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Review Article

PROPHYLACTIC ASPECT OF HOMOEOPATHY AN OVERVIEW FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN ERA

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ABSTRACT

The age old aphorism that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" crystallizes the essence of concept of prevention of diseases. Prevention is the most effective way to reduce the disease burden in a community. Preservation of the health, promotion of health, prolongation of life and minimization of the sufferings can be achieved through prevention. From the very earliest period of the history of medicine until the most recent times, search for absolute preventives of diseases has always occupied a large share of attention of those who occupied themselves with medical art. In recent times attempts have been made-with more or less success - to discover prophylactics. One of the most noted and successful of these is the introduction of vaccination by Jenner, in 1798, as prophylactic of small pox which worked to and marvelous extent. In fact it has almost wiped out small pox from the face of the earth. Hygienic prophylactics have greatly helped to reduce the incidence of diseases. Rule that guides homoeopathic physicians to the selection of remedy should also lead him to the discovery of prophylactic. In this article, a thorough study from Hahnemanian period to modern period being made and some researches highlighted to justify Homeopathic Prophylaxis.

KEYWORDS: Prophylactic, Homoeopathy, Prevention, Prophylaxis.

INTRODUCTION

Hahnemann- the father of Homoeopathy has dreamt the scope of prevention long before the modern medical science as expressed in sec 4- "He is likewise a preserver of health if he knows the things that derange health and cause disease, and how to remove them from persons in health." He forbade visiting of patients in order to prevent the propagation of infectious diseases. Regarding this Hahnemann himself published a famous book "The friend of Health" in two volumes in the year 1792 and 1795 respectively.[1] Homoeopathy is a time-tested two-century old empirical system of healing. It is a natural method of treatment, aimed at curbing a disease holistically. naturally. gently permanently. It is based on the natural law of healing 'Similia Similibus Curentur', which means 'let likes be treated by likes'.

Prophylactics are homoeopathic remedies used for disease prevention. The process is called homoeopathic immunization or Homoeoprophylaxis. Just as the Law of Similar is used to choose remedies for treatment, it is also applied for prevention. Remedies not only treat symptoms in the sick similar to those they produce in the healthy, but prevent similar symptoms in the well. This unique method of treatment has long been contributing in public health

through curative, preventive and promotive care. The preventive aspect of Homoeopathy is well known, and historically, Homoeopathy has reportedly been used for prevention during the epidemics of cholera, Spanish influenza, yellow fever, scarlet fever, diphtheria, typhoid etc.^[2]

Levels of Prevention[3]

The objective of preventive medicine is to intercept or "oppose" the disease process in man or community. This may be done at various levels in the course of the natural history of the disease. In this regard, according to allopathic science there are five levels at prevention which are as follows: 1. Health promotion, 2. Specific protection, 3. Early diagnosis and treatment 4. Disability limitation 5. Rehabilitation

Health Promotion

The first level of prevention, health promotion is not directed at any particular disease, but is intended to improve the general health and well-being of the individual and the community. These are 1. Adequate nutrition, provision of sanitary environment- safe water supply, facilities for the safe disposal of excreta and other wastes, healthful housing, control of insects and rodents, provision of

recreation facilities etc., Personal hygiene, Health education, marriage counseling, sex education, physical education, periodic health screening, improvement of the standard of living people, genetic counseling etc.

Hahnemannian view

In Sec. 77, Hahnemann states "those diseases are inappropriately named chronic, which person incur who expose themselves continually to avoidable noxious influences, who are in the habit of indulging in injurious liquors or ailments, are addicted to dissipation of many kinds which undermine the health, who undergo prolonged abstinence from things that are necessary for the support of life, who reside in unhealthy localities especially marshy districts, who are housed in cellars or other confined dwellings, who are deprived of exercise or of open air, who ruin their health by overexertion of body or mind, who live in a constant state of worry etc. These states of ill-health, which person bring upon them, disappear spontaneously, provided no chronic miasm lurks in the body, under an improved mode of living, and they cannot be called chronic diseases." From the above aphorism it is clear that the pseudo-chronic diseases which occur due to the violation of hygienic rules can be prevented by following proper hygienic rules. In this point there is no contradiction with allopathic science.

Specific Protection

The following are some of the currently available measures for specific protections as advocated by the allopathic science- specific immunizations, use of specific nutrients, protection against occupational hazards, protection against accidents, protection from carcinogen, avoidance of all allergens.

Regarding specific immunization, Homoeopathy has its own views and scope.

Specific immunization by homoeopathic preventive medicines

Homoeopathy has a great scope in preventing diseases by homoeopathic medicines. The different methods which are advocated by different stalwarts of Homoeopathy are as follows: A. Specific prophylaxis a) By specific medicine, b) By Genus epidemicus, B. General prophylaxis, a) By antimiasmatic (specially antipsoric) treatment (especially of children), b) By constitutional treatment (especially of pregnant mother)

Special prophylaxis

Special prophylaxis by specific medicines

Special prophylaxis denotes prevention of a particular disease by a particular medicine. The same

rule that guides the homoeopathist to the selection of a remedy, should also led him to the discovery of a prophylactic. Belladona, Camphor for Scarlet fever, Cuprum met, Veratrum album for Cholera, Pulsatilla, Aconite for Measles, Diptherinum for Diptheria, Malandrinum, Variolinum for Chickenpox, Ledum and Hypericum for Tetanus, Anthracinum, for Anthrax etc.

Special prophylaxis by Genus epidemicus

Medicine which is indicated in majority of patients affected from an epidemic disease (which attack many persons with very similar sufferings from the same cause in a locality) is termed as Genus epidemicus. When this medicine is applied to healthy persons of that particular affected locality, it acts as a preventive medicine and escapes those persons from that particular disease.

Genus epidemicus can only only be obtained after the break out of an epidemic disease in the community. That is the main defect of using it as a preventive.

General prophylaxis

General prophylaxis denotes prevention of diseases in general- not a particular disease.

Dr. Winter and Dr. Gastier of Tholssey advocated General Prophylaxis by antimiasmatic (mainly antipsoric) treatment.

As regards chronic diseases he starts with the idea that they originate from the psoricmiasm, in most cases transmitted by the parent to the offspring. When there is reason to suspect such a hereditary psoric constitution in an infant, which in later life would become developed into different dyscrasias recommends that the child be subjected to an antipsoric prophylactic treatment consisting of a succession of the so called antipsoric remedies.

Dr. Fearson advocated general prophylaxis by constitutional treatment especially of pregnant mother

Dr.Fearson has favoured a course of preventive treatment in cases of suspected constitutional tendency to disease, not only in the very earliest infancy but also from the very moment of conception when that can be ascertained. The constitutional treatment of the fetus shall be through the system of mother. However if the mother is unhealthy during the gestation, we should devote great attention to her treatment, as by rendering her healthier we may greatly influence the constitutions of the focus that derives sole nutrition from her.³

Historical evolution of prophylaxis concept

In ancient period people believed in the supernatural theory of disease. The inquisitive nature of human being led to the concept of disease and

prevention. Greeks were the first to develop the concept of Hygiene, (in Greek Hygeia), the Goddess of Health. Her disciples were called hygienists, who practiced hygiene for health. Hygeia is represented as a beautiful woman, holding in her hand a bowl from which a serpent is drinking. In Geek mythology, the serpent testifies the art of healing, which symbol is retained even today. During ancient days, due to lack of knowledge about disease causation and spread, hygiene and cleanliness was the only option for the promotion of health and prevention of disease. [4]

Even before the discovery of bacteria and viruses, physicians have long sought methods to prevent the scourge of epidemic diseases. Amulets have been used throughout history to help ward off illness. Coral was worn by infants to prevent colic, a red thread worn about the neck was thought to prevent nosebleeds, and a dried toad could be worn to ward off the plague. Bezoar stones from the stomachs of animals were so highly praised for their prophylactic powers, that the Shah of Persia sent some to Napoleon as a gift. Bonaparte, failing to see their merit, promptly threw them into the fire as useless rocks. So have gone many of the prophylactics of old. [5]

The history of the world is intertwined with the impact that infectious diseases have had on populations. Evidence of smallpox has been found in 3000 years old Egyptian mummies. Egyptian papyrus paintings depict infectious diseases such as poliomyelitis. Hippocrates wrote about the spread of disease by means of airs, water, and places, and made an association between climate, diet, and living conditions. Investigators described miasmas as the source of infections. Fracastoro discussed the germ theory in the year 1500 and three routes of contagion were proposed direct contact, fomites, and contagion from a distance (airborne). Epidemics of leprosy, plague, syphilis, smallpox, cholera, yellow fever, typhoid fever, and other infectious diseases were the norm.

The development of the microscope by Leeuwenhoek in the year 1600, allowed scientists to visualize micro-organisms for the first time. The 1800s brought knowledge of the cultivation and identification of micro-organisms. Vaccines were developed and used which introduced specific methods to our storehouse of measures for control and prevention. Pasteurization was another important contribution to disease control. An appreciation of the environment and its relationship to infectious diseases resulted in implementation of broad control measures such as community sanitation, personal hygiene, and public health

education. The importance of nutrition was appreciated for its impact on infectious diseases. [6]

Possibility of disease prevention first came to focus, when James Lind, while traveling in a ship in 1748, conclusively showed that scurvy can be prevented by the use of fresh citrus fruits. Cellen reported that he himself drank milk inundate with mercury to prevent syphilis. But the major thrust came with the discovery of small-pox vaccine by Edward Jenner. [7]

Ayurveda concept

"Ayur" means life and "veda" means knowledge, so it's the science deals with knowledge of life. It considers that in the atmosphere, disease germs exists, but its entry to a healthy person may not be that easy. It can infest or attack a person when suitable conditions are developed. It is something like germination of seeds in the presence of good climatic conditions, water supply, light, soil etc. When the conditions are not satisfied, the seed will never germinate to become a grown up plant. So, in Ayurveda, these prophylactic measures are of great importance.

'Sushruta' described guidelines to protect the attack of transmitting and epidemic diseases due to microorganisms. Close contact with such patients (by touch, wearing ornaments, sleep in the same bed, food intake from the same plate, use same clothes etc.) can cause tuberculosis (*Rajayushmavu*), eye and skin diseases. A person with proper 'ojus' need not worry even if the causative agents enters in him as they are driven out easily. Certain purification methods in Ayurveda (fumigation, hosting of medicated clothes in the open air, disinfecting the atmosphere by growing medicinal plants in the court yard, etc) are some of the preventive measures to get away from epidemics and atmospheric pollution. (Charaka Samhita). [8]

History of Homoeoprophylaxis

The approach to prevention in Homoeopathy is two-pronged. Homeoprophylaxis or prevention through Homoeopathy, can either be met through Genus Epidemicus, which means a remedy which is found to be curative in the majority of cases of the same disease is also the most likely preventive for that disease; or through nosodes (medicine prepared from biological material of a disease). The former is identified through observation of several cases of an epidemic disease, and analysing the symptomatology of those cases for the most indicated medicine (aphorism102). This medicine is considered to be the preventive medicine for the ongoing epidemic of that disease. The latter, on the other hand, once prepared through homoeopathic procedure, is considered a preventive for the disease it is prepared from, regardless of the overall presentation of that disease, which happens to change from time to time. [9]

The preventive aspect of Homoeopathy is well known, and historically documented in various texts in homeopathic literature.

The first and most celebrated of the prophylactics discovered by Hahnemann, was the preventive of scarlet fever, Belladona. Regarding this Hahnemann reasoned. "A remedy that is capable of checking a disease at its onset must be its best preventive". Belladona was the remedy that he had found capable of curing scarlet fever in its early stage- the case of accidental preservation from scarlet fever in a child who had been taking belladonna for an articular disease occurred to his memory, and from this slight data he rightly inferred that Belladona was the prophylactic of scarlatina. He administered his newly accordingly preservative to the five remaining children of the family in which the disease had broken down violently. To his satisfaction, he found that they were all completely protected from the disease, though constantly exposed to the emanations proceeding from affected children. The prophylactic power of Belladona for scarlatina was later confirmed by physicians like Bloch, Cramer, Gelnecki, Wolf, Ibrelisle, Velsen, Berdt, Schenk, Behr, Zeuch after using it on thousands of patients during the prevalence of a very malignant form of the epidemic. Hufeland himself certifies on various occasions to the efficacy of this prophylactic, and in 1826 he wrote a special treatise on the subject "On the prophylactic power of Belladona in scarlet fever" wherein he collected all evidence that had been published up to that time in favor of the prophylactic virtue of belladonna in scarlet fever.

Another epidemic disease for which a prophylactic has been recommends is measles, for which pulsatilla and aconite have been variously advised. Arnold recommends sulphur as the prophylactic of measles.

Dr.Hering in 1930, suggested that the preventives of many diseases might be found in their own morbid products, that for example the saliva of the rabid dog might be the prophylactic of hydrophobia, Variolous matter preserve from small pox; epidemic and miasmatic diseases, find their prophylactic in their own seeds; the plague, the malignant pustule, the itch, each provide its own preventives. He does not; however, seem to have put his views to the test of experiment.

Dr.Croserio proposes, as a preservative against infection with gonorrhea, mercurius 30, three globules taken two or three successive nights after the suspicious connection. He says this practice has

always succeeded with him, and that he was guided to the choice of mercurius as the prophylactic from the homoeopathic analogy of its pathogenetic effects with the symptoms of gonorrhea. However it requires further researches to prove its prophylactic power. [10]

Hahnemann has suggested to give Sulphur in potency to the mother in order to free the fetus from Psora the king of diseases. [11]

Hahnemann's another observation was the use of Cuprum 30 taken once a week during the prevalence of the epidemic of cholera. [12]

Boennignhausen has an excellent success in using Thujafor the prophylactic use in small pox. [13]

Dr. Winter, in his very learned essay on prophylaxis, says that those chiefly liable to epidemic, miasmatic and contagious diseases are such as are not in a good relative state of health, there is something wrong in their vegetative system, to which these diseases have peculiar affinity. He adds that if this defective system is corrected and eradicate the faults we can put these persons in a condition to resist these diseases. In order to effect these changes, he proposes to give successive doses of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd dilution or trituration of mercurius, followed by Sulphur, Calcarea, Lycopodium, Graphites, Arsenic. [14]

The following gives a brief review of some of the references to short term Homoeoprophylaxis. The references are listed in chronological order for the development of Homoeoprophylaxis

1801: Hahnemann then describes his use of Belladona to prevent Scarlet Fever from his essay, "The Cure and Prevention of Scarlet Fever". (Sources: Dr. S. Hahnemann, Lesser Writings).

1831: Hahnemann used the remedies Camphor, Cuprum metallicum and Veratrum album as effective remedies to both treat and prevent Asiatic cholera. (Sources: Dr. S. Hahnemann, Lesser Writings).

1853: Another eleven doctors followed Hahnemann's example and prescribed Belladona during the same epidemic. Of 1,646 children exposed to scarlet fever after being given Belladona, 123 (7.4%) developed symptoms of infection. The general attack rate was as high as 90%, suggesting and efficacy of around 92.9%. (Sources: Dr. R E Dudgeon, lectures on the Theory and Practice of Homoeopathy).

1884: The vaccine 'lymph'-pus has been dynamised more homoeopathico and given as a prophylactic against small-pox in epidemic times, and apparently with effect. *Thuja occidentalis* has been used in like manner by more than one homoeopathic practitioner and they claim that it is effective. (Sources: Dr J C

Burnett, Vaccinosis and its Cure by Thuja; with remarks on Homoeoprophylaxis).

1968: Dr. Krishnamurty, Report on the use of Influenzinum during the outbreak of epidemic in India 1968. Nearly 20% of patients treated by conventional medicine contracted the flu. Only 6.5% of patients treated homeopathically were infected.

1972: Though the efficacy of the Homoeopathic prophylactic remedies for various conditions has not been proved by controlled studies and statistical records, yet generations of homoeopath have used these remedies to prevent these conditions and they claim to have done it successfully. So, their efficacy may be accepted on the basis of this experience even if it is not proved. (Sources: Dr. P. Sankaran, Prophylactics in Homoeopathy).

1974: Meningococcinum as a Preventive against Meningitis. In August 1974 (in Guarantingueta, Brazil) there was an epidemic of meningitis. 18,000 children under the age of 15 were given Meningococcinum 10CH, and 6,340 children of similar ages were not covered. The following results were obtained after 6 months, noting that the Homoeoprophylaxis cases came from the less wealthy and most at-risk groups in the town, and the unprotected group from the wealthier and less atrisk groups:

18,000 protected homeopathically-6 cases

6,340 not protected -

10 cases

Efficacy 78.9%

(Sources: Dr D Castro Dr G GNogueira, Use of the Nosode)

1976: The same is true of the Homoeopathic oral flu vaccine. Clinical experience proves that protection is given in individual, yet there is no increase in antibodies to the influenza virus. One cannot ignore clinical observation but we have no way of measuring true reasons- it just works. The results therefore of Homoeopathy in preventive medicine are justifiable based on experience rather than experiment. (Sources: Dr M Blackie, The Challenge of Homoeopathy).¹⁵

1991: Allen says that he had used Diptherinum for 25 years as a prophylactic and has never known a second case of diphtheria to occur in a family after it has been administered. Tyler writes that for nearly 3 years, Diptherinum in high potency has been used in the London Homoeopathic Hospital to protect nurses and patients exposed to the infection with perfect success. Homoepathic physicians are satisfied that they have a really safe and better polio preventive in Lathyrus Sativa when properly given. Dr. John Henry Clarke strongly recommended Pertussin in whooping cough. In practice the results of pertussin have been

verified by Dr Dorothy Shepherd (Sources: Dr. B Sethi, Homoeoprophylactic remedies)

1998: During an outbreak in Brazil, 65,826 children were given the homoeopathic preventive and 23,532 were unprotected. The nosode was shown to be 95% effective in the first outbreak and 95% effective after 6 months and 91% effective after 12 months in the second outbreak. (Sources: Mroninski C, Adriano E, Mattos G, 2001. Meningococcinum: its protective effect against meningococcal disease). [15]

Researches on Homoeoprophylaxis all over the world:

2806 patients were treated prophylactically with Variolinum 30 (a nosode) for prevention of smallpox in Iowa. Of the 547 patients definitely exposed, only 14 developed the disease. Efficacy rate was 97.5%.[16]

In 1950, during an epidemic of poliomyelitis, Dr Taylor Smith of Johannesburg, South Africa protected 82 people with homoeopathic Lathyrus sativus. Of the 82 so immunized, 12 came into direct contact with disease. None were infected. [17]

During epidemic in France from 1984-1987, Oscillococcinum 200C taken twice daily for 5 days significantly increased the rate of cure within two days (n=478, 237 treated by medicine and 241 on placebo), absence of symptoms at 48 hours, relative risk estimate significantly favors homeopathy (p=0.048), no pain and no fever (p=0.048), recovery rate (headache, stiffness, articular pain, shivering reduction) at 48 hours better in homeopathy group (p=0.032). [18]

In May 2001, prophylactic use of Eupatorium perfoliatum 30C single dose was given during a dengue outbreak to 40% of residents in the most highly affected neighborhood which resulted in significant decrease in dengue incidence by 81.5% (p<0.0001) when compared with those neighborhoods that did not receive homeopathic prophylaxis. [19]

Multicenter, single blind, randomized, placebo controlled study was conducted by CCRH to evaluate the effect of homoeopathic medicines in the treatment of Influenza like illness and to compare the efficacy of LM (50 millesimal) potency vis-à-vis centesimal (C) potency. In LM group (n=152), C group (n=147) or placebo (n=148) group. The study revealed the significant effect of individualized homoeopathic treatment in the patients suffering from ILI with no marked difference between LM and Centesimal groups. The medicines which were commonly prescribed were: Arsenic album, Bryonia alba, Rhustox., Belladonna, Nux vomica, Sepia, Phosphorus, Gelsemium, Sulphur, Natrummur. and Aconitum napellus. [20]

Studies carried out for evaluating the role of homoeopathic treatment of dengue fever have been encouraging, with evidence reported from Brazil and Cuba. In Brazil, in May 2001, a single dose of the homeopathic remedy Eupatorium perfoliatum 30C decreased the incidence of dengue by 81.5%. [21]

In Cuba, 25,000 patients who tested positive for dengue were treated with homoeopathic complex containing medicines *Bryonia Alba, Eupatorium p., Gelsemium s.* and *dengue nosode* with significant improvement in clinical condition and reduction in days of stay at hospital. [22]

Researches within India

Homoeopathy has been effective in various kinds of fever including Chikungunya. The data present in literature mentions several medicines like Belladonna, Eupatorium perfoliatum, Bryonia Alba, Phosphorus etc. as effective medicines for the disease. Trials conducted on this disease have been able to validate a few of the medicines which are usually prescribed in Chikungunya. In 2006, a homoeopathic preventive Eupatorium 30C was distributed to 1061 people with significant prevention (p < 0.0001). Another preventive trial was conducted by CCRH in 2007 where homoeopathic medicine Bryonia 30C was distributed as a preventive to 19, 750 people in Kerala and Bryoniaalba 30C was found to be better than placebo in decreasing the incidence of Chikungunya in Kerala. [23]

Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy carried out research studies for prevention and treatment of JE during its epidemics in eastern parts of U.P. in 1989, 1991 and 1993. Belladonna 200, single dose was distributed as preventive to 3,22,812 persons in 96 villages in three districts of U.P. In a follow up of 39,250 persons, none of them reported any signs and symptoms of Japanese encephalitis. During the year 1999-2003, the government of Andhra Pradesh adopted *Belladonna-Calcarea carbonica-Tuberculinum bovinum* (BCT) regimen as preventive and the response was encouraging. The death rate was nil in the BCT distributed areas. [24]

CONCLUSION

Homeopathy has a long record of success during epidemics and pandemics crisis, in old and modern times. The homeopathy axiom individualization is not followed in the use of genus epidemicus during an epidemic. Constitutional treatment strengthens vitality and increases the general resistance of the host to diseases while specific prophylaxis works against a specific contagion. Nevertheless, these two methods are complementary when used correctly. Conducting more carefully designed laboratory studies that

measure symptoms or pathology in living organisms against experimental and control treatments with homoeopathic remedies vs. placebo would help to establish credible benchmarks for describing the effects and validity of homoeopathic prophylaxis treatment and for understanding the issues that exist regarding posology, potency, prevention, and the use of prophylaxis. If the homoeopathic school is to put up an effective opposition to the growing demand of for modern preventive medicine a thorough scientific research is absolutely necessary.

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