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REVIEW ARTICLE

HOLISTIC APPROACH OF HOMOEOPATHY IN GERD i.e. GASTRO ESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISORDER

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Abstract

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Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is generally defined as a chronic relapsing condition in which the reflux of stomach content into the oesophagus and beyond provokes symptoms and/or complications. About 20-40% of the population has been encountered reflux like symptoms during a 6-12 month period with variable intensity and frequency. Acid plays the major role in most patients affected by GERD and the severity of reflux oesophagitis as well as the prevalence of its complications.

INTRODUCTION

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) or gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD) is one of the upper gastrointestinal chronic diseases where stomach content persistently and regularly flows up into the esophagus, resulting in symptoms and/or complications.

Pathophysiology

The mechanisms involved in the pathogenesis of GERD are multiple and include:

- A. Motor abnormalities, such as :
- Impaired lower oesophageal sphincter (LES) resting tone,
 - Transient LES relaxations (TLESR),

- Impaired oesophageal acid clearance and delayed gastric emptying;

B. Anatomical factors, such as hiatal hernia;

C. Visceral hypersensitivity;

D. Impaired mucosal resistance.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Symptoms include dental corrosion, dysphagia, heartburn, odynophagia, regurgitation, non-cardiac chest pain, extraesophageal symptoms such as chronic cough, hoarseness, reflux-induced laryngitis, or asthma.

On the long term, and when not treated, complications such as esophagitis, esophageal stricture, and Barrett's esophagus may arise.

RISK FACTORS

Acid reflux is due to poor closure of the lower esophageal sphincter, which is at the junction between the stomach and the esophagus. The risk factors include obesity, pregnancy, smoking, hiatal hernia, and taking certain medications. Medications may cause or worsen the disease are benzodiazepines, calcium channel blockers, tricyclic antidepressants, NSAIDs, and certain asthma medicines.

TREATMENT

The management of GERD include lifestyle changes, medications, and sometimes surgery if not improving with the first two measures.

A. Lifestyle changes include:

- Not lying down for three hours after eating,
- lying down on the left side,
- raising the pillow/bedhead height,
- losing weight, and
- Stopping smoking.
- Foods that may precipitate GERD symptoms and could be avoided include coffee, alcohol, chocolate, fatty foods, acidic foods, and spicy foods.

B. Medications include:

- Antacids,
- H₂ Receptor Blockers,
- Proton Pump Inhibitors, And
- Prokinetics

C. Surgery:

Nissen fundoplication- In this procedure, the upper part of the stomach is wrapped around the lower esophageal sphincter to strengthen the sphincter and prevent acid reflux and to repair a hiatal hernia

INVESTIGATION:

1. Upper gastrointestinal endoscopy
2. Contrast barium study
3. PH monitoring
4. Gastroesophagealscintigraphy
5. Multichannel impedance pH monitoring
6. Manometry

HOMOEOPATHIC VIEW

Hahnemann considered man as a composite being, a multidimensional entity, a unit of life, consciousness with intelligence and stated, 'it is the patient who is sick and not the organs'. Considering the psychosomatic relationship in GERD, a detailed and careful case taking is necessary, which helps in person diagnosis, disease diagnosis and management of the case, both in general as well as therapeutic planning. Thus, Homoeopathy has good vital role in treating GERD.

In the "The Friend of Health" (1792) Hahnemann says –"In its healthy state the human stomach only needs an instinct to direct us to certain classes of food, which we should partake of from time to time if we would continue in right good health i.e. the salivary glands, the stomach, the pancreas and the liver all pour out their secretions abundantly, and thus produce the conditions essential to healthy digestion".

Our master Dr. Hahnemann has given specific diet and mode of living for the patients who are under homoeopathic treatment for a chronic disease. This was illustrated detail in his theory of chronic diseases.

Hahnemann says, "Everything that hinders the cure must also in these cases

removed". The following guidelines given by Dr. Hahnemann are as follows:

Diet

- Lower class, there need be no very strict limitations
- Limit the condiments of onion and pepper with his meager diet
- Coffee has in great part the injurious effects on the healthy body. In people up to 30 years of age it can be stopped immediately and absolutely. In people above 30 years it should be reduced gradually and then stopped
- Rye or wheat, roasted like coffee in a drum and then boiled and prepared like coffee, has both in smell and much resemblance of coffee. This can be used as an alternative
- Wine – with chronic patients it will be hardly ever necessary to altogether forbid it. To do also would produce a sudden sinking of their strength and an obstruction to their cure and might even endanger their life. The concentration of wine should be reduced gradually by mixing with equal parts of water. Later 5 to 6 parts of water can be mixed and it can be used regularly as a health drink
- Giving up of whisky and brandy is necessary. A small portion of good, pure wine should be used instead of it for a little while, and then

concentration of the wine should be reduced as before

- The permission of beer is quite questionable. Honest physician cannot allow his patient to drink whatsoever is called beer
- Dishes containing vinegar or citric acid are injurious to chronic patients
- Very acid fruits are to be allowed in very small quantity and sweet fruits only in moderate quantity
- Those who have with weak stomachs – avoid cinnamon, cloves, amonnum, pepper, ginger and bitter substances
- With abdominal troubles – avoid vegetables causing flatulency
- Beef and good wheat – bread or rye – bread together with cow's milk and a moderate use of fresh butter seem to be the most natural and harmless food for men
- Only little salt should be used
- Pickled and smoked meats should be rarely used
- Sprinkling chopped raw herbs on soups, putting pot-herbs into vegetables and eating old rancid cheese must be avoided
- Use of better quality of fish, prepared by boiling and used sparingly with sauces not much spiced
- Use of tobacco should be carefully considered. Smoking is some cases of chronic disease may be permitted.

But smoking should be always limited and more so if the mental activity, sleep, digestion or the evacuations are defective

- Snuff is a great hindrance in the cure of chronic disease.

Dr. Hahnemann In aphorism 5 of Organon of Medicine stated:

“Useful to the physician in assisting him to cure are the particulars of the most probable exciting cause of the acute disease, as also the most significant points in the whole history of the chronic disease, to enable him to discover the fundamental cause, which is generally due to a chronic miasm. In these investigations, the ascertainable physical constitution of the patient (especially when the disease is chronic), his moral and intellectual character, his occupation, mode of living and habits, his social and domestic relations, his age, sexual function, &c., are to be taken into consideration”.

In a footnote to paragraph 7, Hahnemann writes:

“It is not necessary to say that every intelligent physician would first remove this exciting or maintaining cause, where it exists; the indisposition thereupon generally ceases spontaneously”

In aphorism 150 of Organon of medicine, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann describes indisposition as:

“By indisposition Hahnemann means a slight alteration of health manifested by one or more trivial symptoms, which a slight alteration in the diet and regimen will usually suffice to dispel; whereas in cases of disease proper the vital force cannot adjust itself automatically, even with adequate hygienic and dietetic measures, but requires a specific stimulus in the form of drugs for its readjustment and restoration of balance”

In aphorism 259 – 263 of organon of medicine, Dr. Hahnemann describes diet and regimen in acute and chronic diseases as:

- Proper hygienic and dietetic measures must be taken recourse to before administration of remedial drugs which are used as specific stimuli to rouse the vital force to react against the morbid agents and overcome their noxious influences.

Hahnemann’s ‘Chronic Diseases’ also highlights the importance of healthy lifestyle. In the treatment part he says about the removal of all hurtful influences that can affect the cure. Nourishing and strengthening diet, regime and mode of living are having close relation with the outcome of the treatment.

According to Richard Hugh’s, similarity between disease and drug-action should be Generic, Specific and

Individual. The patients constitution and temperament, his mental and emotional state, the conditions of aggravation and amelioration presented by his sufferings, the side of the body affected and the time of day or night at which his symptoms are more pronounced, these elements helps to find out individual similarity. Here all the three points are equally important in finding the simile.

Stuart close explained the cause of disease in his “the genius of Homoeopathy” states that “emotional causes such as continued anxiety, worry, vexation, wrongs and frequent occurrence of fear and fright in time destroys the corporeal health often to a great degree. Certain stresses are thereby set up that discharge themselves along the various peripheral nerves leading to development of somatic symptoms or certainly in the mind leading to changes in the patient’s personality”.

The treatment of GERD in conventional medicine primarily revolves around the treatment of symptoms. The symptoms may be suppressed for some time but eventually come back sooner or later. This results in a vicious cycle where the treatment becomes less and less effective over time. Homeopathy, on the other hand, has an approach of trying to correct the problems from the root and over time, remove the very cause that

results in the problem.

HOMOEOPATHIC THERAPEUTICS

- **Abies Nigra** - Most of the symptoms are associated with the gastric disturbances. *In dyspeptic troubles of the aged*, with functional heart symptoms; also after tea or tobacco. *Constipation. Pain in stomach always comes on after eating.* Sensation of a lump that hurts, *as if a hard-boiled egg had lodged in cardiac end of stomach*; continual distressing constriction just above the pit of the stomach, as if everything were knotted up. Total loss of appetite in morning, but great craving for food at noon and night. Offensive breath. Eructations.
- **Anacardium Orientale** - Weak digestion, with fullness and distention. *Empty feeling in stomach.* Eructation, nausea, vomiting. *Eating relieves the Anacardium dyspepsia.* Apt to choke when eating or drinking. Swallows food and drinks hastily. *Pain as if dull plug were pressed into intestines.* Rumbling, pinching, and griping. **Modalities.**--*Worse*, on application of hot water. *Better*, from eating. When lying on side, from rubbing
- **Kalium Bichromicum** - Symptoms are worse in the morning; *pains migrate quickly*, rheumatic and gastric symptoms alternate. Nausea and vomiting after beer. Load immediately

after eating. Feels as if digestion had stopped. Dilatation of stomach. Stitches in region of liver and spleen and through to spine. Dislikes water. Cannot digest meat. Desire for beer and acids. Gastric symptoms are relieved after eating, and the rheumatic symptoms reappear. Vomiting of bright yellow water. Cutting pain in abdomen, soon after eating. Chronic intestinal ulceration. **Modalities.**--*Better*, from heat. *Worse*, beer, morning, hot weather, undressing.

- **Phosphorus** - *Suddenness* of symptoms, sudden prostration, faints, sweats, shooting pains, etc. Ill effects of iodine and excessive use of salt; worse, *lying on left side.* Sour taste and sour eructations after every meal. Belching large quantities of wind, after eating. *Throws up ingesta by the mouthfuls.* Vomiting; *water is thrown up as soon as it gets warm in the stomach.* Cardiac opening seems contracted, too narrow; the food scarcely swallowed, comes up again. Pain in stomach; relieved by cold food, ices. Region of stomach painful to touch, or on walking. Inflammation of stomach, with burning extending to throat and bowels. *Bad effects of eating too much salt.* A very weak, *empty, gone sensation* felt in whole abdominal cavity. **Modalities.**--*Worse*,

touch; physical or mental exertion; twilight; warm food or drink; change of weather, from getting wet in hot weather; evening; lying on left or painful side; during a thunder-storm; ascending stairs. **Better**, in dark, lying on right side, cold food; cold; open air; washing with col water; sleep.

- **Lycopodium Clavatum-** Dyspepsia due to farinaceous and fermentable food, cabbage, beans, etc. Excessive hunger. Aversion to bread, etc. Desire for sweet things. **Food tastes sour**. Sour eructations. Great weakness of digestion. Bulimia, with much bloating. After eating, pressure in stomach, with bitter taste in mouth. **Eating ever so little creates fullness**. Hiccough. **Incomplete burning eructations rise only to pharynx there burn for hours**. Likes to take food and drink hot. Sinking sensation; worse night. Immediately after a light meal, abdomen is **bloated, full**. Constant sense of fermentation in abdomen, like yeast working; upper left side. Hernia, right side. **Modalities.--Worse**, right side, from right to left, from above downward, 4 to 8 pm; from heat or warm room, hot air, bed. Warm applications, except throat and stomach which are better from warm drinks. **Better**, by **motion**, after midnight

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