

Dermatomyositis & Homoeopathy

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Abstract

In the month of February 2024, India lost a budding actor in the name of Suhani Bhatnagar who was a part of the popular movie 'Dangal'. She was only 19 years of age. Unfortunately, she had 'Dermatomyositis', a rare inflammatory disease. She was treated with steroids but in vain. It is here that the article focuses on the use of homoeopathy of AYUSH in this rare disease. Homoeopathy has already proved its efficacy during the COVID 19 pandemic where it subdued the inflammation in the body. Thereafter, the disease could not progress to the lungs. Applying the concept of anti-inflammatory approach, homoeopathy can deal with the issue of 'Dermatomyositis'. It is to be noted that along with the homoeopathic medicines, all other supportive therapies like fluid management, temperature management & blood circulation management. At the end of the article, a homoeopathic protocol is mentioned that can be used in this rare disease.

Keywords: Dermatomyositis, Immunosuppressive, Immunoglobulins, Miasms, Materia Medica.

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INTRODUCTION

A need is felt to aware the public & private physicians on this auto immune disorder that affects the

skin & skeletal muscles. The cause is idiopathic & it is difficult to diagnose. In the case of Suhani, she was having issues since 2 months & the diagnosis could be made only 15 days before her death [1-6].

Her case started with the swelling in the left hand initially & developed skin problems. She was taken to so many doctors without any relief. This is where homoeopathy of AYUSH can help surely as it can deal with the inflammation in the body. Thereafter, she was diagnosed with 'Dermatomyositis' only 15 days before her death at AIIMS, Delhi. Steroids, antibiotics and other inflammatory reducers did not help her. Homoeopathy would have helped her [1-6].

The condition mimics with conditions related to skin, lungs, nerves, kidneys & thus the patient visits the dermatologist, pulmonologist, neurologist, nephrologist & rheumatologist. This is a rare disease that is of multi systemic nature. This is where the approach of General Physician (GP) chips in with the holistic approach & a competent homoeopath is one such physician with a holistic approach [1-6].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dermatomyositis is clubbed under skin conditions associated with malignancy. It is a multisystem disease predominantly affecting skin, muscles & blood vessels. Typical cutaneous features include a violaceous 'Heliotrope' erythema periorbitally & involving the upper eyelids but this can sometimes affect the upper trunk & shoulders. This is called as the 'shawl' sign. It can also affect the limbs. Linear erythematous streaks may also be observed on the back of hands & fingers. There can be papules over the knuckles which are called as Gottron's papules. Tortuous dilated nail fold capillaries often best seen with a dermatoscope & ragged cuticles are usually evident. Photo aggravation of the cutaneous features is often prominent [1].

The disease is under the domain of 'Rheumatology & Bone Disease' & is usually discussed with Polymyositis. In both these conditions, inflammatory infiltrate of both skeletal & smooth muscles are seen. These can be presenting features of a previously undiagnosed malignancy [1].

The exact cause of the disease is unknown. Some studies say it can be caused by viral infection of the muscles. The immune system is disorder, bacterial infections, Ultra Violet radiation, air pollution are other factors related to the cause. Some cases can be Iatrogenic as well [1-6].

The typical presentation of dermatomyositis is symmetrical proximal weakness over a few weeks usually affecting the lower limbs more than the upper limbs. There are difficulties in rising from a chair, climbing stairs & lifting. Muscle pain is not a prominent feature but may be present in up to 1/3rd of cases. Systematic features of fever, weight loss & fatigue are common. Subcutaneous calcification associated with skin ulceration occurs. Respiratory or pharyngeal involvement can lead to ventilatory failure or aspiration.

Interstitial lung disease occurs in 1/3rd patients & is associated with the presence of antisynthetase (Jo-10 antibodies) [1].

The symptoms include skin rash around eyes, cheeks, chest & back. It is accompanied by weakness in muscles of shoulders, upper arms, hips, thighs & neck. There can be problems in raising arms, getting up from a sitting position [1-6].

Auto Immune (AI) disorders happen when the body's immune system attacks & destroys healthy body tissues by mistake. Auto Immune disorders can be triggered by multiple factors like recurrent viral infections, smoking, air pollution, certain drugs & chronic stress. Genetic predisposition is also a potential factor [1-6].

People who were Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) positive in COVID 19 have three times higher risk to auto immune disorders like dermatomyositis. Higher the severity of COVID 19, higher is the risk. A study published in Lancet mentions that prolonged inflammation in COVID 19 triggers the immune system to create antibodies against virus antigens that share structural similarities with self antigens & lead to a cross reactive response against both self antigens & non self antigens [1-6]. Homoeopathy has been efficacious in reducing inflammations in the body during COVID 19 [14].

The allopathic or the conventional treatment involves anti inflammatory medicines like steroids & cortico steroids given orally or Intra Venously (IV). At times, immunosuppressive medicines are also given to block or slow down the immune system. At times, immunoglobulin which are donated blood products & boosts the body's immune system are given IV [1-6].

Epidemiology

Davidson's text book mentions the incidence as 2-10 cases per million/year¹. As per a study, Dermatomyositis may occur at any time from infancy through 80 years of age but occurs most commonly between 40 to 60 years of age. The incidence is 9.63 cases per million people [6]. The mortality rate is given by another research which states that the mortality rate is 10% & especially high in the first year of the disease [7]. The incidence of the disease as per another study mentions that it is 10-20 times lower than the incidence of lupus [8]. It affects both the children & adults [8].

Another study found that the incidence of dermatomyositis is higher among female patients at 1.9 with 95% Confidence Interval (CI) & a range of 1.1-2.6 per 100,000 person years [9].

Policy in India

The Indian Organization for Rare Diseases mentions that the treatment amount of rare disease is

hiked to ₹ 50 lakhs or 5 millions. The hike was done through amending the paragraph 10(i) of the national Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD), 2021. Earlier, it provided financial support up to ₹ 20 lakhs or 2 millions under the umbrella scheme of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN) [10].

Burden in India

Taking the projected population of India to 150 crores or 1500 millions, every year there will be 15000 cases per year maximum. Hence, the prevalence in that year will be 3000 as the previous year also had 1500 cases maximum [11].

The Future

As a result of decreasing immunity due to the surge in Non Communicable Diseases, there will be repeated viral & bacterial infections that are expected to have a surge in auto immune disorders. The risk factors are further compounded with the rise in pollutants. The recent pandemic is another example of catalyzing the auto immune disorders [1-11].

Integration of Homoeopathy of AYUSH in the NPRD will be a big help for the nation to deal with such auto immune disorders like dermatomyositis. The essential medicine properties of homoeopathy like cost effective, clinically effective & zero side effects will only help to ease the problem [12, 13].

10% of the population use homoeopathy currently in India or 15 crore who use homoeopathy currently can benefit while preventing them from auto immune disorders. Hypothetically, if we assume that out of this 150 million homoeopathy users, there will be 150 cases of dermatomyositis per year. These 150 cases can be saved from not only morbidity but also mortality. This means 15 cases can be saved from death [1-13].

Perspective of Homoeopathy

It is an 'Acute Miasm' from the perspective of homoeopathy. Homoeopathy has multiple drugs to deal with the problem. As it involves destruction process in the body, the dominant miasm is 'syphilitic' in nature [15-27].

The leading drugs in Myositis are 'Arnica', 'Rhus tox', 'Ruta'. The leading drugs for dermatitis are 'Chamomilla', 'Hepar Sulph', 'Merc Sol', 'Pulsatilla', 'Rhus tox', 'Silicea' [15-27].

The leading drugs that cover both Myositis & Dermatitis are 'Arnica', 'Belladonna', 'Bryonia', 'Calcarea Carb', 'Hepar Sulph', 'Merc Sol', 'Mezereum', 'Rhus tox', 'Ruta' [15-27].

The leading drugs under the conditions of 'Dermoid' are 'Calc Carb', 'Natrum Carb', 'Natrum Mur' & 'Nitric Acid' [15-27].

The leading drugs for 'Weak Muscles' are 'Calcarea Carb', 'Cimicifuga', 'Cocculus', 'Gelsemium', 'Kali Carb', 'Physostigma', 'Radium', 'Silicea', 'Sulphuric Acid', 'Veratrum Viride' [15-27].

To curb inflammation, drugs like 'Prednisolone', 'Cortisone', 'Hydrocortisone', 'Curcuma Longa' & 'Sycotic Compound', 'Osteo Arthritic Nosode' & 'Colchicininum' can be prescribed [15-27].

Other drugs like 'Echinacea', 'Azadirachta Indica', 'Antipyrinum', 'Pyrogen', 'Natrum Nitricum', 'Curare', 'Kali Hypo Phos', 'Kali Nitricum' can also be prescribed [15-27].

For fatigue, drugs like 'China', 'Sterculia', 'Lecithin', 'Acid Phos' can be given in Mother Tinctures [15-27].

As this disease involves muscles in the initial stages, the disease can be checked at the stage of muscle involvement with some drugs that acts on especially on the muscles. These drugs are 'Natrum Salicylicum', 'Strychninum', 'Chloroformum', 'Calcarea Hyphos', 'Plumbum Aceticum', 'Baryta Acetica', 'Lathyrus Sat', 'Kali Hypophos', 'Lolium T', 'Mang Met', 'Oxytropis', 'Lobelia Cardinalis', 'Agrostemma Githago', 'Agaricus Phalloides' [15-27].

To reduce congestion & inflammation, Bowel Nosodes can also be prescribed. These nosodes act well on auto immune disorders [27].

CONCLUSION

Suhani would have been alive today if these drugs were used on her. Homoeopathy has already proved its efficacy in COVID 19 in reducing inflammations in the body. Steroids complicated cases during the pandemic while increasing the blood sugar levels & could not ensure that in co-morbidity cases that the inflammation did not spread to the lungs.

Here also, homoeopathy can prevent the interstitial pulmonary complications. Further, the spread into the Upper Respiratory Tract can also be avoided.

In this rare disease, a holistic approach has to be followed as it has multi system involvement. Homoeopathy follows this holistic approach & can be a great boon if integrated into the policy of rare diseases.

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Declaration

The lead author declares that the Homoeopathic protocol given here is only suggestive in nature.

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