Homoeopathy in management of chronic ischaemic ulcer: An evidence-based case report

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Abstract
Introduction: Ischaemic or arterial ulcer occurs when there is an obstruction in the arterial supply to a particular part of the human body leading to necrosis. These are extremely painful types of chronic wounds. Treating arterial ulcers is a difficult task for the physician since supportive measures such as compression therapy and leg elevation are contraindicated. Surgical intervention is the ultimate approach to manage in conventional medicine. The homoeopathic system of medicine offers a wide range of medicines and a holistic approach to treat such cases non-invasively. Case Summary: A case of a 75-year-old woman who suffered from chronic ischaemic ulcer for the past year, successfully managed using frequent doses of homoeopathic medicines Arsenicum album and Calendula officinalis, is reported here. The duration of treatment was 4 months.

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Homoeopathy in management of chronic ischaemic ulcer: An evidence-based case report

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Abstract

Introduction: Ischaemic or arterial ulcer occurs when there is an obstruction in the arterial supply to a particular part of the human body leading to necrosis. These are extremely painful types of chronic wounds. Treating arterial ulcers is a difficult task for the physician since supportive measures such as compression therapy and leg elevation are contraindicated. Surgical intervention is the ultimate approach to manage in conventional medicine. The homoeopathic system of medicine offers a wide range of medicines and a holistic approach to treat such cases non-invasively. Case Summary: A case of a 75-year-old woman who suffered from chronic ischaemic ulcer for the past year, successfully managed using frequent doses of homoeopathic medicines Arsenicum album and Calendula officinalis, is reported here. The duration of treatment was 4 months.

Keywords: Amputation, Arsenicum album, Calendula officinalis, Dermatology, Homoeopathy, Ischaemic ulcer, Vascular diseases

INTRODUCTION

Chronic leg ulcer (ICD 10–L97) is defined as a break in the skin below the level of the knee persisting for more than 6 weeks and showing no tendency to heal after three or more months. The prevalence is 0.6–3% of those aged over 60 years, increasing to over 5% of those aged over 80 years.¹ A study revealed about 4.5/1000 population prevalence of chronic wounds in the community.² In the future, almost 10% of the population will develop a chronic wound, with a wound-related mortality rate of 2.5% contributing a significant burden to the community.³

Based on aetiology, chronic leg ulcers are of two types, venous ulcer (ICD 10–I87) which is the most common type, accounting for more than 90% of all cases, due to venous or valvular insufficiency and ischaemic ulcer or arterial ulcer, (ICD 10-I70) which constitutes only 10% but are the most painful and more challenging ulcers to treat.

Pathophysiology of chronic ischaemic ulcers is attributed to occlusions or blockage in arteries. The arteries become stenotic because of lipid deposition in arterial vessel walls, often due to high levels of circulating cholesterol or triglycerides leading to tissue hypoxia to deliver to the leg and foot, resulting in cell death and tissue breakdown.⁴ Other causes which trigger arterial ulcers are vasculitis, micro thrombotic diseases and trauma. The risk factors include advanced age, obesity, repeated pressure, comorbid conditions such as diabetes mellitus and hyperlipidemia, hypertension and autoimmune diseases such as sickle cell anaemia, leprosy and tuberculosis.⁴,⁵ Sedentary lifestyle, smoking and alcohol habits are other lifestyle risk factors.⁵

Deep ulcer with a punched-out edge, rest limb pain, increasing pain especially at night, friable granulation tissue, discharge with a foul odour and wound breakdown instead of healing are the features of ischaemic ulcers.

Ischaemic ulcers pose a significant public health problem. These impose a significant and underappreciated burden on the individual, the health-care system and society. Systematic studies reveal the negative impact of vascular ulcers on the quality of life of the patients such as disability and significant emotional trauma.⁶

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Current conventional treatment options are angioplasty, stenting and bypass grafting. Amputation for chronic ischaemia is performed when preservation of the limb is not possible, or gangrene develops.

At present, there are a multitude of therapeutic approaches for the management of chronic ulcers. However, Homoeopathy is one of the systems of medicine with a holistic approach to chronic conditions.[7] All physical, especially mental, and pathological elements are incorporated in the management of any disease.[8] It always had a unique prescribing strategy, unlike modern medicine which focuses primarily on the pathological component of the disease. The system discovered by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann has its own philosophy and perpetual doctrine. Due to the low prevalence of arterial ulcers, homoeopathic studies about management and outcome are highly needed. This case report describes the successful outcome of homeopathic treatment and demonstrates the scope of Homoeopathy in surgical cases.

**Patient Information**

A 75-year-old female Mrs. A, moderately built, belonging to low socio-economic status, a homemaker, consulted for the complaints of multiple painful ulcers in the right leg shown in Figure 1a-c for the past year.

**History of present illness**

The patient’s complaints started in December 2019 after her brother passed away suddenly. She was in extreme shock and did not cry. The very next day she developed a small swelling near the right ankle joint. Within 24 h, the swelling spread to the entire right lower limb. She was in extreme pain and had a high-grade fever, at one point she lost consciousness and was immediately rushed to the emergency department of a private tertiary health-care centre. After a thorough investigation, she was diagnosed with right foot cellulitis, acute compartment syndrome and acute renal failure (ARF). A fasciotomy of the right leg was performed as immediate management. Dialysis was done for ARF management during that period. The wound after the fasciotomy procedure failed to heal. Despite following regular cleaning and dressing, and intake of a wide range of antibiotics, the ulcer did not heal and was extremely painful. The patient became bedridden, further small ulcers started to appear and the colour of her leg changed to black. Surgical intervention was advised but the patient and her family members were hesitant to undergo it and instead explored other systems of medicine, thus finally came for homoeopathic treatment.

**Personal history**

The patient was a strict vegetarian and had an extreme aversion to the smell of meat. She would wake up early in the morning to perform regular prayers, and despite being disabled, did intense cleaning of her room. She had also become quarrelsome, always picking fights with her caregivers, which was not so before her disease condition. She preferred refrigerated cold water, though it caused physical discomfort. Deep-fried and oily food were her favourite food items.

She had no history of diabetes, hypertension, or any other comorbid conditions. Family history was insignificant. Her body temperature was 98°F; blood pressure was 120/80 mmHg and pulse rate was 76/min.

On examination, multiple, extremely painful ulcers were seen over the frontal and medial aspect of the right lower leg, right ankle joint and over the calf. The ulcers were deep, irregular in shape, with punched-out edge, with a hard lardaceous base. The larger ulcers were 5 cm × 2 cm and 3 cm × 3 cm respectively, with purulent discharge. Pitting oedema and inflammation were observed over the surrounding area [Figure 1a-c]. Peripheral pulse was diminished.

**Diagnostic assessment**

Doppler ultrasonography of the right lower limb (arterial and venous) dated October 3, 2020, revealed multiple calcifications in the superficial femoral and popliteal artery, and diffuse spontaneous oedema in the leg and foot.

Blood investigations revealed eosinophilia (absolute eosinophil count: 530/ul), raised mean corpuscular volume (94 fl), raised erythrocyte sedimentation rate (68 mm/h) and increased mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration (44 gHb/100 mL). Renal function test results were within the normal range.

**Totality of symptoms**

The case had unique mental generals such as fastidiousness, quarrelsome nature and ailments from silent grief. Physical generals such as a desire for cold water and oily and greasy food, aversion to cold air, and smell of meat became important.

*Figure 1: Before treatment (lesion as on 16 December 2020). (a) Arrows pointing to two ulcers with punched-out edge, shiny and hairless skin. (b) Pale unhealthy granulation tissue with yellowish exudate. (c) Small ulcers and significant oedema over the calf*
generals, and aggravation on taking cold food and drinks were recorded.

Particular symptoms of the lesion such as location, deep and painful in nature and colour of discharge were recorded.

**Analysis and evaluation of symptoms**

**Mentals**
- Fastidious
- Ailments from Grief, with silent
- Quarrelsomeness.

**Physical general**
- Cold drinks aggravation
- Desire for cold drinks
- Desire for Fat (oily) and rich food
- Aversion to smell of meat.

**Particulars**
- Ulcers in the lower extremity, ankle, painful in nature
- Deep ulcer
- Yellowish discharge.

**Miasmatic analysis**

A miasmatic evaluation of all the presenting symptoms was done which showed the predominance of sycotic miasm with some syphilitic features [Table 1].

**Repertorisation**

Based on the symptomatology, repertorisation was done using complete repertory from the Hompath Ice breaker version. *Arsenicum album* was the highest-scoring medicine covering the maximum number of rubrics [Figure 2].

**Table 1: Miasmatic analysis of the case**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Miasm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fastidious</td>
<td>Sycosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Sycosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ailments from Grief, with silent</td>
<td>Sycosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarrelsomeness</td>
<td>Sycosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold drinks aggravation</td>
<td>Psora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for cold drinks</td>
<td>Syphilis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for Fat (oily) and rich food</td>
<td>Sycosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aversion to smell of meat</td>
<td>Sycosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painful ulcers in lower limbs, ankle</td>
<td>Syphilis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow- coloured discharge</td>
<td>Sycosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occlusion of arteries</td>
<td>Sycosis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Therapeutic intervention**

Individualized homoeopathic medicines were selected according to the symptom similarity. *Arsenicum album* 30C (four medicated globules of size 40) was prescribed to be taken sublingually, twice a day for 5 days and *Calendula ointment* (external application) manufactured by Sharda Boiron Laboratories Ltd was prescribed.

**Follow-up and outcome**

The patient was followed-up and assessed for 5 months as shown in Table 2. During follow-up, a series of photographs were taken with the consent of the patient. Gradual healing and closure of the ulcer are observed in Figure 3. Complete healing and closure were observed [Figure 4a-c]. Causal attribution of changes was assessed, using the Modified Naranjo Criteria for...
Table 2: Timeline of follow up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of follow up</th>
<th>Main symptom</th>
<th>Prescription</th>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 December 2020</td>
<td>Painful ulcer with purulent discharge</td>
<td><em>Arsenicum album</em> 30C/b.i.d, 5 days <em>Calendula</em> ointment Placebo</td>
<td>Prescription after repertorisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 December 2020</td>
<td>The pain increased for about 3 days, colour of discharge changed from yellow to clear and the patient was distressed due to the pain</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>Homoeopathic aggravation observed and favourable change in discharge colour. This implied that remedy and potency selection were rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 January 2021</td>
<td>Pain reduced, watery discharge present</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>Favourable follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 February 2021</td>
<td>Pain reduced significantly; granulation tissue appeared in larger ulcer, smaller ulcers on the calf healed completely</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>Favourable follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 March 2021</td>
<td>The larger ulcer showed signs of healing, a slight increase in pain</td>
<td><em>Arsenicum album</em> 30C, b.i.d for 5 days <em>Calendula</em> ointment Placebo</td>
<td>Increase in symptom intensity, same remedy repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 April 2021</td>
<td>Ulcer replaced by scar tissues</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>Favourable follow-up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homoeopathy [Table 3]. Her caretakers reported a significant change in her quarrelsome nature. She became more adjustable and calmer after the healing of the ulcer.

After wound closure, the patient underwent rehabilitation therapy and walking ability was restored. Due to financial conditions and the pandemic crisis, the patient was unable to undergo blood investigations and Doppler investigations after the completion of treatment.

**Discussion**

In modern medicine, a case of ischemic ulcer is advised surgical intervention (revascularization).[9] High incidence of amputation is observed in chronic limb ischaemic patients since gangrene tends to set in them.[9] Impact of psychological factors and negative emotions on ulcer healing has been established in multiple evidence-based studies.[10-12] The present case report was aimed to present the remarkable effect of *Arsenicum album* in the management of chronic ischaemic ulcers. Effective pain management, and faster and more durable wound closure was the primary goal in management.

In this case, the patient suffered from painful ulcers for about a year in spite of regular dressing and allopathic medication which was significantly more than the average healing period of ischaemic ulcer.[13] This clearly indicated a blockage in the vital force of the patient that resulted in delayed healing.[14]

After repertorization, the top five suitable remedies were *Arsenicum album*, *Lycopodium clavatum*, * Sulphur*, *Mercurius sol.* and *Silicea*.

Any of the above medicines would have apparently palliated the complaints temporarily, but as recommended in the literature, only the most similar remedy covers the disease state of the patient as a whole, and thus would ensure long-term, curative results. In this case, *Arsenicum album* emerged as the simillimum by covering the maximum number of symptoms. *Arsenicum album* is a tri-miasmatic remedy suitable for chronic diseases and having traits of all three miasms, such as psora, syphilis, and sycosis. The peculiar, the characteristic mental expressions of *Arsenicum album* such as fastidiousness (demands things to be neat/clean/organized, in spite of her disability does cleaning work of her room), religious and thermal characteristics, refrigerated drinks causing general discomfort (chilly patient) were present. Furthermore, pathological symptoms such as hard painful ulcers in the ankle with yellowish discharge were also covered by *Arsenicum album*.[15] None of the other medicines had the above-mentioned characteristic features. Hence, the medicine was selected after referring to both repertory and Materia Medica. Since the case had structural changes, the remedy was given in 30C potency. Similar evidence establishing the efficiency of *Arsenicum album* in the management of gangrene, venous ulcer and diabetic ulcers is available.[8,16,17]

This simillimum, which was administered in low doses, acts as a complex nano-structures, sending weak, external/internal environmental stressor signal (hormetin) similar to that of disease condition to trigger the neural and cellular defenses (hormesis).[18]  

![Figure 3: After treatment (arrow showing significant reduction in the size of ulcer with the appearance of granulation tissue as on 26 February 2021)](image-url)
Srinivasagam, et al.: Ischaemic ulcer healed with homoeopathy

Calendula was used for its anti-septic properties as an external application to avoid further infection.[20] During the follow-up, there was an initial aggravation followed by the gradual improvement in the disease condition which was favourable as per Kent’s third observation.[21] The appearance of granulation tissue was observed, as shown in Figure 3. This indicated that the choice of remedy and its potency was accurate. Hence, the same prescription was repeated whenever the improvement of the case was stagnant. After about 4 months of treatment, the ulcer healed completely. Modified Naranjo criteria for Homoeopathy were applied to assess the likelihood of a causal relationship between homeopathic intervention and clinical outcome.[22,23] The total score of +9 shown in Table 3 validated the effect of given individualized homoeopathic medicine Arsenicum album and the outcome.

**Conclusion**

The above case report shows that homoeopathy could play a significant role in the management of surgical cases, provided the medicine is selected on the basis of individualization, applying totality of symptoms for remedy selection, while also considering the pathogenicity of the disease for potency selection. Further advanced studies like case series and randomized control trials could add more substance to this inference.
Patient perspective
The patient was satisfied with the treatment protocol and was surprised to see how the wound healing process was gentle and short. After the homoeopathic treatment, the patient was advised to undergo physical rehabilitation therapy, and now she is in good mental condition and able to engage in normal routine work. The treatment helped her not only to cure the wound but also to improve her quality of life, both physically and mentally.

Declaration of patient consent
Written informed consent was obtained before taking any patient photographs and using them for publication purposes.

Financial support and sponsorship
Nil.

Conflicts of interest
None declared.

References
Srinivasagam, et al.: Ischaemic ulcer healed with homoeopathy

L’homéopathie dans la prise en charge des ulcères ischémiques chroniques: un rapport de cas fondé sur des données probantes

L’Introduction: Un ulcère ischémique ou artériel se produit lorsqu’il y a une obstruction dans l’approvisionnement artériel à une partie particulière du corps humain conduisant à la nécrose. Ce sont des blessures chroniques extrêmement douloureuses. Le traitement des ulcères artériels est une tâche difficile pour le médecin puisque des mesures de soutien comme la compression et l’élévation des jambes sont contre-indiquées. L’intervention chirurgicale est l’approche ultime de la gestion en médecine conventionnelle. Le système homéopathique de la médecine offre un large éventail de médicaments et une approche holistique pour traiter de tels cas de manière non invasive.

Résumé du cas: Un cas d’une femme de 75 ans qui a souffert d’un ulcère ischémique chronique au cours de la dernière année, géré avec succès en utilisant des doses fréquentes de médicaments homéopathiques Arsenicum album et Calendula offcinalis est rapporté ici. La durée du traitement était de quatre mois. Une documentation photographique a été faite et présentée ici après avoir obtenu le consentement du patient.


क्रोनिक इस्कीमिक अल्सर के प्रबंधन में होम्योपैथी का उपयोग: एक साक्ष्य – आधारित केस रिपोर्ट

परिचय: इस्कीमिक या अर्टीरियल अल्सर तब होता है जब मांसपेश्यों के किसी भाग में धर्मनियों द्वारा होने वाली आपूर्ति अवश्य हो, जिससे कि नेॅक्रोसिस हो जाता है। ये क्रोनिक ज़ख्म अलग-अलग दर्द-नुकसान होते हैं। अर्टीरियल अल्सर का उपचार करना चिकित्सक के लिए एक कठिन कार्य होता है जो की कम्प्रेषन थेरेपी और लोग एलिबेशन जैसे सहायक उपाय नहीं किए जा सकते। पारंपरिक चिकित्सा में शल्य चिकित्सा ही अंतिम उपाय होता है। होम्योपैथिक चिकित्सा प्रणाली में कई तरह की दस्तावेज उपलब्ध है जिनसे बिना किसी चीर-फाड के ऐसे मामलों का उपचार संभव रहते हैं जो सही संबंध होते हैं। केस का सारांश: यहां एक 75 वर्षीय बुद्धि हिला का केस प्रस्तुत किया जा रहा है जो पिछले एक साल से क्रोनिक इस्कीमिक अल्सर से पीड़ित थी और होम्योपैथिक दवाओं जैसे अर्सेनिकम एल्बम और कालेंडला ऑफिसिनेलिस के अनेक खुराकों का सेवन करने से ठीक हो गई। उपचार की अवधि चार महीने थी। फोटोग्राफिक दस्तावेज-केसर मंसीज की अनुमति से प्रदान किया जा रहा है।

Homeopatía en el tratamiento de la úlcera isquémica crónica: Un informe de caso basado en la evidencia

Introducción: La úlcera isquémica o arterial ocurre cuando hay una obstrucción en el suministro arterial a una parte particular del cuerpo humano que conduce a la necrosis. Estos son tipos extremadamente dolorosos de heridas crónicas. El tratamiento de las úlceras arteriales es una tarea difícil para el médico, ya que las medidas de apoyo como la terapia de compresión y la elevación de la pierna están contraindicadas. La intervención quirúrgica es el enfoque definitivo para el manejo en la medicina convencional. El sistema homeopático de la medicina ofrece una amplia gama de medicamentos y un enfoque holístico para tratar estos casos de forma no invasiva.

Resumen del caso: Se informa aquí el caso de una mujer de 75 años que sufría de úlcera isquémica crónica durante el último año, manejada con éxito usando dosis frecuentes de medicamentos homeopáticos Arsenicum album y Calendula officinalis. La duración del tratamiento fue de cuatro meses. La documentación fotográfica se realizó y presentó aquí después de obtener el consentimiento del paciente.
顺势疗法：慢性缺血性溃疡的病例报告

引言：当人体特定部位的动脉供血受阻，导致坏死时，就会发生缺血性或动脉性溃疡。这些都是非常痛苦的慢性症状。动脉治疗对医生来说是一项巨大的挑战，因为像压迫治疗和抬腿这样的支持性措施是禁忌的。手术干预是医学中的一种管理方法。顺势疗法系提供了广泛的物质和非侵入性治疗此类病例的整体方法。

病例摘要：本文报告了一例75岁的女性病例，她在过去一年中患有慢性缺血性溃疡，并成功地使用了一定量的顺势疗法物质（Arsenic Album）和金花（Calendula Officinalis）。治疗时4个月。在获得患者同意后，在此处完成并出示了照片文件。