

Review Article

'G' followed by 'H'-gout follows homoeopathy

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ABSTRACT

Currently in modern medicine, it is seen that taking a uric acid reducing drug during an attack of gout actually prolongs the pain and discomfort. So, the learning is that one need not worry about high uric acid levels during an acute flair of gout. What actually someone needs is an anti-inflammatory that reduces the inflammation caused by the crystals of uric acid that build up in the joints when someone has gout. This anti-inflammatory drug is 'colchicine'. Homoeopathy has been using the drug 'colchicum autumnale' for last 233 years since its discovery in 1790 by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843). It also uses its active principle 'colchicine' for the last 233 years. It is quite striking to see that the modern medicine is realizing the importance of 'colchicine' currently. The same 'colchicine' was advised to be used as an anti-inflammatory to reduce the markers like C-reactive protein, LDH, D-dimer and homocysteine. During the COVID-19 peak, again the homoeopathic Colchicine came to the rescue. The current article examines the use of homoeopathy in gout and uric acid problems and again at a larger issue with the protein metabolism and the kidney health. Integration of homoeopathy at large scale will help the nation to protect its members from protein metabolism disorders, kidney health and gout as well.

Keywords: Uric acid, Gout, Purine

INTRODUCTION

Gout manifests through extreme pain around the heel, ankles along with a big red, tender, hot and swollen toe. The pain lingers for days. Gout is associated with high

uric acid levels. Uric acid is an immune system stimulant. It is needed for endothelial functions and regulates immune responses. Basically, it works as an anti-oxidant. In humans, over half the anti-oxidant capacity of blood plasma comes from uric acid. It is concentrated in the

liver, vascular endothelial cells and in human nasal secretion where it acts as an anti-oxidant. The problem occurs when its levels go higher.^{1,2}

Normal values of uric acid range between 3.5 and 7.2 milligrams per deciliter. It is usually 6 for women, 7 for men and does not require medication unless gout or kidney stones develop. Medication is a must when the uric acid figures are higher than 9.^{1,2}

Genetic predisposition has some role with the elevated uric acid levels but the dual factor of diet and alcohol are two prime reasons.^{1,4}

EPIDEMIOLOGY OF GOUT

A study in 2022 shows that prevalence of gout in developing countries such as India is basically 0.5%.³ In another study done in 2014, it was found that 60 men developed gout corresponding to an incidence of 1.73 per 1000 person years.⁴ Another study done in West Bengal in 2012 from Bigwan village shows a prevalence of 0.1%.⁵ A 2020 study found that overall prevalence of hyperuremia among subjects attending HU camps in Indian population was 24.66%.⁶ Similarly, in another study done in 2010 found that in India, approximately 0.12-0.19% of the population are affected by gout.⁷

PATHO-PHYSIOLOGY OF GOUT

When the body cannot expel excess levels of uric acid into the bloodstream, it crystallizes and settles in common joints, mostly in the big toes, ankles, wrists, knees, smaller joints and even elbows. This is when body aches come all over and inflammatory conditions like gout develops. Elevated levels of uric acid cause the formation of kidney stones that can damage the organ if left untreated. High uric acid can trigger hypertension and once the uric acid level is controlled, the blood pressure is managed well there by preventing heart attacks, heart disease and stroke. High levels of uric acid with comorbidities like high cholesterol, diabetes, abdominal obesity and obstructive sleep apnea which can lead to complications.^{1,2}

Uric acid is formed as a result of the breakdown of a compound called 'Purine'. The foods that are rich in Purine are mostly animal derived. These foods are red meat, organ meats and sea foods such as anchovies, sardines, mussels, scallops, trout and tuna. In alcohol, beer and whiskey contribute the most to purines and wine is the least.^{1,2}

Sweetened carbonated beverages and fructose corn syrup also contribute to purines. All of these interfere with the body's ability to expel uric acid. On the other hand, purine rich vegetarian foods like spinach, beans, peas, tomatoes contribution to raising uric acid levels is negligible. In fact, whole grains, legumes, fruits, fibrous food, coffee, vitamin C have protective effect.^{1,2}

WAY FORWARD

It is important to monitor uric acid levels regularly and take steps to manage the levels if the levels go higher. Adjustment in the diet is crucial.^{1,2}

The modern medicine treatment plan displayed significant side effects with less better effect. The way forward is to integrate alternative system and here homoeopathy comes in the forefront. Along with homoeopathy, regular physical exercise, yoga and the diet based on the principle of ayurveda can significantly retard the progression of the disease. The three types of food are Satwik, Tamasik and Rajasik. Increasing Satwik, moderating Tamasik and reducing Rajasik is the key to deal with gout and uric acid levels. Integration of homoeopathy in the issue of gout and uric acid coupled with early diagnosis and early treatment is crucial for prevention of gout and uric acid and its related morbidities.²³

To deal with these types of non-communicable diseases, the government of India operates national program for prevention and control of cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and stroke since 2010.⁸ Large scale surveys like national family health survey (NFHS) reflect the trend of India moving from the stage of communicable diseases to the stage of non-communicable diseases through the process of epidemiologic transition.²⁰

HOMOEOPATHIC APPROACH

A study shows that there is complex interplay between gout pain and mental health thus needing a holistic approach to management in gout addressing both physical and psychological factors. This is where homoeopathy chips in to play an active role. As already mentioned above, all homoeopathic medicine has physical and mental symptoms as the drugs are proved on human beings. Given below are Homoeopathic medicines that are primarily from four sources. These are H. C. Allen's Key notes, Robin Murphy's materia medica, Phatak's materia medica and Boericke's materia medica. These four text books are used to teach homoeopathic students who become qualified homoeopaths later. The treatment plans for the uric acid disorders mentioned above are given below.^{10-19,25,26}

The major reference book here is the repertory by Phatak. Under gout, the major drugs are 'colchicum', 'colchicine', 'urtica urens', 'thlapsi bursa pastoris', 'acid benz', 'ranunculus scleratus', 'abrotanum', 'rhododendron'.¹²

Among bowel nosodes, 'sycotic compound' and 'bacillus number 10' can be prescribed.¹⁶

Among the specifics, 'uric acid' and 'urea' can be prescribed.¹⁰

The problem of uric acid diathesis or lithemia in which the uric acid levels go up can also be dealt with effectively. The medicines like ‘acid benz’, ‘berberis vulgaris’, ‘bursa pastoris’, ‘coccus cacti’, ‘sarsaparilla’, ‘lycopodium’, ‘natrum sulph’. ‘sepia’, ‘thuja’, ‘urtica urens’ can be prescribed.¹²

The issues like uric acid related disorders can be resolved through the universal health coverage (UHC) where the AYUSH systems like homoeopathy can play an active role. The network of private, public and corporate system can come handy here. The inclusion of the traditional systems like homoeopathy can play a vital role to achieve UHC in India as reinforced by a published article on the issue of UHC.²¹

With the probable upcoming of large number of cases of uric acid disorders in view of high stress levels due to the consequences of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis that is still prevalent in the form of long COVID, the homoeopathic system has a fair role to play.²⁶

Homoeopathy while being economical, has no side effects and on the top of it is cost effective thus fulfilling the criteria of the essential medicines. Simultaneously, it has a wide range of the medicines for uric acid disorders as seen in the contents of the sections mentioned above.⁹

HOMOEOPATHY AND GDP OF INDIA

The current GDP of the India is 3.75 trillion INR. As per the available data, 10 percentages of population use homoeopathy currently in India. Hence, integration of homoeopathy will help India to save 0.375 trillion INR per year hypothetically. In the process, the kidney health, joint health can be improved while saving the population from the complications related to excess the uric acid levels.²⁴

CONCLUSION

As all drugs in homoeopathy have a group of mental symptoms, homoeopathy is and will be effective against uric acid disorders in general as it takes care of the mental issues as well. However, it should be also seen that along with constitutional/deep acting/polychrest homoeopathic medicines, specific medicines are also required to deal with the cases. It should be ensured that nutrition, counseling and all psychic health modalities like life style modification, diet and stress reduction are adhered in each case. In fact, the detailed case taking of a case and empathetic hearing are the elements of supportive therapy as uric acid cases are chronic and resistant. The homoeopathic approach of case-taking/anamnesis exactly fits into the criteria of supportive therapy. Hence, as a part of treatment, the supportive therapy is inherent in the homoeopathic system of treatment. To get optimal results, the homoeopathic fraternity should be ready to cover the masses as there is no other therapeutic system that can

cover the masses effectively both therapeutically and economically.

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