

Homeopathy in Dentistry and Oral Medicine: A Review

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Abstract

Objectives: Homeopathy is the most important field of alternative medicine. At present, over 3000 organic medications have been registered in the homeopathy pharmacopeia; out of which, 70% have herbal, 20% have mineral and the remaining have animal origins. Evidence shows that homeopathy may be beneficial in dentistry and oral medicine. However, this is a less known field for dentists. Therefore, this study aimed to do a review on the most common homeopathy medicines used for oral and dental problems and to present it in a simple and practical way for general dental practitioners.

Review of Literature: Google Scholar and PubMed data bases were searched for any article related to both homeopathy and dentistry. Several recent meta-analyses, randomized control trials, animal and laboratory trials, and other interventional papers were studied.

Homeopathy drugs are basically produced from natural origin; they have less side effects in comparison with chemical drugs. In this method, only small doses of medications with low cost are used. The positive effects of homeopathy drugs on several oral conditions have been emphasized.

Conclusion: Homeopathy may be a suitable adjunct to conventional medicine for management of many conditions since it is affordable, effective and uplifting for patients.

Key Words: Dentistry; Homeopathy; Oral Medicine

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Introduction

Alternative medicine refers to the use of alternative approaches, other than routine treatment modalities, for treatment of medical conditions. Alternative medicine is gaining increasing popularity worldwide. Introduction of homeopathy dates back to 200 years ago. The term homeopathy is composed of “homeo” meaning similar and “pathy” meaning treatment. The main concept of homeopathy is that factors causing disease symptoms in healthy individuals can also be used to cure similar

symptoms in diseased individuals (1). Mean score of satisfaction of patients with treatment with homeopathy was 77.48 ± 6.36 in 2004 and 77.4 ± 8.13 in 2008 in Isfahan (2).

The mechanism of action of homeopathic medications is similar to the use of vaccines, where attenuated microorganisms are used to trigger an immune response in the human body. Mental and psychological conditions are also important in homeopathy. Although patients often seek treatment for their physical conditions, their mental and psychological status must also be taken into account. Since homeopathic treatments are

based on stimulating the immune system, irreversible damage to this system decreases the chance of recovery (3-5). At present, over 3000 organic medications have been registered in the homeopathy pharmacopeia; out of which, 70% have herbal, 20% have mineral and the remaining have animal origin. Homeopathic remedies are prepared by diluting the drugs in alcohol or distilled water; this process is followed by forceful striking on an elastic body, which is referred to as succession (6). The efficacy of remedies increases as such (6). Selection of remedies for each condition is done by homeopaths using a reference book called “repertory”. In this process, signs and symptoms of the disease, medical history and physical and mental status of the patients must also be considered (7).

In dentistry, good oral hygiene and healthy diet play significant roles in gingival health (2). Homeopathy has many applications in dentistry. It is used for pain relief after dental surgeries and to decrease inflammation and bleeding (2).

Considering the increasing popularity of homeopathy as an alternative treatment and lack of information about its efficacy for treatment of dental and oral conditions, this study aimed to do a review on the most common homeopathy medicines used for oral and dental problems.

Definitions:

Repertorization: It is defined as the use of repertories (homeopathy reference books) to find the best remedy for a specific condition. This process is initiated by case taking and ends with simillimum (finding similar remedies). The sequence is as follows: Case taking, recording and interpretation of data,

defining the problem, classification and evaluation of symptoms, erecting a totality, selection of repertory and proper repertorization, reportorial result, analysis and prescription.

Homeopathic remedies: Homeopathic medications are available in four forms of alcoholic solution (medication is dissolved in a combination of water and ethyl alcohol in different ratios; the percentage of alcohol is often <40%), tablets, globules (most common form, made of lactose ranging in size from 1mm to 10mm, they are wetted with homeopathic medication), and ointment or crème (effective for treatment of topical and cutaneous conditions). Homeopathic prescriptions may be pathological, constitutional or a combination of both. Constitutional prescription of remedies is based on analysis of the patient’s body type, temperature and behavior while pathological prescriptions are aimed to cure a specific disease (2).

Homeopathic medications must not be stored in extreme cold or heat and should be far from magnetic fields. Also, they must be kept away from direct sunlight and perfumes (8).

There is a common belief that if a drug is diluted with water, it becomes less effective. However, it should be noted that dilution of drugs with water decreases their hazardous and toxic effects and increases their potency. In manufacture of homeopathic medications, a process called potentization is performed. If the primary ingredient is diluted once in 1:100, it is referred to as C1 (centesimal). For instance, Chamomilla is often produced in C4 concentration, which means it is diluted four times in 1:100. In this method,

after each time of dilution of drug with water, the bottle is vigorously shaken. Thus, in homeopathy, X is dilution in 1:10 and C is dilution in 1:100.

Applications of homeopathy in dentistry

In dentistry, homeopathy is used to alleviate pain, inflammation and bleeding following dental surgeries (2). Also, it may be suitable for many conditions, for which, the conventional medicine falls short (2,9). Homeopathy cannot replace dental procedures. However, it can help relax the patient and smooth the procedure (1). Homeopathic prescriptions in dentistry are a combination of constitutional and pathological prescriptions (2). In general, homeopathy can be used in dentistry to prevent certain conditions, as an adjunct for treatment of certain conditions, to relax the patient and eliminate fear and anxiety and to enhance recovery (2). Homeopathic medicines in dentistry are often administered in two forms. In systemic administration, the remedy is dissolved in a solution or placed under the tongue where it is quickly absorbed. It should be noted that the tablets should not be touched because the effective agent is impregnated in the coating. Instead, the tablets can be tipped directly into the mouth. Also, tablets should be taken 20 minutes before or after meals. Smoking and use of peppermint toothpastes must be avoided since they may interfere with the action of homeopathic medications. Arnica is a commonly used homeopathic medication for dental purposes mainly for cases of trauma, postoperative pain, swelling and bleeding (2). Also, it can be used prior to anesthetic injection, scaling and root planning (2). Calendula mouthwash is also

useful for gingival health (2,9). Tincture is beneficial for tooth hypersensitivity due to exposure of cementum or dentin (2). Chamomilla 200C is useful for toothache. It can be taken one hour before surgery and can be repeated every 15 minutes (no more than 6 doses) (2). Calcarea phosphorica 30C twice a week is prescribed for cases with delayed eruption of teeth (2). Belladonna 30C every one hour and Coffea cruda 30C every 15 minutes are used to alleviate pain in dry socket (2). Phosphorus 30C every 15 minutes is used to manage bleeding. Arnica 30C is used to manage shock, bleeding and soreness following trauma, bruising or fractures. It is used three times a day for chronic and every one hour for acute cases (up to six doses). Some of the more common dental problems and their treatment/management with homeopathic medications are discussed here (arranged in alphabetical order):

Abrasion: Calendula ointment (5%) three times a day is recommended for cases of abrasion of corners of the mouth (due to manipulation or accidental contact with bur) (10,11).

Acute bleeding: Arnica montana 200C is administered every 30 minutes. Ferrum phosphoricum 6C, Ipecacuanha 30C and Phosphorus 30C every 15 minutes are used if bleeding continues and the blood is light red. If bleeding continues and the blood is dark, Lac caninum 30C or Chininum sulphuratum 6C once every hour are used. Lac caninum 30C every 15 minutes is used in hemophilic patients (12-14).

Acute periodontitis due to trauma to teeth: Arnica montana 200C and Ruta graveolens 30C every four hours can be used.

Acute conjunctivitis of dentists: Macerated leaves eye drop (2-3 drops in 28cc of water) every three times a day are prescribed (12,15).

Antibiotic side effects: Nitricum acidum 30C every four hours is used for diarrhea as a side effect of antibiotics. Borax 30C three times a day is used for thrush (oral or vaginal) as a side effect of antibiotic therapy (10-12,14).

Aphthous ulcers: Hydrastis homeopathic topical lotion/mouthwash can be used; Borax 30C every four hours can be used for halitosis and scalloping of tongue borders due to the impression of teeth in patients with a large tongue. Hydrastis canadensis 30C every four hours is useful for sticky and highly consistent saliva with no halitosis. Kali bichromicum 30C every four hours is used for aphthous ulcers with yellow-green bases and swollen uvula. Nitricum acidum 30C every four hours is prescribed for aphthous ulcers with a bloody base and needling pain. Sulphuricum acidum 30C every four hours is prescribed for alcoholics and nursing women. If aphthous ulcers did not respond to these treatments or recurred, patients should be referred to a homoeopath for general treatment. Intercurrent treatments with more potent medications such as Sulph may be necessary; however, they should be prescribed with caution in patients with eczema (10,11,16).

Bruxism: Cina 30C one hour before bed time is prescribed for children with bruxism and parasite. Nux vomica 30C twice a day is prescribed for workaholic patients with recurrent gastrointestinal problems (10,11).

Candidiasis stomatitis: Broax 30C three times a day is the main medication for this

purpose. Kali muriaticum 6C and Natrum muriaticum 6C can be used every four hours as well. If not treated, Psorinum 30C once a day is prescribed (must be used with caution in eczema patients) (17).

Cellulitis: Belladonna 30C every two hours is used in presence of cellulitis with pulsating pain. Lachesis mutus 30C every two hours is used for tissues turning blue or purple. Pyrus americana 30C every two hours must be added to the afore-mentioned medications when there is a risk of septicemia. Due to serious health hazards, a maxillofacial surgeon must visit the patient (18).

Dental abscess: Belladonna 30C is used at the time of initiation of abscess (swelling and redness) every 30 minutes. Mercurius solubilis 6C is used every one hour for swelling, halitosis and increased salivary flow. In later stages following pus formation, Hepar suis 6C is used to accelerate drainage (5 tablets every two hours). When surgical incision and drainage is required, Myristica sebifera 3X every one hour can be used as an alternative/adjunct to surgery. Silica marina 6C twice daily is used to accelerate recovery and eliminate localized puss. Salvia officinalis mouthwash associated with the above-mentioned remedies is beneficial as well (12,16).

Dental caries: Calcarea caronica 30C twice a week is recommended for caries prevention in short, slightly over-weight patients with a flat palate and anterior square-shaped teeth and no crowding. In tall patients with a hunched face, deep palate, tendency for crowding and vertically triangular yellow anterior teeth, Calcarea phosphorica 30C twice a week is prescribed

for caries prevention. In patients with facial asymmetry, scoliosis and soft joints, Kreosotum 30C twice a week is recommended. Bacillinum 30C once a month can also be used as an adjunct to the above-mentioned medications (19).

Dry socket: Salvia officinalis mouthwash several times a day is recommended. Belladonna 30C once every hour is prescribed for pulsating pain. In case of presence of unbearable pain, which is alleviated by rinsing cold water and the patient is anxious, Coffea 30C every 30 minutes is prescribed. Hepar sulphuris 6C every four hours is used to enhance recovery. Silicea 6C twice a day is used to accelerate elimination of bone sequesters. Plantago Q solution can be used topically (12,20,21).

Eczema of dentist's hands: viola Tricolor drop (10 drops in 28 cubic centimeters of water) can be applied to the site to control itching. Graphite sceme 8X every two hours can be applied for cracks (22).

Gingivitis: Mercurius solubilis 6C three times a day is used for halitosis due to gingivitis. Nitricum acidum 30C three times a day is used for gingivitis when borders of the tongue are smooth (12,21,23).

Gingival pain and tooth hypersensitivity after scaling and polishing: Salvia officinalis mouthwash and calendula lotion several times a day can be effective (24).

Glossitis: Arsenicum album 6C, Ignatia amara 6C and Iris versicolor 6C twice a day are effective (12,25).

Herpetic gingivostomatitis: In cases with severe halitosis and high salivary flow, Mercurius solubilis 30C is prescribed three times a day. Baptisia tinctoria 30C three times a day is used in patients with mouth

dryness, malaise and sleepiness. Rhus toxicodendron 6C three times a day is prescribed in patients with low-grade fever and cervical lymphadenopathy (12,26).

Halitosis: When not treated by conventional dental treatments, Arnica montana 6C and Mercurius solubilis 6C can be administered twice daily. Nux vomica 6C three times daily is beneficial for halitosis after meals. Rheum officinale 6C twice daily is beneficial for halitosis due to tongue fissures, gingiva or oral mucosa; 6-spigelia is suitable for treatment of halitosis in patients with tachycardia (3,10-12).

Jaw fracture: Rhus toxicodendron 30C and Bryonia alba 30C alternatively every two hours and Ruta graveolens 30C every two hours are used for pain relief. Sticta pulmonaria 200C is effective to help the patient sleep. Symphitium 3X three times a day is used to enhance healing. Arnica Montana 30C twice a day is used for soft tissue injuries. Ruta graveolens 6C twice a day is used to enhance bone healing. Ruta graveolens 6C and Rhus toxicodendron 30C every four hours are used alternatively to relax the muscles. Hypericum perforatum 6C twice a day is used for nerve recovery (27).

Lichen planus: Arsenicum album 6C twice a day and Natrum phosphoricum 30C once a day are often prescribed (12,14,28).

Migraine-like facial neuralgia: For acute conditions, Sanguinari 200C and Spigellia 200C are used for neuralgia of the right and left sides, respectively every 15 minutes. Plantago can be topically applied on painful areas of the skin or mucosa every 15 minutes (12,29,30).

Oro-sinus fistula: Hydrofluoricum acidum 6C twice a day and Silicea 6C in case of no improvement can be used (12, 31).

Osteomyelitis: Phosphorus 6C, Amphisbaena 30C and Hekla lava 6X every four hours and Pyrogenium sepsis 30C for infection control twice a day are used for this condition (12).

Pain control: Chamomilla 200C one hour before the operation is used for pain control and can be repeated every 15 minutes (31).

Pericoronitis: Salvia officinalis mouthwash is useful. Belladonna 30C every two hours is prescribed for pulsating pain; Hepar suis 6C three times a day is used to eliminate pus (24,32).

Pregnancy gingivitis: Mercurius solubilis 6C twice a day is used for treatment of pregnancy gingivitis (12,13,26).

Prevention of oral surgical complications: Arnica montana 200C and Hypericum perforatum 6C in the morning and in the evening one day prior to surgery and seven days after surgery are effective for pain control. Phosphorus 30C with the same dosage and timing is used for bleeding control. Pyrogenium sepsis 30C twice a day for seven days after the operation is effective for infection control. Calendula mouthwash is used to eliminate pain and swelling several times a day after the operation. Antimonium tartaricum 6C three times a day for a couple of days before and one week after surgery can effectively prevent pulmonary complications (33).

Ranula: Thuja occidentalis 6C and Mercurius solubilis 6C once a day are prescribed (12,34).

Sialorrhea: Iris versicolor 30C every two hours is used for high salivary flow along

with tension headache. High salivary flow after meals is managed by Allium sativum 6C three times a day (12,35,36).

Scaring: Graphites 6C and topical application of Graphite 8X twice a day are used for treatment and Thiosinaminum 6C twice a day is used for prevention of scar tissue formation (33).

Sialolitis: Calcarea carbonica 6C twice a week are prescribed for patients with numerous sialoliths (10,11).

Taste disorders: Complete loss of taste is managed by Natrum muriaticum 6C and Magnesia carbonica 6C twice a day. Loss of olfaction and sense of taste due to cold can be treated by Manganum muriaticum 6C three times a day. Loss of sense of taste with a thick coating on the tongue is treated with Antimonium crudum 6C three times a day. Antimonium tartaricum 6C three times a day is prescribed for patients who complain of loss of sense of taste and have a milky coating on their tongue (12,37).

Toothache: Plangto 6C every 15 minutes (cotton pellet dipped in Plangtois placed on the tooth), Staphysagria 30C every hour (for severe pain), Chamomilla 200C every 30 minutes (for unbearable pain) and Sepia 6C every four hours (for toothache during pregnancy) are effective for pain control (12).

Trigeminal neuralgia: Aconite 30C three times a day, Phosphorus 30C twice a day and Manganum phosphoricum 30C three times a day are used (16, 38).

Temporomandibular joint disorders: Medications include Rhus toxicodendron 30C twice a day for clicking, Granatum 6C three times a day for clicking and pain, Arum triphyllum 30C twice a day for

mastication pain and Petroselin 6C twice a day for cases prone to mandibular dislocation (11).

Trismus: Treatment varies based on the cause. Belladonna 30C and Nux vomica 30C three times a day are often administered (39).

Xerostomia: Xerostomia without thirst is managed by Pulsatilla 6C twice a day (12,17).

Advantages of homeopathy:

Chance of recovery for some chronic/incurable conditions: Some chronic or acute conditions, which do not have a definite conventional medical treatment can be managed by homeopathy such as migraine, MS and many psychological conditions. Although a homeopath may not be able to promise full recovery, chances of treatment may be higher (40,41).

Shorter recovery: In many chronic conditions such as migraine, eczema and asthma, patients have to use the chemical drugs for long periods of time or for the rest of their lives. These conditions, however, may be managed by homeopathy in a shorter time (a couple of months or 2-3 years).

Treatment of entire body: In homeopathy, the entire body is considered and all problems are managed with a single drug during a specific treatment period.

Fewer complications: No significant complication or side effect has been documented for homeopathic medications. Some insignificant disturbances are temporary and part of treatment. Thus, in prescribed doses, homeopathic medications do not cause any complication or side effect. Obviously, over-dose of these drugs may have toxic effects.

Prevention: Homeopathically treated patients are often more resistant to diseases (42).

Patient cooperation: In homeopathy, patients often consume drugs once a month. Also, homeopathic drugs often have no taste or odor and resemble water. Thus, patient cooperation is often higher compared to conventional pharmaceutical therapy. This is particularly important in pediatric patients.

Cost: Homeopathic medications are very cheap and most homeopaths provide patients with medications free of charge. The patient only pays the fee for the physician's visit.

Small dose of drugs: Homeopathic drugs are administered in small doses. Also, these drugs have no interference with chemical drugs and the patient can take both simultaneously (3,42).

Mimura and colleagues designed a clinical trial to evaluate the efficacy of thalidomide, dapsone, colchicine, and pentoxifylline for treatment of severe manifestations of aphthous stomatitis in 2009. The result showed significant symptom relief with the medications; furthermore, thalidomide was the most efficient and well tolerated drug (43). In another clinical trial, Mojaver and colleagues evaluated the efficacy of homeopathy for treatment of trigeminal neuralgia in 2007. The results for both the reduction of pain intensity and attack frequency were statistically significant during the four-month evaluation. Their results suggest that homeopathic treatment is an effective and safe method for treatment of trigeminal neuralgia (44).

Limitations of homeopathy:

-Some diseases are physical and cause irreversible structural changes such as

wounds, traumas, kidney stones, deep caries, root fracture, etc. In such cases, conventional treatments should be necessarily performed but homeopathic medications can also enhance the course of recovery or alleviate pain.

-In cases with advanced stages of cancer, reinstatement of vital body force is not possible and homeopathy may not be able to help such patients.

-Cardiovascular emergencies, shocks and some acute conditions need urgent medical care and homeopathy is not indicated for such patients.

-Foreign bodies, thrombosis, tumors and cysts, epilepsy, polycystic kidney disease and nutritional and vitamin deficiencies are among conditions requiring medical attention.

Suggestions: A homeopathy course can be included in dental curricula to familiarize dental students with this field. Also, in vivo

clinical trials on the efficacy of homeopathic medications in dentistry are required.

Conclusion

Homeopathy may be a suitable adjunct to conventional medicine for management of many conditions since it is affordable, effective and uplifting for patients.

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