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REVIEW ARTICLE

UTILITY OF LESSER KNOWN MEDICINES OF CUCURBITACEAE FAMILY

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Abstract

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Cucurbits are considered as an excellent fruit in nature and have been taken as vegetables and salads for daily consumption. In homoeopathy, many remedies of Cucurbitaceae family are mentioned in various Homoeopathic Materia Medica. The common one being Bryonia alba and Colocynthis, yet there are many remedies in this family which are lesser known or lesser used but still this family is not considered much important medicinally. Hence, this article aims at highlighting those lesser known remedies which can be helpful in daily practice.

INTRODUCTION

Group study is a way in Homoeopathy to study families of remedies. It helps to memorize the most similar remedies quickly and easily. In order to study these families, Homoeopathic materia medica is mainly classified into three kingdoms i.e., Animal

kingdom, Plant kingdom and Mineral kingdom. In which concept of group analysis of plant kingdom is based upon characteristics of the botanical natural orders. In this article we are discussing one of such family from plant kingdom i.e., Cucurbitaceae family.⁽¹⁾

The cucurbitaceae family is also known as cucurbits or gourd family. It is a family of mainly climbing plants consisting of 125 genera and 965 species. Due to the nutritional and medicinal properties of cucurbitaceae plants, the consumption of fruits of this family is very popular among Indians.⁽²⁾

The taste of cucurbitaceae is mostly bitter due to presence of cucurbitacinen (amino acids) and amino acid citrulline is found in seeds of many cucurbitaceae.⁽¹⁾ In ayurveda and folk medicine, plants of this family are used for their several therapeutic values.⁽²⁾ In previous research, it has been found that through different modes of preparation, the plants species of this family are used to heal external burns, abrasions and wounds, and to treat respiratory diseases, diabetes, skin disorders, and also used as diuretic, antipyretics, anti-inflammatory and antiseptic.⁽³⁾

Cucurbitaceae is the largest group of summer vegetable crops which includes cucumber, water melon, musk melon, pumpkin, squashes, tinda, bottle gourd, luffa, bitter gourd, parwal and snake gourd.⁽²⁾

In homoeopathy the important remedies from this group are:⁽¹⁾

- Bryonia alba
- Colocynthis cucumis

- Cephalandra indica
- Coriaria ruscifolia
- Cucurbita pepo
- Cucurbita citrullus
- Elaterium
- Luffa amara
- Luffa bindal
- Luffa actangula
- Momordica balsamina
- Momordica charantia
- Trychosanthes

DOCTRINE OF SIGNATURE :⁽¹⁾

- The cucurbitaceae family are mentally very productive. It can be seen by the fact that when we pick up more fruits from the plants, the more they will grow.
- Due to their hard exterior they can be put aside for longer duration at the time of hardship and shortage for e.g. pumpkins are stored for winter season. Just like they store the nutritional value and sweetness of life for future usage, in the same way they store the bitterness of their deception and indignation.
- This family has huge fruits or roots representing storage for future need. It can be seen by their family oriented nature. They share their savings with others as an investment for future.

- The plants of this family are climbing plants, grow over large distances and they need to be supported and do not root themselves at many places. In the same way, the remedies of these plants have desire to travel but there is homesickness too.

UTILITY OF LESSER KNOWN MEDICINES OF CUCURBITACEAE FAMILY:

1. *CUCURBITA PEPO*:^(1,2,3,4,5)

Common name: Pumpkin, safed kadu, konda

Fruit: It is used to soften the dryness of skin and pimples. It helps to increase the appetite, in the cure of leprosy and purification of blood. Pulp is used for spots on skin.

Seed: it helps in expulsion of pinworms from human body. Great source of nutrients, including minerals, protein and healthy fats.

Leaf: It helps in reducing fever.

CLINICAL:

- In cases of Sea-sickness.
- As its seeds are poisonous for eelworms and flat worms. It is a Good remedy for Tapeworm in children.
- It is useful in cases of Vomiting of pregnancy.

- Immediately after eating, nausea occurs.

2. *CUCURBITA CITRULLUS*:^(3,4)

Common name: watermelon

Fruit: It cleanses kidney and bladder by acting as a diuretic. It is recommended especially in cases of women for fluid retention during menstruation and pregnancy. It helps in reducing asthmatic attack, improving digestion, improving cholesterol level, relieving arthritis symptoms, boosting immunity and wound healing. As a beauty aid, its juice helps in reducing blemishes of skin.

Seed: These are enriched with protein, magnesium, calcium and Potassium.

CLINICAL:

- Painful urination with constriction and pain in back.

3. *CEPHALANDRA INDICA*:⁽⁴⁾

Common name: Telakucha, Bimba, Kanduri Ki-bill, Korai, Kabare-hindi

CLINICAL:

- It is indicated in cases of Diabetes mellitus and insipidus and Glucose in urine.
- It is useful in affections of skin - Boils, abscesses, carbuncles.
- It is indicated in cases of Jaundice, Dropsy and Dysentery.

4. *CORARIA RUSCIFOLIA*:⁽⁵⁾

Common name: Toot-berry, Tupa-kihi or Tutu

CLINICAL:

- It is useful in cases of Delirium tremens, Mania and Loss of memory.
- It is also indicated in cases of Vomiting.

5. ELATERIUM: ^(4,5,6)

Common name: Squinting cucumber

CLINICAL:

- Profuse gushing watery diarrhea of olive green colour with gripping pains in abdomen.
- Copious and watery violent vomiting
- It is indicated for Dropsy, Beriberi and Scurvy.
- Skin – Urticaria, Erysipelas and Scabies
- Joint and nerve complaints – Rheumatism and Sciatica
- Mental disorders due to suppressed malaria.
- Aggravation of complaints by damp weather or standing on damp ground.

6. LUFFA AMARA: ⁽⁴⁾

Common name: Titpolla, Dhamarjab

CLINICAL:

- Enlarged spleen
- Fever
- Congestion of Liver
- Painless diarrhoea and vomiting with burning in body.

7. LUFFA BINDAL: ⁽⁴⁾

Common name: Ghosalata, Debdali, Koshataki

CLINICAL:

- It is indicated for Chronic malaria fever.
- Colic due to gallstone
- Dropsy
- Nasal catarrh – acute and chronic both
- Splenomegaly and Hepatomegaly
- It can be used as external application in cases of Haemorrhoids.

8. LUFFA ACTANGULA: ^(4,7)

Common name: Angled Loofah, Ridged Gourd, Chinese Okra

Fruit: It is useful in cases of spleen enlargement, useful in purification of blood, to destroy worms in the stomach and helpful in cases of premature graying of hair.

Seed: Extraction of oil from seed is useful in treatment of skin affections.

Leaf: The leaves are used for dressing in cases like spleen enlargement, tinea, haemorrhoids and leprosy. It is also helpful in treating dysentery.

Roots: Addition of roots to the milk or water helps in the removal of stones in the kidney.

CLINICAL:

- Restlessness and anxiety with icy coldness of whole body.
- Unquenchable thirst.

9. *MOMORDICA BALSAMINA*:^(4,5)

Common name: Balsam Apple

CLINICAL:

- Splenic flexure of colon shows accumulation of flatus.
- Backache and pain in hypogastrium of gripping and colicky nature with painful and profuse menses.
- It is indicated in cases of Dropsy and Leucorrhœa also.
- It can be used externally for burns and chapped hands.

10. *MOMORDICA CHARANTIA*:^(3,4)

Common name: Bitter gourd, Bitter melon, Karela

Fruit: It has been used as traditional medicine for diabetes in the form of fruit juice. It is effective in wound, burns, itching of skin and leprosy.

Seed: It is helpful in expulsion of intestinal and parasitic worms.

Leaf: It contains antiviral and antibiotic properties, hence can be given to children in cases of cough.

CLINICAL:

- Explosive diarrhea of yellow, watery discharge along with cramps, increased thirst and marked weakness.

- Nausea and vomiting with cholera like symptoms.

11. *TRICHOSANTHES DIOICA*:^(2,3,4)

Common name: Snakegourd, Patola, Parwal, Parver, Kombu-pudalai, Kammupotla

Fruit: It helps in reducing blood sugar and cholesterol levels. It is also helpful in the treatment of jaundice and alcoholism.

Leaf: Juice can be taken as tonic to febrifuge and in sub acute case of liver and spleen enlargement, diseases of skin and oedema.

Root: Helpful in curing boils, headaches, bronchitis.

CLINICAL:

- Fever – Malaria fever - acute and chronic both and Kala-azar. It can be used in all types of fever where bilious symptoms predominate.
- Burning over whole body with thirst and craving for cold drinks.
- Prostration, restlessness and sleepiness.
- Profuse nausea, vomiting and stools during Cholera.
- It is indicated in cases of Enlarged Liver and enlarged Spleen with Jaundice.
- Characteristic symptoms for administration of this medicine are Headache, Waterbrash, Nausea and smarting pain after defecation.

CONCLUSION

A wide range of remedies are present in cucurbitaceae family but some remedies are lacking in clinical verification. Hence, this article will help in understanding these remedies and further help in their implementation in day to day practice. This work is a small attempt to explore the hidden treasure of this family from various homoeopathic literatures that can enhance the knowledge of Homoeopathic Materia Medica which will further help in improving our clinical practice.

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