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## REVIEW ARTICLE

### SCOPE OF HOMOEOPATHY IN ALCOHOLISM AND ADDICTION

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#### Abstract

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Substance abuse is defined as excessive use of substances like alcohol, tobacco, any other drug that is harmful to oneself, society, or both. Alcohol is a detrimental and intoxicating chemical that can lead to addiction. In today's society for the majority of the population, alcoholic beverages are an inevitable component of the social gathering. Alcohol consumption is linked to an increased risk of acquiring serious non-communicable illnesses such liver cirrhosis, cardiovascular diseases and several malignancies as well as mental and behavioral disorders, including alcohol dependency. The Homoeopathic literature has a wide range of medicines for the treatment of alcoholism, including addiction and withdrawal.

#### INTRODUCTION

“The first thing in the human personality that dissolves in alcohol is Dignity.”

Alcoholism and addiction is defined by alcohol dependence, which is the body's physical and mental inability to stop drinking and the presence of alcohol

cravings.<sup>[1]</sup> DSM-V amalgamates the two DSM-IV disorders of alcohol abuse and dependence into a single condition named as alcohol use disorder (AUD), with mild, moderate, and severe sub-classifications.<sup>[2]</sup> This is particularly noticeable in social scenarios with lots of exposure and social impact, both nationally and globally, where alcohol is regularly used while socializing.<sup>[3]</sup> In his work on Alcoholism, Dr. Monin says that "the desire for drink is a kind of mental perversion beyond the rational resources of morals and medicine". The thirty-five varieties of alcoholic beverages consumed by the world's various cultures create significantly varied psychological impacts.<sup>[4]</sup>

Globally, 3 million deaths are caused by alcohol use each year, along with millions of disabilities and deteriorating health. Overall, 5.1% of the global burden of disease is attributed to hazardous alcohol usage. Alcohol abuse accounts for 7.1% and 2.2% of the worldwide burden of disease in males and females, respectively. Alcohol is a major cause for premature death and disability among people aged 15 to 49 years, accounting for 10% of all fatalities in this age spectrum.<sup>[3]</sup>

An individual is said to be inebriated by alcohol if the Blood Alcohol Concentration > 5.4-7.4 mmol/L. Consuming alcohol on a regular basis can

lead to damage all vital organs of the body like brain, heart, liver, pancreas and immune system as well as mental illness like delirium tremens, hallucinations and dementia.<sup>[2]</sup> Alcohol consumption in pregnancy can be dangerous for fetus, it can lead fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, it can be prevented by avoiding the alcohol consumption while pregnancy and while trying to conceive.<sup>[5]</sup>

## CAUSES

1. **Genetic factors:** It runs in families; offspring of alcoholics consume four times as much as those of non-alcoholics. As a consequence, if the father is an alcoholic, the children are at a higher risk.
2. **Psychological:** Poor stress management skills, loneliness, desire to escape from reality, a sense of adventure, pleasure seeking. Low frustration tolerance, feelings of inadequacy. Childhood psychological trauma as a result of a strained parent-child relationship. Inferiority, low self-esteem, poor impulse control. Disorders such as sadness, depression, anxiety, and phobia are apt to engaging in alcohol as an escape.
3. **Personality disorders:** Persons with super ego turn to alcoholics to diminish their stress, Childhood

history of antisocial personality disorder, Common in cyclothymic personalities.

4. **Social factors:** Influence of bad company, cinemas, literature. Sudden loss in property or closed ones. Peer pressure, urbanization, religious reasons, unemployment To forget problems of life. Unhealthy environment, Parental disharmony.
5. **Occupational:** Heavy vehicle drivers, manual workers, laborers. Physical exhaustion or hard worker.
6. **Economic causes:** Poverty, Unemployment
7. **Others:** Marital disharmony, Easy availability, Free time and boredom, Loneliness <sup>[6]</sup>

## SYMPTOMS

Alcohol addiction can be mild, moderate or severe; it depends on the occurrence of symptoms in individual.

- Weight loss or weight gain
- Being not able to limit the quantity of alcohol consumption
- Loss of memory, Loss of concentration
- Extremely urging for alcohol
- Weakness of immune system
- Insomnia

- Having financial and relationship problems
- Drinking alcohol becomes everyday routine
- **Feelings of withdrawal symptoms** – like nausea, vomiting, perspiration, shaking, hallucinations, and taking alcohol again to avoid these symptoms <sup>[7]</sup>

## Short-Term Effects Of Alcohol On The Brain

Brain makes a complete balance of chemical neurotransmitters for a human body to function properly and systematically. Alcohol intoxication creates disturbances to connectivity and information transmission pathway from brain to the other organs of the body, which can lead multiple adverse mental effects like – confusion, impaired coordination, poor memory, poor motor function activity etc.<sup>[8]</sup>

Heavy drinking may have bad effects on different parts of brain.

- Cerebral cortex is regulating the decision making process and judgmental process of individual, in case of alcohol addiction impairment and slowness of these functions can be seen.
- Hypothalamus and pituitary glands are responsible for regulating the nervous system and hormonal secretions with

proper distribution to the blood stream, in case of heavy alcohol consumption hormonal imbalances and related diseases can be seen.

- Medulla is related to respiration, body temperature and consciousness, those who are alcohol addicted suffers with breathing difficulties, decrease body temperature and loss of consciousness.
- Hippocampus part of brain is related to memory, which supports to make new memories and remember them for a long time, people with alcohol addiction suffers with short term memory.<sup>[8]</sup>

### **Long-Term Effects Of Alcohol On The Brain**

Drinking alcohol for a long time makes it difficult for the brain regions to maintain a balance, and creates alteration in neurotransmitters which leads to difficulty in processing of basic life support functions like body temperature, breathing, blood pressure etc, Heavy drinking for a long time can lead to permanent damage of vital organs like – Liver, Heart, Kidney, digestive system, risk of cancer and also damage the white matter in the brain which lead to brain shrinkage, cognitive impairment like: speech, memory, concentration, learning ability and this can lead dementia.

**Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome (aka Wet Brain)** - Person who is having large quantity of alcohol for a long period of time are having thiamine deficiency, and develop a serious neurological disorder called Wernicke- Korsakoff Syndrome, this includes two different stages namely, Wernicke encephalopathy and Korsakoff amnesic syndrome sometimes referred to as “wet brain.” This disorder may cause continue mental confusion, difficult eye movement, coordination impairment, learning and memory problems.<sup>[8]</sup>

**Alcohol Poisoning Symptoms** - Mental confusion, Seizure episodes, Unconsciousness, Paralysis, Coma, Respiratory suppression, In severe cases, it leads to death.<sup>[8]</sup>

### **MAJOR COMPLICATION**

1. Liver cirrhosis
2. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: when a pregnant women consumes alcohol
3. Kidney failure
4. Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome
5. Cancer of gastrointestinal tract
6. Mental illness like - Depression, anxiety, dementia

### **ROLE OF HOMOEOPATHY**

The homoeopathic management pertains to counselling, sufficient anti-addiction measures, and suitable remedies. In addition to homoeopathic medicines, the body requires supporting measures to

detoxify the effects of alcohol, and a healthy diet is necessary to make up for any nutritional shortages. A few lifestyle adjustments will also aid in the cessation of alcoholism. [4] According to aphorism 221 of the 6th edition of the Organon of Medicine, acute medicines are used to cure acute mental disorders like insanity brought on by the overuse of alcoholic beverages that produce transient latent psora explosion. [9] In their first phases, these illnesses are caused by psoric miasm, and they may subsequently progress to syphilitic miasm. [10]

There are various remedies for alcoholism in the Homoeopathic system that may be effective if they are prescribed according to the totality of the physical and psychical symptoms in the individual to be treated. *Angelica, Antimonium tartaricum, Arsenicum album, Avena sativa, Apocynum cannabinum, Camphor, Capsicum annum, Carboneum sulph, Cardus marianus, Coffea cruda, Crotalus horridus, Chimaphila umbellata China officinalis, Gelsemium sempervirens, Hepar sulph, Petroleum, Pulsatilla, Quercus glandium spiritus, Ranunculus bulbosus, Sterculia, Sulphuric acid, Secale cornutum* etc are effective in the management of alcoholism and following medicines are majorly used- [4] [11]

1. ***Nux vomica***- Before and during drunkenness, tendency to envy, to jealousy, to suicide by shooting or stabbing. Easily made drunk by a small quantity of alcohol. Longing for red wine, white wine, beer, absinth, rum; persons inclined to get drunk for lack of anything else to do; neurotic men, and women addicted to drunkenness during or after pregnancy. Inclined to constipation, to vomiting, to regurgitations, to difficult digestion. [4]
2. ***Lachesis***- Ill-natured people, hard to get along with. Vicious, revengeful, evil, jealous, envious, and licentious. Predisposed to murder others but unwilling to kill themselves, unless they are driven over by vehicle. Talking constantly before or during drunkenness. Appetite for brandy and absinth. [4]
3. ***Causticum***- Fussy, argumentative, dishonest, and easily moved to tears before and after drinking; excessive enthusiasm prior to and during intoxication; overexcitement before and during drunkenness. Desire for brandy and wine. For ones who have lost their loved and closed ones. Sometimes inclined to theft. Tobacco users. [4]
4. ***Sulphur***- Psoriatics. Sufferers from hemorrhoids. Persons who work and go to sleep slowly with a prolonged but

not refreshing sleep. Slow-going people, getting drunk in secret. Desire for wine and whisky. Mild before and brutal during drunkenness. More intelligent while they are drunk; saying and doing while drunk what they would neither say nor do before. Thoughtless. Inclined to steal and to lie. <sup>[4]</sup> <sup>[11]</sup>

5. ***Calcarea carbonica***- Corpulent, obese people. lacking both the sense of a duty and the willpower to carry it out. Not disposed to be obliging. Having motiveless dislike for certain persons. Inclined to steal and to lie. Sometimes inclined to gamble. Sometimes tight in financial affairs, other times somewhat overspending for oneself or for show. Unable to resist a drink of alcohol due to a lack of willpower. <sup>[4]</sup>
6. ***Opium***- Especially brandy-drinkers. Easily moved to tears after being humiliated when intoxicated. Gay, stupid, sleepy or drowsy after drinking. This remedy suits, those who drink wine in the first instance and cider, beer, ethylic alcohol, or amylic alcohol in the second. <sup>[4]</sup>
7. ***Staphisagria***- for drunkards who have made an abuse of sexual pleasures. Being unnerved, they imagine they can restore themselves by the abuse of alcoholic liquors. Sad before, during and after drunkenness. Inclined to

persecute. Bachelors and immoral husbands. Hypochondriac. Onanism. Jealous. Tobacco users. <sup>[4]</sup>

8. ***Conium maculatum***. — People who drink to "brace up" because they feel lonely, cold, and chilly. Persons who cannot stand continence. Great indifference. Intelligence not as yet thoroughly developed. Adults lacking in reason, like children. Lower back paralysis, particularly in the lower legs, is prone to paraplegia. <sup>[4]</sup> <sup>[11]</sup>
9. ***Magnesia carbonica***- Suits drinkers of mild liquors, those who make very frequent use of dainties and candies. Face livid or scarlet. Sad, taciturn or loquacious. Sleeplessness during the night and sleeps during the day. Speaking continuously while drunk. <sup>[4]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Homoeopathy might be an effective weapon against the adverse effects of alcoholism, whether the issue is acute intoxication, management of withdrawal symptoms, potential cure of the addiction, or even prevention of a genetic predisposition towards alcoholism in the next generation. We hope that homoeopathy will assume its appropriate position in the treatment of alcoholism, avoiding considerable suffering and lowering expenses for family members and society as a whole.

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