

HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE – AN ADJUVANT FOR DENTISTRY: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Allopathic medicine is simply too expensive and far too capital intensive for a country like India to support. However, because of the local availability and accessibility of herbs and other traditional medicines, treatment according to traditional medical systems or Complementary and Alternative medical systems are often cheaper and are also considered as much safer than conventional medicines. Dentistry is the unique field of medicine in which various oro-facial problems are treated. The use of traditional medicine in dentistry is common and has been used widely to treat dental problems since long time. *Homeopathy* as a part of holistic dentistry is said to provide effective treatment to the patients while minimizing side effects. The present scientific literature based review is highlighting the possible role of *Homeopathy* in the management of various orofacial disorders.

Keywords: Complementary and alternative medicine, Dentistry, *Homeopathy*, oral diseases

INTRODUCTION

Modern western practitioners suffer from ethnocentricity.¹ Some believe that our system of medicine is the ultimate, and the only one that really works. But we often forget that modern scientific medicine reaches only a relatively small group of people, and that perhaps over a third of the world has no share in it.^{1,2}

Allopathic medicine is simply too expensive and far too capital intensive for a poor country like India to support.² Modern medical doctors are too few in certain areas and are not always ready to live with the poor in the slums, the high mountains, the desert areas, or the remote forests.³ Along with it, the longer life expectancy and life style related problems have brought with them an increased risk of developing chronic, debilitating diseases such as heart

disease, cancer, diabetes and mental disorders.^{2,3} Although new treatments and technologies for dealing with them are plentiful, nonetheless more and more patients are now looking for simpler, gentler therapies for improving the quality of life and avoiding iatrogenic problems.³ Also to extend modern medical services to all sections of the population, particularly those living in backward and rural areas, would take a long time and require a large amount of funds.⁴

Because of the local availability and accessibility of herbs and other traditional medicines, treatment according to traditional medical systems (TM) or Complementary and Alternative medical systems (CAM) are often cheaper. They are also considered as much safer than other conventional medicines.⁵

Therefore the World Health Organization (WHO) is now encouraging and supporting local governments to increase research efforts, training facilities and exchange of information relating to traditional medicines.¹ WHO accepts that traditional systems will continue to play an important part in providing services to very large numbers of people, particularly in rural areas.^{5,6}

Homeopathy is one of the CAM which has been widely used since 200 years. While it can scarcely compare in antiquity with Chinese or Indian medicine, *Homeopathy* is the longest established CAM to have arisen in Europe which was pioneered by Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843).⁷ The term *Homeopathy* comes from the Greek words *homeo*, meaning similar, and *pathos*, meaning suffering or disease.^{5,6} It is mainly based on the observation of "like cures like" or the "principle of similars", the idea that substances known to cause particular syndromes of symptoms can also, in low and specially prepared doses, help to cure diseases that cause a similar syndrome of symptoms.⁷⁻¹⁰

Homeopaths are proud of their history and are convinced of the efficacy of their remedies. *Homeopathic* medicines are used by many people throughout the world; like many other complementary and alternative therapies, *Homeopathy* generally scores highly in "patient satisfaction" surveys, and it has a reservoir of public support. In the U.K. for instance, one of the countries where *Homeopathy* has relatively strong public support, a survey cited by the British Homeopathic Association found that 15% of the public "trust" *Homeopathy*. This same survey also found higher percentages of trust in *Homeopathy* in other countries:

58% Brazil, 53% Chile, 49% Saudi Arabia, 40% France, 28% Russia, 27% Germany, and 18% USA.^{9,11}

Dentistry is the unique field of medicine in which various oro-facial problems are treated. The use of traditional medicine in dentistry is common and has been used widely to treat dental problems since long time.⁶ Recently, dental health care approach has been directed towards holistic methods like *Ayurveda*, acupuncture, naturopathy or *Homeopathy* in managing diseases and conditions related to oro-facial structures.^{6,7} *Homeopathy* as a part of holistic dentistry is said to provide effective treatment to the patients while minimizing side effects.

Dentists; especially western practitioners, have started to use homeopathic medicines in everyday practice as an adjunct to conventional treatment.⁶ The inclusion of *homeopathic* medicine in a dentist's therapeutic armory is particularly useful for a range of treatments, from relatively mild acute conditions through to complex chronic pathologies.^{7,9} Some of these conditions have historically been shown to be difficult to treat or manage: for example, dental anxiety, atypical facial pain, burning mouth syndrome and post-extraction osteitis. Success has also been achieved in the treatment of chronic conditions where conventional treatments have failed or are contra-indicated and which include the management of lichen planus and recurrent infection.⁷

Hence by considering the importance of *homeopathic* preparations, a sincere attempt has been made to highlight the possible integration of dental treatment modalities and *homeopathic* medicine to provide the best and unique from each

system to patients as a complementary therapy and an alternative choice of treatment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this review of literature along with various textbooks on *homeopathic* material medica and repertories, we only considered those studies that are consistent with the philosophy of *Homeopathy*. The databases searched for the current review were MEDLINE, EMBASE, BIOSIS, PSYCHINFO, CINAHL, British Library Stock Alert Service, SIGLE, AMED. Similarly, references lists of selected papers, hand searching *homeopathic* journals and conference abstracts, by consulting existing *homeopathic* bibliographies; by using both forward and backward reference chaining techniques; and by tracking recent activities in the field of *Homeopathy* which is primarily concerned with dental disorders was also performed. In addition, we also collected literature on traditional medicine and searched some Indian journals not included in MEDLINE. References that were primarily anecdotal or that were only peripherally related to the topic were excluded.

Key concepts of *Homeopathy*⁸

1. *Homeopathy* seeks to stimulate the body's defense mechanisms and processes so as to prevent or treat illness.
2. Treatment involves giving very small doses of substances called remedies that, according to *Homeopathy*, would produce the same or similar symptoms of illness in healthy people if they were given in larger doses.
3. Treatment in *Homeopathy* is individualized (tailored to each person). Homeopathic practitioners select remedies according to a total picture of the patient,

including not only symptoms but lifestyle, emotional and mental states, and other factors.

The place of *homeopathy* in clinical care

Homeopathy can be used to treat a wide range of conditions. It can help to repair any damage that the body has the potential to repair and help restore the balances and mechanisms involved in recovery and health. Despite the differences in approach, *homeopathic* and conventional treatments can work very well alongside each other. Consulting a conventional doctor with training in *homeopathy* allows the individual patient to receive the best of both worlds, with the most effective treatments being tailored just for them. *Homeopathy* can be of great economic value to both the patient and the practitioner. However, *homeopathic* medicines are relatively inexpensive and the available evidence suggests that *homeopathy* has the potential to generate savings through reduced conventional prescribing, and demand for other services such as hospital visits.^{9,11}

Homeopathic applications in the management of oro-facial diseases

The scope for *homeopathy* within dentistry is broad. It is commonly used to help alleviate associated pain, bleeding and inflammation. At a more advanced level *homeopathy* can be used by the dentist to:

- Prevent or inhibit the development of disease processes in the oral cavity.
- Provide treatments that work alongside conventional medicine.
- Prevent or limit complications and sequelae of surgical intervention.
- Facilitate recovery from dental trauma, restorative treatments and anesthetic agents.
- Improve patient tolerance or prostheses and instrumentation.

- Manage dental conditions with a holistic approach.^{7,9,11}

It should be noticed that *Homeopathy* is not a replacement or alternative to clinical dental care but can be used alongside conventional treatments and drug regimens. Healthcare professionals trained in the use of *Homeopathy* know it

works and prescribe appropriately just as with any other prescription. Here is the summary of some acute and chronic dental problems which can be managed by *Homeopathic* preparations: as in all *homeopathic* prescribing, the remedy selection is more important than potency. (Table 1)

Table 1: Showing the list of *Homeopathic* medicines used in the management of various oro-facial disorders

Oro-facial Disorder	Recommended Homeopathic medicine
Dental Abscess ^{11,12}	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belladonna: early dental abscess accompanied by redness and throbbing which is aggravated by slightest touch. (30x every 30-60 minutes) 2. Heparsulphuriscaleum: where abscess is accompanied by pus formation, increased salivation, and where gums are sour to touch and bleed easily. Repeated doses of 6X will encourage pus discharge, while higher potency (30x - 200x two or three times daily) will help abort pus formation. 3. Silicea: once pus is draining, silicea 6X will hasten the discharge. 4. MyrisrticaSebifera: where abscess is swollen and accompanied by numbness of the area especially suited for wisdom teeth in potency of 6X. 5. Calendula: dilute the tincture 1 part to 20 parts of water use as a gentle but effective mouth rinse.
Apprehension (anticipation of dental visit) ¹³	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gelsium: For dental fears that are accompanied by nausea, diarrhea, sleepy feeling or "weak knees." (Potency 12C - Three pellets the night before, the morning of and 45 minutes before dental appointment) 2. Aconite: When an individual experiences fear with a sudden onset of panic (about an upcoming dental visit) accompanied by physical and emotional restlessness. (Potency 12C - Five pellets the night before, the morning of and 45 minutes before dental appointment) 3. Coffecruda: when anxiety is accompanied by intolerance to noise or music, 30x to be taken the night before , the morning of and ½ to 1 hour before the dental visit 4. Chamomilla: this is not for apprehension, per se, but may greatly help those individuals with lowered pain threshold, three doses of 30 x over several hours prior to dental visit.
Bleeding ^{14,15}	<p>Almost all post-surgical bleeding is well controlled by pressing moist gauze pad or tea bag over the bleeding area in cases where bleeding is not controlled by local measures certain homeopathic intervention can be used such as ;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phosphorous: 6X to 20xevery 10 -30 minutes till bleeding stops. 2. Arnica: if bleeding is accompanied by bruising or soreness, 30x every 10-30 minutes until bleeding is controlled. 3. Ferrumphosphoricum: Use when there is profuse bleeding following an extraction or gum surgery that is not controlled by pressure with a moist guaze pad. (Potency 6C- 3-5 pellets every 15 min. to a ½ hr. until bleeding is controlled.
Toothache ^{11,15}	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antimoniumcrudum: Use for a toothache that is worse at night and is aggravated by heat. 2. Araneadiadema: Use for sudden, severe pain in the teeth after lying down. 3. Belladonna: Use for throbbing tooth that's worse when pressure is applied. (potency 15C- 3 pellets every ½ to one hour until symptoms subside) 4. Calcareacarbonica: Use for a toothache that worsens when exposed to hot or cold air. 5. Chamomilla: Use for a toothache with intolerable pain that's worse from warmth and not better with cold. 6. Aconitum Napellus: Indicated for unbearable pain accompanied by anxiety, restlessness that comes on suddenly and where movement worsens the condition. The pain is sharp and tearing in nature. Represents a severe pulpitis or inflammation of the

	<p>nerve of the tooth. (Potency 7C - five pellets every 15 or 20 minutes until pain subsides)</p> <p>7. Coffeacruca: Use for toothache that worsens with heat and is relieved by ice. (Potency 9C- 3 pellets every 30 min. until symptoms abate)</p> <p>8. Ferrummetallicum: Use for a toothache that is relieved by ice water.</p> <p>9. Magnesia carbonica: Use for a toothache that is worse at night. Patient must get up and walk about for relief.</p> <p>10. Magnesia Phosphorica: works well with toothaches that are worse with cold and relieved by heat. (potncy 9C- 5 pellets every 30 min. until symptoms abate)</p> <p>11. Plantago major: Use for a toothache that is better with pressure and worse without cold air.</p> <p>12. Pulsatilla: Use for a toothache that is relieved by holding cold water in the mouth.</p> <p>13. Staphysagria: Use for pain from major decay of a number of teeth.</p>
Diseases related to Gingiva and Periodontium ^{11,15-17}	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arsenicum album: Use for unhealthy, bleeding gums. 2. China: Use for gum tissue that is bleeding. 3. Ferrumphosphoricum: Use for poor gum tone or gums that bleed after brushing. 4. Hypericum: Use for tender gum tissue and to promote healing. 5. Kali chloricum: Use for acute ulcerative tissue. 6. Naturiummuriaticum: Tissue integrity. 7. Heparsulphuris: Tissue with suppuration, chronic abscesses. 8. Silicea: Periodontal abscess with swollen glands. 9. Staphysagria: Loose teeth, pain increased by pressure. 10. Symphytum: Injuries to periosteum. Stimulates growth of epithelium on ulcerated surfaces. 11. Mercuriussolubilis: Use for acute ulcerative tissue with a coated tongue and metallic taste in the mouth. 12. Nux vomica: Use for swollen painful gums when the back of the tongue has a whitish coating and when the patient consumes a lot of stimulants such as coffee and tea. 13. Phosphorous: Use on swollen gums that bleed easily, and when there's an overproduction of saliva. 14. Rutagraveolens ("dry socket"): Use for injured bone and alveolitis.
Halitosis ¹⁸	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Calendula mouth tincture (mixed in water): Use as a mouthwash. 2. Also a mixture of Carbo veg 30C and Merc sol 30C twice daily can be used.
Conditions related to Salivation ¹⁹	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Barytacobonica: Use when there is excessive saliva during sleep. 2. Bryonia Alba: Use for an extremely dry mouth, with dryness of mucous membranes and great thirst. 3. Phosphorous: Use for hyper salivation and when gums are swollen and bleed easily. 4. Pulsatilla: Use for diminished saliva with no thirst.
Diseases Related to Temporomandibular Joint ²⁰⁻²²	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arum triphyllum: Use for pain in joint on swallowing. 2. Calcareaflourica: Use for hypermobile joints 3. Calcarea phosphorica: Use when mouth cannot be opened without pain. 4. Carbovegetabilis: Use for vertigo with nausea and tinnitus. 5. Chamomilla: Use for low pain threshold. Unbearable spasms of pain, radiating into the ear. 6. Cuprum metallicum: Use for trismus of muscles. 7. Granatum: Use for painful cracking of the joint. 8. Mangesiumphosphorica: Use for muscle spasms. 9. Phytolacca: Use for earaches with pain extending into teeth, jaw, and throat. 10. Rhustoxicodendron: Use for joint stiffness that improves with movement and for "Popping" of TMJ.
Severe Trismus ²¹	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HypericumPerforatum: Excellent for the prevention of muscle spasms. (Potency 9C - three pellets every hour until symptoms abate) 2. Cuprum Metallicum: This remedy is ideal once the muscle spasms start. (Potency 9C -three pellets every 20 minutes until abated)

Bruxism ¹¹	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belladonna: Use for grinding problem that causes painful teeth. 2. Podophyllum: Use for night grinding when experiencing a burning sensation of the tongue. 3. Tuberculinum: Use for children who grind their teeth.
Delayed Eruption ^{11,23} Tooth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Calcarea carbonica: Use for a delayed eruption. 2. Chamomilla: Ideal for delayed and difficult tooth eruptions and for a whiney child who is restless and wants to be held and pampered. (potency 12C- 3-5 pellets every ½ to one hour until symptoms subside) 3. Hypericum: well suited for the nerve pain associated with tooth eruption. (Potency 9C- 5 pellets every ½ hour until symptoms subside). 4. Zincum metallicum: Use for teeth gritting during difficult dentition with loose teeth and bleeding gums.
Decay of Milk Teeth ²³	Kreosotum: This remedy is for premature decay of milk teeth, which become yellow, dark and then decay. It is also used for aching pains in diseased teeth.
Oral Ulcerations ^{21,25,26}	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Natrum muriaticum: Use for cold sores and fever blisters. Lips and corners of mouth dry and cracked lips. 2. Nitricum acidum: Use for ulcers with irregular edges and a raw appearance with a tendency to bleed easily.
Oral Herpes Lesions ^{11,26}	Graphites 7C, Petroleum 9C, Rhus Toxicodendron 7C and Arsenicum album 7C: All four medicines are utilized to help resolve this painful lesion. (Potency for each of the four remedies - three pellets each, three times a day at 30 minute intervals).
Dry socket ²⁴	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belladonna: 30x every 30-60 minutes if accompanied by throbbing pain. 2. Rulagaveoleus: 6x for any surgery or other injuries to the jaws or other facial bones. 3. Calendula: dilute the tincture 1 part to 20 parts of water and use as a mouthwash.
Postoperative Complications ^{19,26}	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apismellifica: Good for post injection soreness after dental work also Useful in sudden and rapid onset of swelling accompanied by pink edema, pricking and burning pains. (Potency 9C- 5 pellets every hour until symptoms abate. 2. Chamomilla: Give one hour prior to dental appointment for patients with a low pain threshold. It also expedites the wearing off of the numbness. 3. Hypericum: Use where there is an injured nerve. (potency- 9C 3-5 pellets every 30 min. until symptoms subside) 4. Ledum: excellent remedy for puncture wounds and soreness resulting from a dental injection. (potency- 30C- 3-5 pellets four times a day) 5. Magnesia phosphorica: Use for stiff, sore jaws following prolonged dental work when the muscles are cramped and feel better with warmth. 6. Staphysagria: Use indicated for incisions of soft tissues such as periodontal flap procedures, impacted third molars where access flaps must be performed or periodontal graft procedures. (potency 30C – five pellets every 30 minutes until symptoms abate)

General Guidelines to Increase the effectiveness of Homeopathic Remedies^{27,28}

1. Homeopathic remedies should not be touched. They must be taken directly from the container into the mouth.
2. They should be placed under the tongue and allowed to dissolve.
3. No food should be taken either twenty minutes before or after the remedies are taken.
4. Avoid taking coffee, tea or mint during use of homeopathic remedies. These

substances have the potential of neutralizing the effects of the remedies.

5. Do not store the homeopathic remedies in areas that contain such products as ether, camphor, perfumes or other highly volatile substances. These types product will neutralize the homeopathic remedies.

6. When the symptoms start to abate or resolve, discontinue the homeopathic remedy.

CONCLUSION

Homeopathy is an emerging field of dental medicine that may be useful in

management of conditions affecting orofacial structures. It is expected that homeopathic medicines may have a role in providing dental treatments, which are free of side effects, easily accessible, much cheaper, and perhaps of high quality.

Furthermore, the success of any CAM system lies in its ability to prevent further adverse reactions on the basis of information received. Until these systems are better understood, it is important that dentists be open minded about possible values of these systems and maintain communication with patients who use it. As in all of medicine, dentists must know how to prevent patients from abandoning effective therapy for serious diseases and when to permit safe therapies even if only for their nonspecific value. This will be possible only when dentists/physicians are vitally alert to the onset or offset of any Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs). They need to prioritize their contributions to make the pharmacovigilance program for CAM medicines a success.

However, use of *Homeopathic* medicines could be beneficial to patients who are experiencing certain symptoms to learn about other options that could potentially alleviate those symptoms. Unfortunately, some patients' only route of health information is from their medical doctor, and without the medical doctor being knowledgeable in CAM therapies, the patient may never be aware that these options exist that could potentially be of enormous benefit.

Overall, *Homeopathic* medicines may serve as an integral part of the Dentist's Armamentarium for the prevention and treatment of dental diseases; however more evidence based research is required to firmly

establish the areas of use as well as those in which they may not be applicable.

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