

Role of Homoeopathy in Treatment and Prevention of Acute Infectious and Contagious Diseases

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Abstract: Acute infectious and contagious diseases have historically posed a significant challenge to public health, particularly in times when modern antibiotics and vaccines were unavailable. Homoeopathy, founded by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, has played a notable role in both the treatment and prevention of epidemics such as cholera, influenza, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and plague. Through individualized prescriptions and the concept of genus epidemicus, homoeopathy has shown effectiveness in controlling morbidity and mortality during various outbreaks. This article reviews the role of homoeopathy in the treatment and prevention of acute infectious diseases, emphasizing historical evidence, repertorial references, principles of case management, prophylaxis, and the scope of homoeopathy in today's context.

Introduction

Acute infectious and contagious diseases are characterized by rapid onset, high infectivity, and potential for epidemic spread. Historically, these diseases were associated with significant mortality, especially before the advent of antibiotics and vaccinations. Homoeopathy emerged during this period and provided remarkable results in managing epidemics, demonstrating its preventive as well as curative power. Hahnemann introduced the idea of identifying the genus epidemicus a remedy or group of remedies most suited to the majority of cases in a given epidemic¹.

Principles of Homoeopathic Approach in Infectious Diseases

1. Individualization of Cases – Remedies are prescribed based on the totality of characteristic symptoms, not merely the diagnosis².
2. Genus Epidemicus – A preventive and curative remedy for a majority of cases in a given epidemic¹.
3. Minimum Dose – Administered in potentized form, ensuring safety and efficacy without side effects³.
4. Holistic Perspective – Focus on strengthening the vital force to combat the infectious agent².

Historical Evidence of Homoeopathy in Epidemics

- Cholera Epidemics (1831–1854): Reports from Europe and India demonstrated reduced mortality under homoeopathic treatment (7–10%) compared to conventional methods (40–60%). Remedies like Camphora, Veratrum album, and Cuprum metallicum were widely used⁴.
- Scarlet Fever (1801): Hahnemann successfully used Belladonna as both treatment and prophylactic. Mortality was dramatically reduced in areas where it was administered¹.
- Spanish Flu (1918): Homoeopathic hospitals reported mortality rates of 1–3% compared to 30–40% under conventional treatment. Gelsemium, Bryonia, and Arsenicum album were most effective⁵.
- Diphtheria and Whooping Cough: Homoeopathy played a preventive role with remedies like Mercurius cyanatus, Drosera, and Belladonna⁶.
- Recent Epidemics: Homoeopathy has been applied in Dengue, Chikungunya, and Influenza outbreaks in India and other countries with supportive results⁷.

Repertorial Reference of Common Infectious and Contagious Diseases

Disease	Common Remedies (Repertorial Reference)	Remarks
Cholera	Camphora, Veratrum album, Cuprum metallicum (<i>Kent's Repertory – Generalities, Collapse; Boenninghausen's Therapeutic Pocket Book – Stool, profuse</i>) ^{2,3}	Historically used in 1831 cholera epidemic with lower mortality ⁴ .
Influenza (Flu)	Gelsemium, Bryonia, Arsenicum album, Eupatorium perfoliatum (<i>Kent – Fever, Influenza; Murphy's Repertory – Respiratory, influenza</i>) ^{2,8}	Reduced mortality during 1918 Spanish Flu ⁵ .
Dengue Fever	Eupatorium perfoliatum, Rhus toxicodendron, Phosphorus (Murphy's Repertory – Fever, Bone pains; Boericke – Generalities, Hemorrhage) ⁸	Successfully used in 1996 India outbreak ⁷ .
Typhoid Fever	Baptisia, Arsenicum album, Bryonia, Rhus tox (Kent – Mind, Delirium; Generalities, Fever, Typhoid) ²	Baptisia often used for prostration and offensive discharges ⁶ .
Diphtheria	Mercurius cyanatus, Apis mellifica, Lachesis, Kali bichromicum (Kent – Throat, Diphtheria; Boericke – Throat complaints) ²	Used historically before antibiotics with reduced mortality ⁶ .
Measles	Pulsatilla, Morbillinum, Bryonia, Belladonna (Kent – Skin, Eruptions, Measles; Boenninghausen – Catarrhal fever) ^{2,3}	Pulsatilla for complicated catarrhal states ⁶ .
Whooping Cough	Drosera, Cuprum metallicum, Ipecacuanha (Kent – Respiration, Cough, Whooping) ²	Drosera considered the leading remedy ⁶ .
COVID-19 (Pandemic)	Arsenicum album, Bryonia, Gelsemium, Antimonium tart (AYUSH Advisory 2020; Murphy's Repertory – Pneumonia, Dyspnoea) ^{8,9}	Used as prophylactic (Arsenicum album 30C) in several countries ⁹ .

Preventive Role of Homoeopathy

- *Belladonna* proved prophylactic in Scarlet Fever (Hahnemann, 1801)¹.
- *Eupatorium perfoliatum* used successfully as *genus epidemicus* in Dengue outbreaks⁷.
- *Arsenicum album 30C* recommended by Ministry of AYUSH during COVID-19 pandemic as a preventive⁹.

Scope in the Modern Era

Homoeopathy can serve as an adjunct to conventional treatment in acute infectious diseases and has potential for mass prophylaxis in epidemics where vaccination or antibiotics are limited^{7,9}. It offers supportive treatment in reducing complications, improving recovery, and lowering mortality, while encouraging integrative healthcare approaches, especially in resource-limited countries⁵.

Challenges and Research Needs

Large-scale, evidence-based clinical studies are needed to validate homoeopathic prophylaxis⁹. Integration with public health systems requires strong documentation and standardization. Bridging the gap between traditional use and modern scientific validation remains a critical challenge⁷.

Conclusion

Homoeopathy has historically demonstrated significant value in the treatment and prevention of acute infectious and contagious diseases. Through individualized prescriptions and the concept of *genus epidemicus*, it has contributed to lowering mortality in major epidemics^{1,4,5}. With repertorial references supporting remedy selection, homoeopathy continues to play a relevant role in epidemic preparedness and public health, particularly in settings where conventional resources are limited^{7,9}.

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