



Effect of individualized homoeopathic treatment in influenza like illness

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Abstract

Objective: The present study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of homoeopathic medicines in the treatment of influenza like illness (ILI) as well as to compare the complication rate among the patients receiving homeopathic medicine as compared to the complication rate in patients receiving placebo. The objective of the study is also to compare the efficacy of LM potency vis-à-vis centesimal potency.

Method: It was an open multicentre, single blind, randomized, placebo controlled study, carried out by Central council for research in homeopathy, New Delhi at its different Institutes / Units. Total 48 cases were enrolled for study from the general OPD of clinical research Unit (H), Siliguri. The common presenting symptoms of the illness were fever, cough, sore throat, nasal symptoms (discharge/obstruction) and constitutional symptoms like headache, malaise, myalgia, sweat and fatigue (weakness). Each patient was prescribed medicine because of individual totality and reportorial analysis as per the homoeopathic principles.

Result: Out of 48 enrolled cases, 40 cases were cured with complete follow up of 30 days and remaining 8 patients did not complete the follow-up. The more frequently prescribed medicines found effective were Arsenicum Alb... Bryonia Alb., Gelsemium and Rhus Tox.

Conclusion: The results obtained from the study proved that homeopathic medicines are capable of curing Influenza like illness as well as unwanted complications may also be avoided with homoeopathic medication. Moreover, spontaneous recovery of the illness has been successfully distinguished from the therapeutic efficacy of the indicated medicines through placebo-controlled study.

Key words: Homoeopathy, Influenza like illness, Arsenicum Alb., Bryonia Alb., Gelsemium, Rhus Tox, Placebo.

Introduction

Influenza is a global health problem, commonly referred to as flu, which is an acute infectious disease of respiratory tract caused by RNA virus of the family Orthomyxoviridae that affects birds and mammals. Influenza outbreaks are recorded virtually every year, although their extent and severity vary widely (Anthony S Fauci *et al.*, (Few clinical trials in Influenza like illness with homeopathic intervention have been conducted (2007) the past with positive result. But nowhere individualized homoeopathic treatment has been put under trial. In this context, present study is significantly relevant to evaluate the efficacy of individualized homoeopathic medicines in the treatment of Influenza like illness' The disease resembles many others

febrile illness so that the term 'Influenza like illness' is used in broader sense and the most common symptoms are similar to flu which include chill, fever, sore throat, muscular pain, headache, cough, weakness and general discomfort.

Influenza viruses are classified into three separate genera viz.. A, B and C. The type A viruses are the most virulent human pathogens among the three types and cause the most severe disease [3]. Epidemics and pandemics appear at varying intervals usually in the winter. New epidemics strain may evolve from reassortment through pig vectors between avian and human strains. Pandemics associated with higher mortality are typically associated with type A infection in which

significant genetic recombination of the virus (antigenic shift) has taken place.

Usually influenza virus is transmitted through the air by coughs and sneezes, creating aerosols containing the virus. Influenza can also be transmitted by direct contact with birds droppings or nasal secretions or through contaminated surfaces [4]. The incubation period of illness is ranged from 18 to 72 hours depending on the size of the viral inoculum. Initially, viral infection involves the ciliated columnar epithelial cells, but may also attacks other respiratory tract cells including alveolar, mucous gland cells and macrophages.

The illness reaches peak prevalence in winter. The lower air humidity in winter seems to be the main cause for the transmission of seasonal influenza like illness in temperate region (Shaman & Kohn, 2009). However, sporadic cases are also found throughout the year.

Complications of I.L.I. occur most frequently in children and patients over 60 years old with cardio-pulmonary diseases, diabetes mellitus, renal dysfunction, weak immune system, alcohol/drug addiction and pregnant women in 2nd and 3rd trimesters. The commonest complications are pneumonia, bronchitis, sinusitis and ear infection (CDC, 2006).

Material & Methods

Study Design

A multicentre, single blind, randomized placebo controlled study was carried out during the period June, 2009 to May' 2010 at Clinical Research Unit (H), Siliguri, West Bengal. The patients suffering from I.L.I. were randomly assigned to treat with any one of the three groups i.e. group-I LM potency, group-II Centesimal potency and group-III Placebo.

Study Sample

After obtaining written consent a sample of 48 patients with age group 12-60 years comprising of 25 males and 23 females were enrolled from general OPD. Out of 48 cases, total 40 were completed study with 30 days follow up. The remaining 8 cases did not complete regular follow up. Visual analog scale

(VAS) ranging from 0-10 was used for assessing the intensity of symptoms like headache, myalgia, malaise, sore throat, nasal complaints, chill and sweat. Cough was measured with the scale developed by scientist.

Randomization

After final selection of medicine, according to the randomization number chart all the patients were randomized for verum (Centesimal or LM potency) or placebo.

Inclusion & Exclusion criteria

Patients presenting with signs /symptoms of I.L.I., abrupt onset of fever (within 36 hours of duration) with atleast one respiratory symptom (cough, sore throat, nasal discharge/ obstruction) and atleast one constitutional symptoms (headache, malaise, myalgia, sweat, chill or fatigue) were included for study. Patients who have received other medication (anti viral) within 36 hours before entry into the study, who had immunization against influenza / influenza like illness for that season, patients with immune-compromised or other clinically active illness including cardio-pulmonary diseases, renal dysfunction, diabetes mellitus, pregnant woman, lactating mother and patient with history of drug /alcohol abuse were excluded from study.

Selection of medicine

It was an open trail and medicines were selected based on totality of symptoms and reportorial analysis using Complete Repertory. Consultation with Materia Medica was also taken under consideration for selection of medicines because many a time not all the symptoms were found in repertory.

Potency dose and repetition

LM Potency: For first prescription indicated medicines were given in 0/1 potency followed by next higher potency i.e. 0/2 , 0/3, 0/4 and so on at 4 hours intervals.

Centesimal potency: All the indicated medicines were prescribed in 30c potency. Each dose consisted of 4 globules, size no 20 which was repeated at 4 hours intervals and administration of medicine was stopped as soon as improvement started.

Fig.1. Showing symptom wise improvement assessment with duration of treatment

Fig.1a.Fever

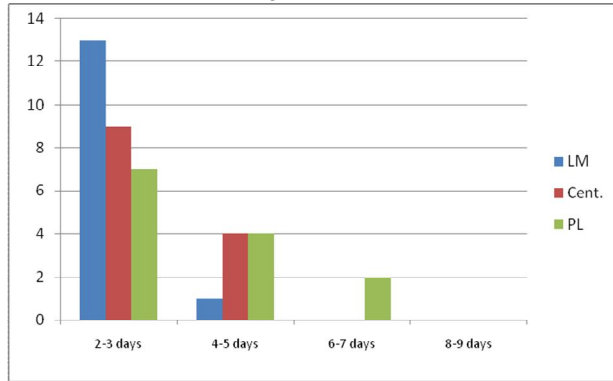


Fig.1b.Headache

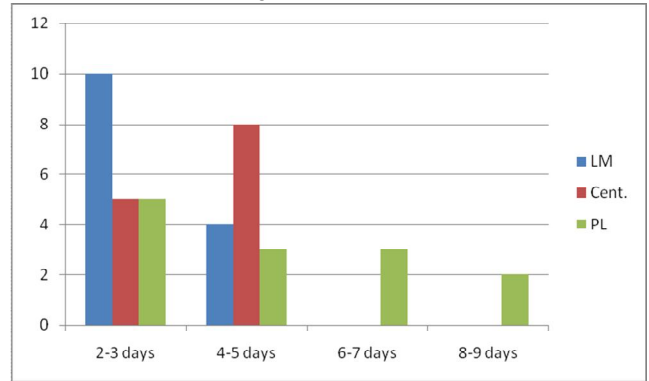


Fig.1c.Mayglia

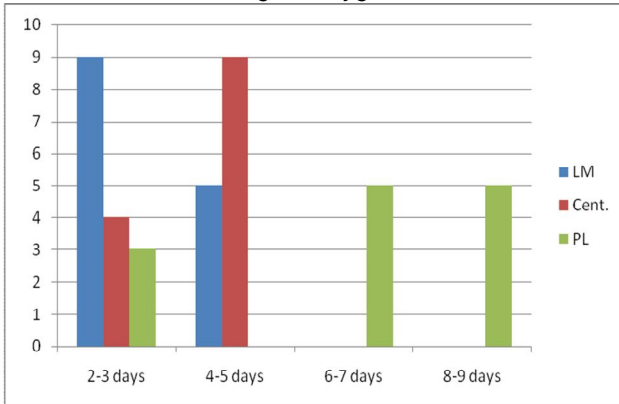


Fig.1d.Measles

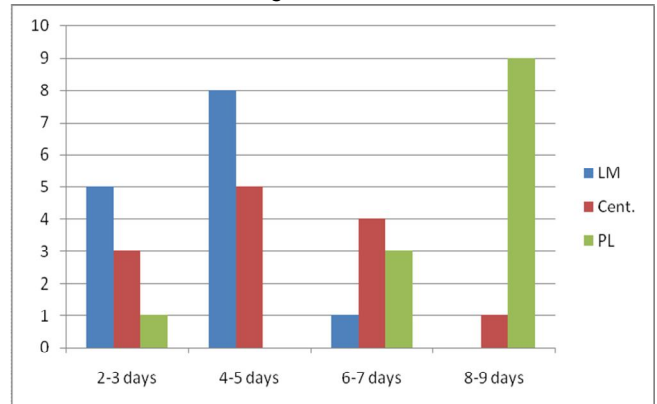


Fig.1e.Sore throat

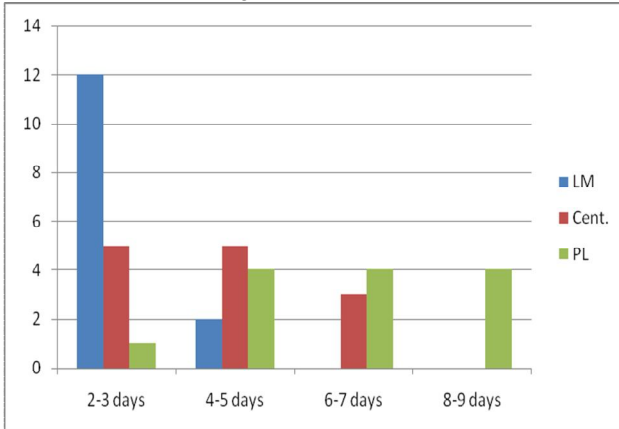


Fig.1f.Fatigue

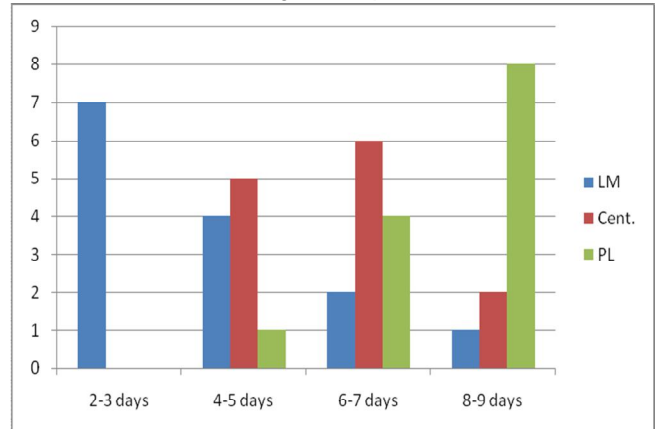


Fig.1g.Nasal complaints

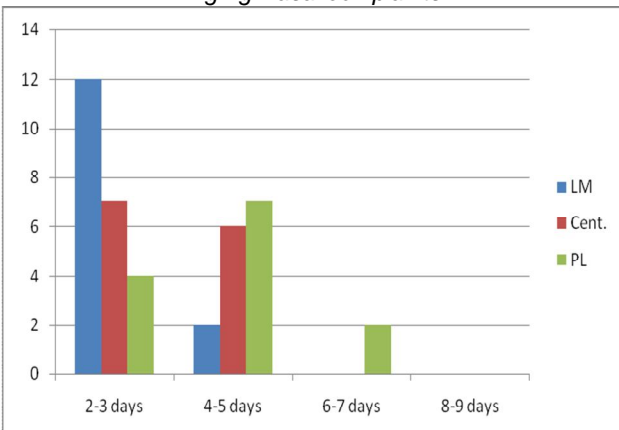
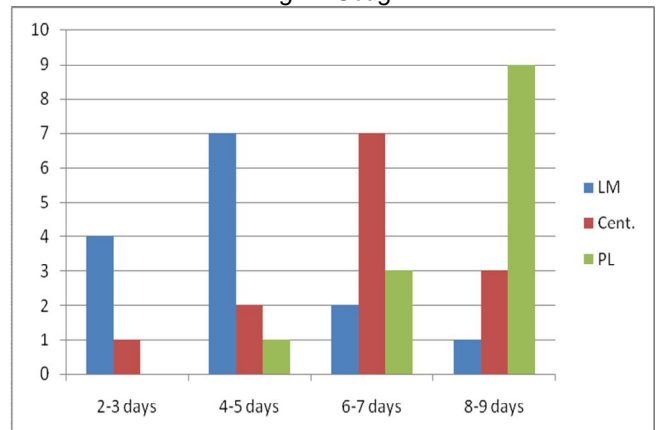
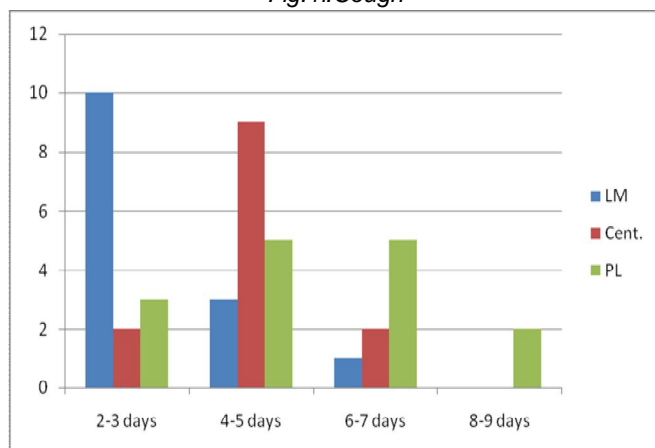


Fig.1h.Cough



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Fig.1i.Cough



Placebo: Placebo group of patients are given the doses constituted of 4 globules, size no 20 and repeated at 4 hours intervals.

Result

Number of achieved cases was 40 and all the cases showed marked improvement followed by cure. Total 13 medicines were prescribed out of which Arsenicum Alb. (6 cases), Gelsemium (4 cases), Bryonia Alb. and Rhus Tox (3 cases each) were found to be most effective. The study demonstrated that response to treatment with LM potency was quick and highly satisfactory as compared to the Centesimal Potency. Total 14 cases were given LM potency and most of the cases were cured within 4-6 days of treatment. Effect of Centesimal potency was also encouraging but response to treatment with this potency was slightly slower than LM potency. In this potency all, the 13 patients were cured within 6-9 days of treatment. Response to treatment with placebo group of patients (13 cases) were rather slower than LM or Centesimal Potency (Fig.1a-1i & Table.1).

Discussion

The overall outcome of present study shows that homoeopathic medicine has a positive therapeutic effect in the treatment of I.L.I. On the other hand, adverse effects of antibiotics and anti viral medicines are always not avoidable during treatment of the illness with conventional system of medicine. Effectiveness of influenza vaccines is also limited and variable. Due to the high mutation rate of the virus a particular influenza vaccine

usually confers protection for not more than a few years. Even it is possible to get vaccinated and still get influenza (WHO report 2006-2007).

The vaccine is reformulated each season for a few specific flu strains. It is for this reason, in country like India, as an alternative system of medicine homoeopathy is more safe and cost-effective as compared to the conventional system of medicine. Though I.L.I. is a self-terminating disease it has been confirmed from the study that homoeopathic medicines are more effective than placebo and response to treatment with the same medicines are also quick in comparison to placebo. In spite of the fact that all the age groups are susceptible to I.L.I. the study has demonstrated that prevalence of the illness is more in younger age group of patients as because they are frequently exposing to some of the predisposing factors like contact with without population (school, college, hostel, industry etc.), exposing in cold air and exposing in rain.

It is also evident that both the sexes are equally affected and the incidence is more in winter season but a considerable number of cases are also found in rainy and post rainy season. It has been found that two symptoms viz. cough and fatigue are continued to persist for a longer period specially cases which are treated with placebo. But no complication was observed during the course of treatment either with LM / Centesimal potency or placebo.

In spite of significant results, some shortcomings are also found during the course of study of the project. Few patients do not welcome frequent telephonic conversations with the physician regarding the illness. Some patients are not ready to visit the clinic for regular follow up for continuous 10 days. Moreover, current evidence from the study does not support the preventive effect of homoeopathic medicine in influenza / I.L.I. Earlier, Arsenicum Alb. has been declared as preventive for the illness but in this regard further research is to be carried out to consolidate the validity of the demand.

Table 1. Showing name of the medicine prescribed with potency and number of cases found effective.

S. No	Name of medicine used with potency	No. of cases prescribed	No. of cases found effective
1	Arsenic Alb.		
	LM Potency	03	03
	Centesimal Potency	03	03
2	Gelsemium		
	LM Potency	02	02
	Centesimal Potency	02	02
3	Bryonia Alb.		
	LM Potency	02	02
	Centesimal Potency	01	01
4	Rhus Tox.		
	LM Potency	00	00
	Centesimal Potency	03	03
5	Belladonna		
	LM Potency	01	01
	Centesimal Potency	01	01
6	Hepar Sulp.		
	LM Potency	00	00
	Centesimal Potency	02	02
7	Apis Mel.		
	LM Potency	00	00
	Centesimal Potency	01	01
8	Aconite Nap.		
	LM Potency	01	01
	Centesimal Potency	00	00
9	China		
	LM Potency	01	01
	Centesimal Potency	00	00
10	Natrum Mur.		
	LM Potency	01	01
	Centesimal Potency	00	00
11	Nux Vom.		
	LM Potency	01	01
	Centesimal Potency	00	00
12	Pulsatilla		
	LM Potency	01	01
	Centesimal Potency	00	00
13	Phosphorus		
	LM Potency	01	01
	Centesimal Potency	00	00

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