



STUDY OF CLINICAL BENEFITS OF HOMOEOPATHY IN RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

- 1.Dr. Tanushree Dasgupta**, P.G. Scholar, Department of Materia Medica, State National Homoeopathic medical College and Hospital, Lucknow
- 2.Dr. Shilpee**, P.G. Scholar, Department of Organon of Medicine and Homoeopathic Philosophy, State National Homoeopathic medical College and Hospital, Lucknow
- 3.Dr. Anuradha Anand**, P.G. Scholar, Department of Materia Medica, State National Homoeopathic medical College and Hospital, Lucknow
- 4.Dr. Rahul Verma**, P.G. Scholar, Department of Organon of Medicine and Homoeopathic Philosophy, State National Homoeopathic medical College and Hospital, Lucknow
- 5. Dr Meenakshi**, P.G. Scholar, Department of Materia Medica, State National Homoeopathic medical College and Hospital, Lucknow

ABSTRACT –Rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory condition. It is a systemic disease which comes under autoimmune disorder in which one’s own body cells attacks and destroys its own cells. Rheumatoid arthritis manifests as polyarthritis which affects several small and large joints. It mainly affects the lining of the joints leading to tenderness and painful swelling of joints. In long run this causes erosion of bones thus leading to deformity.

KEYWORDS –Rheumatoid arthritis, pain, inflammation, joints, homoeopathy, individualization

INTRODUCTION –Rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory condition which causes pain and swelling in joints and leads to deformity of bones. It happens when human body’s own immune system attacks the lining of the joints called as synovial membrane. RA generally attacks many joints at a time causing pain and tenderness¹. The most common joints which gets affected is hands, wrists and knees, sometimes ankles also. As the synovium gets inflamed, the affected joints gets deformed after years of erosion².

PREVALENCE –The prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis in India is estimated to be 0.7%. While globally it is estimated to be 0.46%. Studies show that women are three times more prone to rheumatoid arthritis than men. Rheumatoid arthritis occurs in about 5 out of 1000 people. The age group most commonly involved is 30-50 year of age^{1,3}.

ETIOLOGY –

Although rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease, the exact cause is still not known, many factors may contribute. Genetic predispositions is said to be main cause behind RA, localized to a shared epitope in the HLA-DRB1 locus of class II histocompatibility antigens³.

Other factors involved are³-

- Genetic disposition
- Immune response i.e. an immunological reaction in body
- Destruction of cartilages involved in articulation
- Prolonged extension of an inflammatory process already present in body
- Presence of rheumatoid factor in body
- Presence of inflammatory process in joints and extra articular areas

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS -

Various abnormal immune complexes are produced by synovial lining of articular joints and from blood vessels which are inflamed. Plasma cells produce antibodies like rheumatoid factor [RF], anticyclic citrullinated peptide [anti-CCP] antibody) that make up these complexes. In early course of disease macrophages migrate to the affected synovium¹. CD4+ T type cell lymphocytes infiltrate the synovial membrane lining. Macrophages and lymphocytes produce pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines. Released inflammatory mediators and various enzymes contribute to the systemic and joint manifestations of rheumatoid arthritis, including cartilage and bone destruction⁴.

Rheumatoid nodules develop in about 30% of patients with rheumatoid arthritis. They are granulomas consisting of a central necrotic area surrounded by histiocytic, plasma cells. Nodules can also develop in visceral organs. There is early pannus formation which is a sheet of inflammatory granulation which spreads to synovial lining⁴.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS^{4,5} –

- Joints of hands are primarily involved with redness, swelling and tenderness present.
- Swan neck deformity can be present in RA where proximal interphalangeal joint is hyperextend while distal interphalangeal joint is flexed.
- Mallet finger- where distal interphalangeal joint is flexed, preventing it's extension.
- There can be persistent hyperextension of distal interphalangeal joint of thumb.
- Typically presents with polyarticular symmetrical joint pain with stiffness, swelling mostly involving the small joints in the beginning.
- The onset is usually insidious, accompanied by anorexia, weakness, or fatigue.
- Patients usually complains of early morning stiffness which last for more than one hour .

INVESTIGATION^{1,4,5} –

- Markers of inflammation like ESR , C – reactive protein are elevated
- RA FACTOR is positive
- X ray is usually done to see if there is any joint damage

BLOOD TEST–

- RA FACTOR
- Anti- citrullinated protein antibody
- Erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR)
- C- Reactive protein (CRP)

DIAGNOSIS –

- X-ray-; X-rays of hands and feet are generally performed.
- Abdominal Ultrasound and Pelvic Ultrasounds.
- Magnetic resonance imaging (M.R.I.): This imaging test uses a magnetic field to produce detailed pictures.
- Computed Tomography (C.T.)scan: This specialized x-ray study allows careful evaluation of the affected part⁵.

PROGNOSIS –

With early diagnosis the rate of damage to joint and cartilages can be decreased. If left untreated, the mortality rate of RA is high as it causes damage to joints in 80-85% of patients. Homoeopathic treatment helps in reducing the severity of symptoms⁵.

HOMOEOPATHIC APPROACH TO RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS –

Homoeopathy works on individualization that is every person, every medicine is unique in itself. After case taking, individualized medicine is prescribed to patients based on its totality of symptoms^{6,7}. There are various factors which can trigger the symptoms of RA including genetic, emotional, social and environmental factors. Conventional treatment includes NSAID and anti Rheumatic drugs which have their adverse effects in long run⁸. Homoeopathy through its law of similia not only improves the symptoms of patients but also improves their quality of life.

HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICINES IN RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS^{9,10,11} –

1. BELLADONNA –indicated in acute stage of arthritis. There is presence of redness, swelling and tenderness in joint with severe shooting pain. Pain is aggravated by cold and ameliorate by warmth.
2. BRYONIA- Pain is of stitching type. Small joints are most commonly involved with intense pain and redness. Pain is aggravated by least motion and pressure and ameliorate from rest .
3. BENZOIC ACID- This medicine is indicated in patients with uric acid diathesis. Painful nodosities with offensive urine is characteristic of this medicine .
4. LEDUM PAL- Rheumatic pain is of ascending type. Small joints are swollen and painful. Pain in soles with easy spraining of ankles
5. APIS MILLIFICA – Acute pain in joints with intense burning and redness in joints. Joints are swollen and looks shiny.
6. FORMICA RUFA- Rheumatic and arthritic pain which is better by pressure and worse from motion. Gout complaint with formation of painful nodosities. Muscles feel strained and torn accompanied by restlessness.
7. GUAIACUM- Rheumatism affecting the small joints mainly fingers and wrist. Pain is aggravated from warmth and ameliorate from cold application.

8. CAUSTICUM- Pain in multiple joints which can be accompanied by unsteady gait and urinary complaints. Rheumatic pains are better by warmth.
9. CALCAREA FLOURICA- Pain is unbearable with history of injury to joints. Formation of nodosities which are painful and tender. Joints can be deformed. Better by warmth and motion
10. PULSATILLA - Pain shifts from one joint to another. Character of pain also changes. Pain is not localised to one spot. Pain is worse from heat, warmth and ameliorate from cold and fresh air.
11. COLCHICUM- Arthritis worse from warm and wet weather, change of climate. Most common joints affected are small joints of hands and fingers. Pain is worse from slightest motion.
12. RHUS TOX –Pain and stiffness of joints is worst in morning which is unbearable in first movement but ameliorates by constant motion. Tearing type of pain is present in tendons and ligaments which is ameliorated by warmth.

RUBRICS RELATED TO RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS^{12,13,14} –

- GENERALS- Autoimmune diseases
- GENERALS- Joint; complaints of
- GENERAL – Joints; complaints of; synovial membranes
- GENERAL – Nodosities
- GENERAL – Inflammation – joints ; of
- GENERAL – BONES; complaints of
- EXTREMITIES- Arthritic nodosities
- EXTREMITIES- Arthritis deformans
- EXTREMITIES- PAIN- joints- Rheumatic

CONCLUSION –

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune inflammatory disease which has a high mortality rate. It effects articular joints as well as extra articular areas. If diagnosed early and treated correctly course of disease and it's symptoms can be improved. Homoeopathy through its individualized approach helps patients in relief of symptoms in high degree. The severity and duration of disease depends on various factor . Homoeopathic medicine should be based on law of similia.

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