The first principle of homeopathy is the Law of Similars. Homeopathy is 'a natural pharmaceutical science in which the practitioner seeks to find a substance that would cause, in overdose, symptoms similar to those a sick person is experiencing. When the match is made, that substance is given in very small, safe doses, often with dramatic effects'.

This law is also used in allopathic medicine. Immunizations are based on the Law of Similars. Modern pharmacology has rephrased this principle into the Arndt-Schulz Law, 'Every drug has a stimulating effect in small doses, while larger doses inhibit, and much larger doses kill'.

2) Minimum Dose

The second principle is the minimum dose. Hahnemann, in order to minimize these undesirable effects, serially diluted the medicine to determine the minimum dose which would work. These dilutions are called potencies.

3) Single Remedy

The last tenet of classical homeopathy is the use of the single remedy. The actions of medicines are tested on healthy human subject's one medicine at a time. These tests are called 'provings'.

Homeopathic Prescribing [3]

1) Vitality of the Patient

The first factor to consider when prescribing is the vitality of the patient. In general, the higher their vitality, the higher the potency you can use.

Choice of Potency

When the treatment is prescribed on the basis of local signs and symptoms, prescribe low potencies, under 12X.

When the treatment is prescribed on the basis of a mixture of local, general, mental and emotional signs and symptoms, prescribe higher potencies, 30X - 200X.

2) Emotional vs Physical

The second factor to consider is whether the symptoms are more emotionally or physically based. Homeopaths rank the emotional and spiritual levels at the highest plane of pathology. Below that is the mental, and then below that the physical. The higher the plane of pathology, the higher the potency you may use.

3) Acute Vs Chronic State

The third factor to consider in potency selection is the acuteness of the problem. Usually acute ailments with intense symptoms warrant higher potencies.

4) Correct Remedy

The fourth factor is your own certainty that you have the right remedy. The more certain you are, the higher the potency you might use.

Frequency of Repetition

The more acute the condition, the more frequently you may need to repeat the remedy.

Dilutions

Three potency scales are in regular use in homeopathy. Hahnemann created the centesimal or C scale, diluting a substance by a factor of 100 at each stage [4].

Some homeopaths developed a decimal scale (D or X), diluting the substance to ten times its original volume each stage.

Potency of Homeopathic Drugs [2]

Homeopathic therapies are prepared by potentization. Potencies for homeopathic agents are designated by a number that is followed by an x. The x represents 10, and signifies that the mother tincture has been diluted to one part in 10. The number preceding the x indicates the number of times the remedy has been diluted. The more diluted a remedy is, the more potent it is said to be.

Homeopathic Preparations [2]

Homeopathic remedies come in pellet, tablet, and liquid form. Creams, ointments, or salves can be prepared by mixing the liquid with a cream or gel base. The creams and ointments are useful for sore muscles of the face and neck associated with temporomandibular joint disorders (TMJ) or long dental treatments. The tablets and pellets, which are made with a base of lactose (sweet milk sugar), are dissolved in the mouth, without chewing. These are excellent for children. Since the liquid remedies contain alcohol, they should not be given to children.

Homeopathy and Dentistry- A 2 – Way Relationship

Acupuncturists note that the metallic fillings have the potential of acting as batteries and capacitors which can generate current and store electrical charges. Since every tooth is situated on an acupuncture meridian, the filling may provide additional stress which may create acute and/or chronic symptoms in susceptible individuals.

The fact that acupuncture points reside under the teeth may be one possible explanation that homeopaths sometimes observe that the action of homeopathic medicines are antidoted by some dental work, including getting teeth cleaned or getting new fillings. It has been conjectured that some dental work stimulates so many acupuncture points in a short period of time that it may "short circuit" the action of the homeopathic medicines.

Besides offering a different perspective on fluoridation and amalgam fillings, homeopathy also offers specific medicines that can be invaluable in reducing dental pain and alleviating dental disease.

It should first be mentioned that homeopathic medicines do not replace good dental care but complement it. Also, the medicines may be effective in relieving dental pain, but it is often necessary to discover what the source of the pain is in order to cure the underlying problem. If pain is occurring due to an abscess, it is not enough simply to reduce the pain. The abscess must be treated.

Dental Uses [1, 2, 3]

- **Abrasions:** From instrumentation or manipulation- apply Hypericum and Calendula tinctures to the area 3 times daily.
- **Bleeding:** Initially, Arnica 200C every 15 minutes. For persistent bleeding of bright red blood use Phosphorus

30C every 15 minutes. For persistent bleeding of dark blood use Lachesis 30C every hour.

- **Bruxism:** While sleeping, use Cina 30C, one hour before sleep. While awake, use Nux vomica 30C twice daily.
- **Dry socket:** With throbbing pain use Belladonna 30C every hour. With unbearable pain, use Coffea 30C, every 15 minutes. To promote healing use Hepar sulph 6C every 4 hours.
- **Dental Abscess:** For an acute tooth abscess that is red swollen and throbbing, Belladonna is used. Hepar Sulph is prescribed for a chronic abscess and Silicea is recommended when the abscess starts to drain.
- **Dental Trauma:** Before and after a tooth is extracted Arnica is suggested to try and reduce shock and bleeding. Even the gentlest treatment at the dentist may produce a slight amount of disturbance to the tissues of the mouth and leave it sore. To reduce this discomfort Arnica can be taken. Hypericum is useful should nerves be injured. Eruption of teeth, if delayed, Use Calc carb 30C, twice a week.
- **Fever:** In patients with high fever Aconite, Belladonna or Bryonia may be indicated. A passive fever of 102oF or less suggests Ferrum Phos.
- **Gingivitis** (acute) with heavily coated tongue, use Merc sol 30C three times daily. With clean tongue, use Nit ac 30C three times daily. With excessive destruction of tissue, use Kali chlor 30C three times daily.
- **Halitosis** Use a mixture of Carbo veg 30C and Merc sol 30C twice daily.
- **Lip Cream** Calendula cream can be used for every patient as a lip cream. In most dental treatments the lips are pulled and stretched. Calendula cream on the lips combined with a Propolis mouth wash will leave the mouth comfortable and fresh.
- **Painful Injection:** Painful injection sites can be relieved with Ledum especially where the site has not bled significantly. If there is stiffness of the jaw after a local anaesthetic then consider Ledum 30 three or four times a day especially if the area feels cold.
- **Periodontitis (Chronic pyorrhoea):** With bleeding gums, foul breath and a large tongue the retains the imprint of the teeth use Merc sol 6C once daily. For bleeding gums with substantial loss of periodontal bone, use Phosphorus 15C once daily. Scar tissue, to reduce formation of, Use a mixture of Thiosinaminum 6C, Silica 6C, Arnica 6C, Anagalis 6C and Benzoic acid 6C, three times daily for 5 days after surgery.
- **Teething:** Teething is helped with Chamomilla especially where the child is fractious and restless, wishing to be carried or petted. Chamomilla 30 every hour or as necessary. Thrush (oral) Borax 30C three times daily.
- **Toothpastes:** Calendula toothpaste was developed for homeopaths who felt that the peppermint used as a breath freshener nullified the effects of homeopathic medicines. Instead Calendula toothpaste contains essential oils of fennel and cinnamon, with Calendula for antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and healing properties and finely powdered chalk to clean and shine the teeth without damaging the enamel.

General Guidelines to Increase the effectiveness of Homeopathic Remedies

1. Homeopathic remedies should not be touched. They must be taken directly from the container into the mouth.
2. They should be placed under the tongue and allowed to dissolve.
3. No food should be taken either twenty minutes before or after the remedies are taken.
4. Avoid taking coffee, tea or mint during use of homeopathic remedies.
5. These substances have the potential of neutralizing the effects of the remedies.
6. Do not store the homeopathic remedies in areas that contain such products as ether, camphor, perfumes or other highly volatile substances. These types product will neutralize the homeopathic remedies. When the symptoms start to abate or resolve, discontinue the homeopathic remedy.

Discussion

Many people are now turning to Homoeopathy spurred on by the ill effects of conventional drugs and the desire to find a system that does not suppress the body's natural balance. Besides treating acute dental problems, homeopathic medicines have the capacity to treat various chronic dental problems as well. Since some chronic dental conditions result from general health problems of the person, homeopathic medicines which have the capacity to strengthen a person's overall health therefore can augment general dental hygiene in order to prevent and treat teeth and gum disease ^[4, 5, 6].

No matter what combination of symptoms or chief complaints the individual is suffering at any given time they are all manifestations of a single "disease" that is unique to that individual. The homeopathic philosophy believes that no one organ of the body can be ill without affecting the person as a whole. All symptoms, therefore, must be analyzed and taken into account since they all represent the body's effort to heal itself. Individuals who present recurrent acute or chronic episodes of an illness are reflecting a "constitutional" weakness. The goal of homeopathy is NOT to treat the symptoms but use them as a guide for the appropriate remedy that will stimulate the person's defense system.

Homoeopathy is not a substitute for good dietary practice and oral hygiene habits. Dental treatment can never be completely natural but utilising homeopathic principles can avoid some of the side effects and also make it more pleasant for the patient.

Constitutional homeopathic prescribing involves analyzing a person's body type, temperament, disposition, and behavioral tendencies ^[7]. Pathological prescribing is a treatment specifically for the disease or ailment. Homeopathy in holistic dentistry offers a combination of these. Thus, it is possible to prescribe one remedy to suit the general temperament or psychological state of a patient and another for the particular problem the patient is experiencing.

Conclusion

The dentist who practises homoeopathy is usually concerned about the patient as a whole and will use homoeopathy to enhance a state of health rather than to just treat disease. Homeopathic dentists often apply many other aspects of

holistic dentistry to their practice in their concern for the patient's general health.

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