

A Review on the Scope of Homoeopathic Medicines in Managing Adjustment Disorder

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ABSTRACT

The ability to adjust is an important feature of every human to lead a happy and peaceful life. Though adjustment disorder is a very common phenomenon, its diagnosis is quite difficult. Thus, making it a rare clinical picture. Since it is difficult to diagnose, it warrants more study on the matter and in-depth research into the different effective and innovative treatment modalities available. Homoeopathy is a system of medicine which deals with understanding the patient as a whole and aims to treat the cause of the disease. Likewise, in adjustment disorder, Homoeopathic medicine focuses on treating the cause of disease, depending on the case.

Keywords: Homoeopathy, Adjustment disorder, Psychiatry, Paediatrics, Psychology, Depression, Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Adjustment typically means to fit or adapt according to the requirements of the environment in a given situation. [1] It's a basic feature of every living being and is an essential prerequisite for the organism to survive and thrive. The principle of preservation or survival of the fittest which Charles Darwin called Natural selection, leads to the improvement of each creature in relation to its conditions of life.[2] Therefore adaptation or Adjustment becomes a key factor for any individual to thrive by making changes in themselves to their surroundings in order to live with

contentment. When this Adjustment becomes difficult, it leads to distress.

Adjustment disorder is a psychological response to any stressor that results in clinically significant emotional or behavioural symptoms. [3] This stressor can be a single event or can involve multiple stressors. Stress that produces symptoms within 3 months and up to 6 months of the onset of the stressor, causing more distress than would be expected given the circumstances or be unable to function as usual. The symptoms must lessen or disappear when the stressor ends or when the person learns to adapt to the stressor. As per ICD-10, F43.2, the diagnosis of adjustment disorder can be made if the onset of the behavioural, physical or emotional changes is within 3 months of the stressor, lasting up to 6 months. The manifestations vary depending on the individual's tendencies, pre-existing personality disorder or organic mental disorder. They may include depressed mood, anxiety, worry (or a mixture of depression and anxiety), a feeling of inability to cope, plan or continue in the present situation, and some degree of disability in the performance of daily routine. Disorders of conduct disorders (e.g. aggressive or dissocial behaviour) may be an associated feature, particularly in adolescents. In children, regressive phenomena such as return to bed-wetting, babyish speech, or thumb-sucking are frequently part of the symptom pattern. [4, 5]

Homoeopathy stands for the principle of Likes cure likes. This means that a disease can only be effectively extinguished by a remedy that can produce similar symptoms in a healthy individual. Instead of treating the presentation of disease in the patient alone, the goal of treatment is to remove the cause and then make the individual strong despite his circumstances. When faced with a new circumstance, there is a requirement laid on the individual to modify himself. When this requirement is not sufficiently fulfilled, it leads to adjustment disorder. An individual's ability to adjust depends on his basic nature, influenced by his environmental influences like his upbringing and resources and channelled by his opportunities. Homoeopathic medication aims to strengthen the individual's constitution, by giving him a medicine that suits the similarity of the whole individual, depending on his mental and physical make-up, that is, constitution.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies have shown adjustment disorder in about 2-8% of the global population and more prevalent in females as compared to males. It can be seen in all age groups. In India, the prevalence of adjustment disorder is found to be 24%. [6,7] The need to explore effective disorder-specific interventions arises due to the high prevalence of adjustment disorder in the current clinical setting.[8] In a study conducted in Saudi Arabia, it was found that the risk of adjustment disorder among first-year medical students was more. The common stressors were found to be workload issues and difficulty meeting deadlines. The remedy to this was to increase student-staff interactions to support students in adapting to their new environment and reduce social adjustment difficulties. [9]

Mattoo et. al. conducted a study in India to find the prevalence of Psychiatric morbidity in vitiligo and found that adjustment disorder was present in 75% of cases with vitiligo.[10] adjustment disorder was found

to be the second leading cause of self-poisoning, after depressive disorder, in another study.[11]

Various therapeutic modalities have been explored over the recent decades, to help adolescents with maladjustment. Maladjusted states put the individual at risk of adopting various addicting negative behaviors (smoking, alcohol consumption and substance abuse), detrimental thinking patterns (Low self-esteem, pessimism, Nihilistic thinking), altered emotional states (Depression, anxiety) and hence there is a need in this field to explore into effective treatment modalities that not only enable individuals to adjust to their stresses but also make them more resilient.

Studies taken up by Mauro and team conclude that psychotropic drugs like antidepressants have less effect in treating anxious or depressed mood in adjustment disorder, and therefore must be avoided. Psychotherapies, on the other hand, have shown to be of more use in treating maladjustment. [12] In another study, it was found that dietary supplements showed better results in managing adjustment disorder as compared to benzodiazepines. [13]

Studies conducted by Oliha and Audu (2010) on Adolescents with maladjustment, reveal that Rational Emotive Therapy and Systematic desensitization were effective in promoting emotional adjustment. [14]

Recent case series by Karunakaran et al, reveal that maladjustment can be effectively treated by Homoeopathic medication.[15] In an interventional study conducted in a South Indian Homoeopathic medical college among first-year college students, it was found that Homoeopathic medications such as Natrum Muriaticum, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Arsenicum Album, Calcarea carbonicum, Lycopodium, Ignatia, Silicea, Kali carbonicum and Phosphorus were effective in treating individuals with adjustment disorder.[16]

In the Organon of Medicine by Dr Samuel Hahnemann, he writes about the fundamental and exciting cause of disease.

In a case with an exciting or maintaining cause, the individual can't be cured, as long as the cause remains as it would further cause the individual to present with the same symptoms. When the cause is removed, however, the disease leaves the individual too, as there can be no effect without a cause. [17]

HOMOEOPATHIC INTERVENTION:

The homoeopathic system of medicine deals with the holistic approach in treating a patient. This means that the treatment is for the mind as well as the body. Homoeopathy has a wide range of scope in the field of Psychiatry as the disturbances of the mind are given prime importance in the selection of the remedy. The selection of remedy for a disorder depends on not just the symptoms of the disorder but also the alteration of the general expressions of the individual such as their appetite, thirst, sleep and dreams, cravings and aversions, and bowel and bladder habits. Homoeopathy follows the dictum of 'Man before disease' and hence, the focus of prescription is the mental and physical expressions of an individual before disease and the most peculiar or characteristic features of the alterations in the individual after the disease. These are what comprise the constitution of the individual.

Let us delve into the literature on various remedies in the treatment of adjustment disorder.

Calcarea carbonicum: Indicated in instability following a change in financial status or loss of protection (death of parent or spouse). In individuals who develop intense fears, especially for their own protection and safety. [18]

James Tyler Kent notes that Capsicum is well indicated in school girls with homesickness, who have red cheeks and sleeplessness. They are very sensitive and easily offended. The similar state of homesickness is seen in students in boarding schools and university students who have just begun their studies. [19]

Ignatia is indicated in acute grief states following the loss of a loved one or the end of a relationship where the individual becomes highly emotional, displays erratic and unpredictable behavior. Highly sensitive, emotional and defensive. [20]

Lycopodium is for fear of change and inability to take up new tasks and responsibilities. In states of cowardice which has to be covered up with a false bravado and hence the individual is afraid of being discovered.

Natrum Muriaticum is indicated in prolonged Grief states, where the individual is unable to overcome the loss of a loved one or a broken relationship. Also indicated where a person feels lack of affection or feels neglected following divorce of parents or in children after the birth of a younger sibling.

Magnesium Carbonicum is indicated in individuals with the feeling of being left out and being unloved after the birth of a younger sibling. Feeling of an orphan, like he has no one to care for him. [18]

Phosphorus is indicated in ailments from grief and disappointed love. A person who is highly sensitive to the slightest of changes in his social situation and goes on to seek the love he lost in one area of life from other sources.[19]

Thereby, various homoeopathic medicines are indicated for adjustment disorder through the key terms of 'ailments from' or causation.

CONCLUSION

The cause of behavioral or emotional changes or marked disturbance in an individual following a significant life change needs to be understood in every case and the cause must be treated. This identification of the cause is vital in the process of remedy selection in homoeopathy thus aiding a speedy recovery. Hence Homoeopathy has a broad scope for the treatment of adjustment disorder and these potential needs further exploration.

Declaration by Authors

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