Evidence- based homoeopathy: Case report of alopecia areata in an 11 year old boy

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Abstract

Introduction: Alopecia areata (AA) is an autoimmune disease characterised by non-scarring hair loss in single or multiple areas of the scalp. The disease affects hair on the head or other parts of the body. AA occurs in people of all ages and affects 1-2% of human population. Homoeopathic literature shows that cases of AA have been treated successfully with homoeopathic medicines. Case Summary: This is the case of an 11 years old boy with alopecia areata. The case presented here is documented from Dermatology clinic at Regional Research Institute of Homoeopathy at Gudivada, Andhra Pradesh. The patient was treated with individualised homoeopathic medicine over a period of 3 years. There was significant improvement with homoeopathic treatment, with complete disappearance of bald patches without any recurrence.

Keywords: Alopecia areata, Autoimmune, Homoeopathy, Inflammation, Lycopodium clavatum

Introduction

Alopecia areata (AA) is an autoimmune disorder characterised by patches of non-scarring alopecia affecting scalp and body hair. The disease may be limited to one or more discrete, well-circumscribed, round or oval patches of hair loss on the scalp or body or it may affect the entire scalp (alopecia totalis) or the entire body (alopecia universalis). The lifetime incidence of AA is approximately 2% worldwide.[1] It affects people of all ages and both sexes. Loss of hair is considered as an autoimmune process leading to chronic inflammation due to the presence of organ-specific CD8+ T-cell-dependent response mainly affecting hair follicles. Various triggers such as infections, trauma, hormones and stress are known to worsen the disease. Genetic component plays an important role with a likelihood of severe symptoms seen in first-degree relatives. Its association with other autoimmune diseases such as vitiligo, lupus erythematosus, psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, thyroid disease, allergic rhinitis, pernicious anaemia, diabetes mellitus and rheumatoid arthritis is known.[2]

There is no specific treatment for AA cases. However, topical immunotherapy, intrallesional and topical or systemic corticosteroids are used in patients with AA. Other treatment options include immunosuppressant and biologics medicines. The patients under treatment with these drugs should be constantly clinically monitored due to the adverse effects that can be generated.[3] An important element of the management of AA cases is offering psychological support. With psychological support and education about the disease, long-term improvement can be achieved.[4] The diagnosis is clinical and generally simple in the common cases. In diffuse chronic forms, trichogram and biopsy is advised.[5]

Sharquie and Al-Obaidi[6] investigated the effectiveness of topical crude onion juice in the treatment of patchy AA in comparison with tap water. An Iranian research group investigated the effectiveness of topical garlic gel in the treatment of AA.[7] Xie[8] described a case report of a girl with AA treated with a traditional Chinese medicine concoction. Hay et al.[9] treated AA with aromatherapy with significant improvement. However, despite all the positive results, unfortunately, no study was of sufficient internal validity to provide robust evidence of the benefit of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in AA.

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Received: 06.03.2019; Accepted: 29.11.2019; Published: 27.12.2019.

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How to cite this article: Shivadikar AP. Evidence- based homoeopathy: Case report of alopecia areata in an 11 year old boy. Indian J Res Homoeopathy 2019;13:251-5.
Homoeopathic remedies can offer gentle and safe treatment for patients suffering from AA. Homoeopathy treats the person as a whole. This includes a detailed medical history of the patient, family and causative factors. Any underlying predisposition factor and susceptibility is also considered. Homoeopathic literature mentions many medicines for Alopecia namely Alumina, Arsenicum album, Floricaudum, Graphites, Natrum muraticum, Nitruc acidum, Phosphoric acidum, Phosphorus, Pix liquida, Selenium, Sepia, Syphilinum, Thallium, Vinca minor etc.[10]

**CASE REPORT**

**History**

An 11-year-old boy reported with extensive AA in the Dermatology Clinic at the Regional Research Institute of Homoeopathy, Gudivada, Andhra Pradesh, India. He presented with multiple bald patches on the head which had troubled him over 1 year. The boy was otherwise healthy without any other skin or nail changes. His parents were concerned about his condition and consulted a homoeopath. He used homoeopathic medicines for 3 months without any improvement. There was no family history of AA or any autoimmune disease in the family. The boy was very intelligent and confident. During his case taking, his mother informed that he was very obstinate and learnt things very fast, was very ambitious, had desires for sweet food, perspired profusely and his thermal reaction was hot. The patient has given his consent for his images and other clinical information.

The following characteristic symptoms were considered for repertorisation:
1. Intellectual
2. Obstinate
3. Ambitious
4. Desires company
5. Profuse perspiration
6. Desires sweet
7. Hair falling out
8. Hair baldness in patches.

Repertorisation was done using Hompath8 Software (complete repertory) (Mind Technologies private limited, Mumbai, Maharashtra State, India),[11] and the repertorial result is shown in Table 1.

**Intervention**

First prescription: On 20 October 2012, Lycopodium 30C, once a day for 1 month.

Basis of prescription: Medicine selected on the basis of individualisation, symptom totality and in consultation with Materia Medica was Lycopodium. Furthermore, Lycopodium was chosen as it covers the totality of symptoms and the patient’s thermal reaction was hot. Lycopodium 30C, once a day for 1 month, was prescribed. On subsequent follow-ups, potency was changed based on the assessment of improvement in bald patches.

**Follow-up and outcomes**

Follow-up of the patient was assessed monthly or as required. The date-wise detailed follow-ups are summarised in Table 2.

**Results**

The bald patches on the head showed new hair growth. Initially, Lycopodium 30C showed improvement. However, much significant improvement was observed with higher potency Lycopodium 1M. Bald patches on the head completely disappeared within a period of 3 years of homoeopathic treatment [Figures 1-3].
Table 2: Time line including follow-up of the case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Medicine with doses, repetition</th>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 November 2012</td>
<td>No change noted on bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 30C/once a day/30 days</td>
<td>As there were no changes observed, the same medicine was continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 December 2012</td>
<td>New hair growth appeared on bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 30C/once a day/30 days</td>
<td>As changes on bald patches were noted, Lycopodium 30C was repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 February 2013</td>
<td>Small hairs observed on bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 30C/once a day/30 days</td>
<td>As there was improvement observed on bald patches, Lycopodium 30C was continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 April 2013</td>
<td>New hair growth was noticed on bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 30C/once a day/30 days</td>
<td>As there appeared new hair growth on bald patches, the same medicine was continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 July 2013</td>
<td>No change observed on bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 30C/once a day/30 days</td>
<td>No change was noticed. Therefore, Lycopodium 30C was continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 August 2013</td>
<td>No change noted on bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 30C/once a day/30 days</td>
<td>Complaints persisted without any change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 September 2013</td>
<td>No improvement observed. Complaints status quo</td>
<td>Lycopodium 200/once a week Sac lac/once a day/30 days</td>
<td>In view of no further improvement, potency of the medicine was raised, Lycopodium 200 was prescribed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 November 2013</td>
<td>New hair growth appeared on bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 200/once a week Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>As there was improvement noted, Lycopodium 200 was continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 February 2014</td>
<td>Slow and continuous improvement observed in bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 200/once a week Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>Considering improvement in complaints, Lycopodium 200 was repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 April 2014</td>
<td>Improvement noted in hair growth on the head</td>
<td>Lycopodium 200/once a week Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>There was new hair growth. Therefore, the same medicine was continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 June 2014</td>
<td>Complaints persisted, no further improvement</td>
<td>Lycopodium 200/once a week Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>Complaints continued without any change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 August 2014</td>
<td>No further improvement in hair growth</td>
<td>Lycopodium 200/once a week Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>No further progress in hair growth was noted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 October 2014</td>
<td>Complaints status quo</td>
<td>Lycopodium 1M/once a week Sac lac/once a day/30 days</td>
<td>In view of no further improvement, potency of medicine was raised. Lycopodium 1M was prescribed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 November 2014</td>
<td>New hair growth observed on bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 1M/once a week Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>There was considerable decrease in the size of bald patches and new hair growth. Therefore, the same medicine was continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 January 2015</td>
<td>All bald patches covered with hair without any bald patch on the head</td>
<td>Lycopodium 1M/once a week Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>As there was marked improvement noted, the same medicine was repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 March 2015</td>
<td>Marked improvement observed in all bald patches</td>
<td>Lycopodium 1M/once a week Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>There was distinct improvement in the bald patches, Lycopodium 1M was repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 May 2015</td>
<td>Complete disappearance of bald patches on the head</td>
<td>Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>As there was complete disappearance of bald patches on head, Sac lac was prescribed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 August 2015</td>
<td>Significant improvement of hair growth on the head without any recurrence of new bald patches</td>
<td>Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>Complete disappearance of the bald patches on the head without any recurrence of any other new bald patch, Sac lac was continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 October 2015</td>
<td>Complete growth of hair on the head</td>
<td>Sac lac/once a day/60 days</td>
<td>Complete disappearance of bald patches on head, without recurrence of any bald patches, for over a period of 3 years of homeopathic treatment, Sac lac was prescribed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

The patient presented with multiple bald patches on the head. There was no family history of AA or other autoimmune disease in the family. This case treated with individualised homoeopathic medicine showed complete hair re-growth without any recurrence in a follow-up period. As there is no effective treatment in conventional medicine, a substantial number of AA patients resort to CAM. Itamura[12] reported an Alopecia universalis case treated with Mercurius with significant improvement. Willemesen et al.[13] used hypnosis to treat AA.

In this case, after careful history recording, repertorisation and consultation with Materia Medica, Lycopodium medicine was prescribed. The patient showed improvement in the beginning which proved correct selection of the medicine, but there was slow improvement with low-potency Lycopodium 30C. However, marked improvement was observed with higher 1M potency. This case shows the effective role of homoeopathic medicine in treating AA when prescribed on the basis of homoeopathic principles.
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CONCLUSION
Homoeopathy is a specialised system of medicine. It treats patient as whole and not just symptoms. A complete hair re-growth without any recurrence of bald patches is a documentary evidence [Figures 1-3]. This case shows a positive role of Homoeopathy in treating AA. However, as this is a single case study and AA is associated with a variable and unpredictable remission,[14] well-designed studies may be taken up for scientific validation of results.

Declaration of patient consent
The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. In the form, the patient has given his consent for his images and other clinical information to be reported in the journal. The patient understands that his name and initial will not be published, and due efforts will be made to conceal his identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Financial support and sponsorship
Nil.

Conflicts of interest
None declared.

REFERENCES
Case report of alopecia areata


Homéopathie fondée sur des résultats probants : rapport de cas d'alopécie areata chez un garçon de 11 ans

Introduction L'alopécie areata (AA) est une maladie auto-immune caractérisée par une perte de cheveux non cicatricielle dans des zones uniques ou multiples du cuir chevelu. Cette maladie affecte les cheveux ou les poils sur d'autres parties du corps. L'AA se manifeste chez les personnes de tous âges et affecte 1 à 2% de la population humaine. La littérature homéopathique montre que les cas d'AA ont été traités avec succès par des médicaments homéopathiques.

Resumen del caso: Se trata de un niño de 11 años con alopecia areata. El caso aquí presentado está documentado en la Clínica Dermatológica del Regional Research Institute of Homoeopathy en Gudivada, Andhra Pradesh. El paciente fue tratado con un medicamento homeopático individualizado durante un periodo de 3 años. Con el medicamento homeopático, se consiguió una mejoría significativa con la completa remisión de las zonas alopecicas sin recurrencia.

Homeopatía basada en evidencia: informe de caso clínico de alopecia areata en un niño de 11 años

Introducción La alopecia areata (AA) es una enfermedad autoinmune caracterizada por una pérdida de cabello no cicatrizante en zonas individuales o múltiples del cuero cabelludo. La enfermedad afecta el cabello de la cabeza u otras partes del cuerpo. La AA se produce en personas de todas las edades y afecta al 1 – 2 % de la población humana. La bibliografía homeopática muestra que los casos de AA han sido tratados con éxito mediante medicamentos homeopáticos. Resumen del caso: Se trata de un niño de 11 años con alopecia areata. El caso aquí presentado está documentado en la Clínica Dermatológica del Regional Research Institute of Homoeopathy en Gudivada, Andhra Pradesh. El paciente fue tratado con un medicamento homeopático individualizado durante un período de 2 años. Con el medicamento homeopático, se consiguió una mejoría significativa con la completa remisión de las zonas alopecicas sin recurrencia.

Evidenzbasierte Homöopathie: Fallbericht einer Alopecia areata in einem 11-jährigen Junge