

REVIEW ARTICLE

Homoeopathy for the management of Asthma - A review of Council's Clinical Research

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To conduct a review of the Clinical Research work of the Council in the field of asthma.

Methods: A comprehensive manual search of Council's publications pertaining to asthma was conducted to identify publications on the research work undertaken by the Council including CCRH Quarterly Bulletins (1982 to 2005), Clinical Research studies series and Indian Journal of Research in Homoeopathy (IJRH). Relevant research was categorized by study type and appraised according to study design with their clinical outcomes.

Results: Only 20 publications pertaining to Asthma were found and 10 were selected consisting of observational studies and drug oriented studies.

Conclusion: The positive outcome in controlling acute episodes of asthma, reducing the frequency and intensity of subsequent episodes and weaning of bronchodilators and other allopathic drugs have been reported. As only observational studies have been conducted, further pragmatic trials including randomized control studies are desirable.

Keywords: Bronchial asthma, Observational studies, Homoeopathy, CCRH, Bronchodilators, Drug dependence

INTRODUCTION

Asthma is one of the major public health problems for the developed and developing countries. Worldwide, it is estimated that 300 million people are affected with bronchial asthma. India has an estimated 15-20 million asthmatics with a prevalence of about 10% and 15% in 5-11 year old children.^[1]

Asthma prevalence is increasing despite the recent advances in its management^[2,3] including understanding the inflammatory nature of the disease, use of steroids with add-on long acting bronchodilators, use of devices to deliver the medications more appropriately and appreciation of the value of self-management education.^[2,3,4] The human and economic burden associated with this

condition is severe and the costs of asthma treatment to society could be reduced to a large extent through concerted international and national action.^[5]

A chronic inflammatory condition characterized by airway hyper-responsiveness to a variety of stimuli largely of allergic origin with reversible

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airflow limitation, symptoms of asthma exhibited are wheezing, shortness of breath and cough. It is a major cause of impaired quality of life with impact on work and recreational as well as physical activities and emotions.^[6] Current (day-to-day) control of asthma includes achievement of symptom improvement in activity, and improvement in lung function.^[7]

Homoeopathy is the second most widely used CAM in healthcare systems according to the World Health Organization.^[8] Studies have shown that homoeopathic treatment for respiratory diseases was associated with a significant reduction in the use and costs of conventional drugs.^[9] One study concluded with the fact that though randomized trials are required to prove the efficacy of Homoeopathy in asthma, there is a need for observational data to document the different methods of homoeopathic prescribing and how patients respond.^[10] Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy has conducted several studies to evaluate the therapeutic usefulness of homoeopathic medicines in the management of Asthma and has published vast literature on asthma including observational studies, case reports, theoretical compilations, literary research and personal experiences.

The objective of this review is to analyze the research work done by the Council till date in the field of asthma and the future research required to be undertaken in this less explored area. Analyses of these studies unveil the management strategy for asthma through Homoeopathy during the acute exacerbations, remission period and in patients already on anti-allergics and bronchodilators. The need at present is to conduct future research of pragmatic design to further evaluate available evidences.

METHODS

Search and Selection Criteria

We searched asthma-related publications of the Council from 1982 to 2014 published in Quarterly Bulletin, Clinical research studies series and the Indian Journal of Research in Homoeopathy. The publications pertaining to the clinical research work were only included in the review. All publications are categorized as observational studies/drug oriented studies. Other publications where in only literary work or personal experiences of the clinicians and the repertorial references of asthma were cited, are excluded [Table 1].

RESULTS

Out of 20 publications searched, 10 were included. These publications comprise of observational studies and drug oriented studies. The results of 5 observational studies were compiled and published as one research paper in Clinical Research Studies Series-I. However, 10 publications were excluded as these were not pertaining to the clinical research work of the Council. The excluded papers were the literary work, personal experiences of the clinicians [Table 3] and the repertorial references of asthma. The brief of the studies included in the analysis is given in Table 2.

The outcome evolved is described as under:

- **The observational study constituting the research work done at 5 units/institutes (Regional Research Institute, New Delhi (1978– 2000), Regional Research Institute, Gudivada, Andhra Pradesh (1984 – 2003), Regional Research Institute, Shimla (1987 – 2003), Clinical Research Unit, Udupi, Karnataka (1996 – 2003);(Compilation of 5 studies).**

This observational study conducted on 2641 patients carried out at 5 centers all over India suggests the positive role of Homoeopathy in reducing the frequency and intensity of acute exacerbations of asthma, during the acute attack *per se* and also in reducing the drug dependence. The outcome was assessed on subjective parameters as given in Text Box I.

Text Box I: Out come assessment

Cured	Complete removal of subjective & objective symptoms with no subsequent attacks and escaping aggravating season without getting any symptom at least for 2 years
Improvement	
Marked	Frequency, duration and intensity of attacks reduced remarkably. Tolerance to triggering agents increased
Moderate	Frequency, duration and intensity of attacks reduced moderately with some tolerance to triggering agents developed.
Mild	Partial reduction of intensity of symptoms and duration during active treatment only
No Improvement	No response after considerable period of treatment and status-quo-ante persisted
Worse	Aggravation of subjective and objective symptoms
Dropped out	Patient does not report back after first, second or third visit or stops treatment before the next aggravating season comes. Poor compliance by the patient in respect of specific or general treatment prescribed

Table 1: Included and excluded papers

Included	Excluded
<p>Quarterly Bulletin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparative study of <i>Arsenic album/iodatum</i>, <i>Kali carbonicum</i>, <i>Natrum sulph.</i> their usefulness in bronchial asthma: Anil Bhatia, Y.S. Chillar, Amar Bhatia, Vinod Gala Role of <i>Arsenic iodatum</i> during acute attack of asthma: Bhatia, R. Anil, K. Amar, S.R. Kothari Role of <i>Ocimum sanctum</i> in bronchial asthma: O.P. Sachdeva, S.K. Sharma Role of <i>Arsenic album</i> in bronchial asthma: O.P. Sachdeva, Y.S. Chillar, N. Suri, V. Saxena A clinical trial of <i>Cassia. sophera</i>: P.C. Mal, M.S. Pramanik Wheezing syndrome - a synopsis: S. R. Sharma Study of 413 cases of bronchial asthma treated with homoeopathic system of medicine: Hari Singh, Savita Katara S.K. Sharma Homoeopathy in bronchial asthma: Lalit Verma Useful effects of <i>Justicia adhatoda</i>-an indigenous drug on bronchial asthma: Vikram Singh <p>Clinical Research Series-I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bronchial asthma: A.K. Vichitra, S.R. Sharma, Bindu Sharma, K. Raju, B. Indira, E.C. Thomas, T.N.S. Kurup, Papula Prasad, G.C. Sahagal, Bhawan Singh and D.M. Rao 	<p>Quarterly Bulletin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homoeopathic Repertorial Index for Asthma: V.P.Singh, Vishal Chawla Asthma & Homoeopathy: Search on Internet: O.P. Verma Treatment of Cases of Bronchial asthma by a New Approach: M.L. Sehgal Clinical Cases of Bronchial Asthma: S.K. Zutshi My Experiences in Treatment of Bronchial Asthma: V.K. Gupta Bronchial Asthma, A study with reference to Repertory in the Selection of Drugs: R.P. Patel Answers Without Questions in Acute Asthmatic Situations: S.P. Koppikar Bronchial Asthma: Y.S. Chillar, Amar K.Bhatia, Vinod Gala Asthma An Enigma: K.G.K. Sastry Addition of Drugs and Rubrics for Asthma to Kent's Repertory of the Homoeopathic Materia Medica: Sanjeev Bhatia, Alok Kumar

C. sophera: Cassia sophera

Pathological parameters like Pulmonary Function Test, Clinical scores and QOL scores were lacking and were not evaluated. A uniform protocol was used with the common objective of determining the therapeutic efficacy of homoeopathic medicines in the management of Bronchial Asthma and to identify its reliable indications. Out of 2461 patients enrolled, 2107 patients completed the follow up for a reasonable period of one year to arrive at definitive conclusions. The findings of the study suggest that symptomatic homoeopathic treatment can be safely relied upon to manage asthma both during the acute phase as well as to check recurrence. The study also indicated that 758 patients had an attack of asthma after being exposed to house dust. In 908 patients (43%), tolerance to triggers was enhanced, leading to either total or marked relief in frequency, duration and intensity of attacks. Patients who were dependent on allopathic medicines like inhalers, oral and other medicines reported either less dependency or did not need them at all. *Arsenicum album* was proved to be the most useful remedy, in managing asthma including the acute attacks. It was prescribed to 1,042 patients and was found useful in 933 patients. 73 patients reported tolerance to change of weather with the remedies like *Arsenicum album*, *Kali carb.*,

Hepar sulph., *Phosphorus*, *Sulphur*, *Arsenicum iodatum*, *Bryonia alba* and *Carbo veg.* The conventional system emphasizes drug therapy which includes bronchodilators for releasing bronchospasm and controllers to inhibit the underlying inflammatory process. Likewise, homoeopathic system evolved a drug regimen of using acute remedies for the acute attack and constitutional deep acting medicines to prevent recurrence. Most of the patients were on bronchodilators and other allopathic drugs like inhalers, bronchodilators etc., reported either less dependency or didn't need them at all and were gradually tapered off with Homoeopathy. The drugs found useful in reducing the dependency of allopathic drugs include *Arsenicum album*, *Kali carb.*, *Hepar sulph.*, *Natrum sulph.*, *Merc. sol.*, *Phosphorus.*, *Sulphur.*, *Lycopodium.*, *Pothos.*, *Arsenic iod.*, *Antim tart.*, *Kali sulph.*, *Nux vomica* and *Pulsatilla*. *Viburnum opulus* and *Cassia sophera* were explored during acute attacks of asthma and the results were found satisfactory.^[11]

- Observational studies conducted at Clinical Research Unit, Bombay: (Compilation of 3 studies)** *Arsenic iodatum* was found useful in both atopic and non atopic asthma and in acute attacks of asthma. *Tuberculinum* has a complementary relationship with

Table 2: Asthma publications of the council

Author	Published title	Design	Patients	Summary of results	Observations
A.K. Vichitra, S.R. Sharma, Bindu Sharma, K. Raju, B. Indira, E.C. Thomas, T.N.S. Kurup, Popula Prasad G.C. Sahagal Bhawan Singh and D.M. Rao ⁽¹⁾	Bronchial Asthma: Clinical Research Series	Observational study conducted at 5 centres. Regional Research Institute, New Delhi (1978-2000), Regional Research Institute, Gudivada, Andhra Pradesh (1984-2003), Regional Research Institute, Shimla (1987-2003), Clinical Research Unit, Udupi, Karnataka (1996-2003) and Clinical Research Unit, Patiala, Punjab (1996-2003)	2461 were enrolled and data of 2107 was analysed	Role of Homoeopathy (i) Improvement status of the patients • 52 patients were cured from attacks of asthma during follow-up period of 2 years • Marked improvement: 856 patients no attacks/markedly lesser attacks in terms of frequency, intensity and duration of acute attacks of bronchospasm. Also these patients developed marked tolerance to triggering agents • Moderate improvement: 444 patients • Mild improvement: 522 patients • No improvement: 233 patients	Role of Homoeopathy a. Management of acute attacks: (Reduction of the frequency, intensity and duration of attacks of asthma) <i>Antim tart, Arsenic album, Carbo veg, Hepar sulphuris, Kali carbonicum, Natrum sulphuricum, Pulsatilla and Nux vomica</i> b. Remedies for tolerance to change of weather: <i>Arsenic album, Kali carbonicum, Hepar sulphuris, phosphorus, sulphur, Arsenic iodatum, Bryonia and Carbo veg</i> c. Remedies for asthma alternating with skin symptoms: <i>Graphites, Caladium</i> d. Remedies for drug dependence: <i>Arsenicum album, Kali carbonicum, Hepar sulph. Natrum sulphuricum, Mercurius solubilis, phosphorus, Sulphur, Lycopodium, Pothos foetidus, Arsenicum iodatum, Antimonium tartaricum, Kali sulphuricum, Nux vomica and Pulsatilla.</i> c. Intercurrent remedies: <i>Psorinum, Medorrhinum, Tuberculinum, Calcarea carbonica, Thuja and Sulphur</i>
Anil R. Bhatia, Amar K. Bhatia, S.R. Kothari ⁽²⁾	Role of <i>Arsenicum iodatum</i> during acute attack of asthma	Observational Study conducted at Clinical Research Unit, Bombay	115	(i) Improvement status of the patients a. Significant improvement (>75%) was noticed in 82.6% of patients b. Moderate relief (50-75%) was noticed in 8.7% of patients c. Mild relief(25%) was noticed in 8.7% of patients	a. Arsenic iodatum found effective in both atopic and non atopic asthma and in acute attacks of asthma. b. Tuberculinum has a complimentary relationship with <i>Arsenic iodatum</i> and enhances the action of the latter if given as an intercurrent remedy as evident in the prescribed 74 cases
Anil R. Bhatia, Y. S. Chillar, Amar K. Bhatia, Vinod V. Gala ⁽³⁾	Comparative study of the indications of <i>Arsenic alb./iod.</i> , <i>Kali carb.</i> , <i>Natrum sulph.</i> , their usefulness in Bronchial Asthma	Observational Study conducted at Clinical Research Unit, Bombay	207	a. <i>Arsenic alb./iod.</i> was prescribed to 96 patients b. <i>Kali carb.</i> was prescribed to 60 patients c. <i>Natrum sulph.</i> was prescribed to 51 patients	Arsenic alb- Dry productive paroxysmal cough, thick white expectoration with wheezing Kali carb. -Sneezing with dry productive cough and wheezing Natrum sulph. - Difficult thick greenish expectoration with wheezing
O.P. Sachdeva, Y.S. Chillar, D.D. Ger, N. Suri, V. Saxena ⁽⁴⁾	Role of <i>Arsenic album</i> in Bronchial Asthma	Observational Study conducted at Clinical Research Unit, Bombay	106	Significant improvement in long standing cases of asthma	Apart from verifying the symptomatology of each drug quoted in <i>Materia Medica</i> , new symptoms were added as proving symptoms in these patients
				Significant improvement in long standing cases of asthma	Asthma of nervous character, that comes after midnight, indicated in pallid patients who suffer from cold, having dry whooping cough must sit up in bed and hold the chest, anxious restlessness with prostration.

Contd...

Table 2: Contd...

Author	Published title	Design	Patients	Summary of results	Observations
Lalit Verma ^[15]	Homoeopathy in Bronchial asthma	Case studies of patients at RRI, New Delhi	36	Only four cases were described in this paper	<p><i>Cinchona</i> was found effective in one male patient with asthma since 22 years. , < meals > passing flatus and keeping head low in forward position</p> <p><i>Ipecac</i> relieved one female patient with asthma since 17 years. , constant nausea, decreased thirst with breathlessness and was allergic to wheat dust</p> <p><i>Natrum sulph</i> was found effective in a male child with breathlessness since 4 years. with asthmatic attacks < rainy season</p> <p><i>Aralia racemosa</i> are lived one female patient with breathlessness since 3 years. , excessive thirst with dry mouth during acute attacks</p> <p>Paroxysmal dyspnoea with cough, preceded by coryza and sneezing</p>
Vikram Singh ^[16]	Useful effects of <i>Justicia Adhatoda</i> - An indigenous drug on Bronchial asthma	Case studies of patients at CVU, Vrindavan	25	Complete relief- 5 patients 50% relief-7 patients 25% relief-2 patients No relief-7 patients Drop out-4 patients	Improvement status not indicated in the paper.
P.C. Mai, M.S. Pramanik ^[17]	A Clinical Trial of <i>Cassia Sophera</i>	Case studies of patients at CR(H), Calcutta	80		<i>Cassia</i> was found effective in controlling the acute paroxysms of asthma, but it is a short acting drug

Contd...

Table 2: Contd...

Author	Published title	Design	Patients	Summary of results	Observations
S.R. Sharma ^[6]	*Wheezing Syndrome- a Synopsis	Observational study at CRU, Shimla	331	<p>Improvement was noticed in 294 patients.</p> <p>Acute attacks of asthma were well managed with <i>Viburnum opulus</i> (found useful in 50 patients out of 81 prescribed) and <i>Cassia sophera</i> (found useful in 20 patients out of 27 prescribed). Both <i>Viburnum opulus</i> and <i>Cassia sophera</i> were found useful in 6 patients out of 9 prescribed</p> <p>Significant improvement was noticed in other patients prescribed with individualized constitutional medicine during asymptomatic chronic phase</p>	<p>Asthma started as a result of culmination of the chronic non resolving sinusitis as noticed in 24.47% of asthmatics</p> <p>Outsiders coming from plains and settling in hills get asthma surfaced easily as compared to the natives of hills due to sudden exposure to a vast variety of allergens coupled with high humid climate which is an established asthma precipitant</p> <p>Simultaneous use of homoeopathic medicines is perhaps the only method to treat drug dependent patients. The allopathic medicines should be withdrawn in a tapering off manner</p> <p>Controlling acute attacks of asthma with homoeopathic medicines generated a confidence in patients helping to build a constructive psyche in the patient leading to their satisfaction level</p> <p>Modalities regarding time, weather, place and other triggering agents which often appear quite characteristic and individualizing vary between different groups. These are common variant symptoms which should not be considered for prescription</p> <p>As asthma is a recurring disease of episodic nature, good compliance and follow up is needed to accomplish cure</p>

Contd...

Table 2: Contd...

Author	Published title	Design	Patients	Summary of results	Observations
Hari Singh ^[19]	*Study of 413 Cases of Bronchial asthma treated with Homoeopathic system of medicine	Observational study at RRI, New Delhi	413	<p>Arsenic alb relieved 102 patients out of 134 patients</p> <p><i>Aralia racemosa</i> relieved 3 patients out of 8</p> <p><i>Antim tart</i> relieved 8 patients out of 11</p> <p><i>Blatta Q</i>-relieved 10 patients out of 17</p> <p><i>Bryonia</i>-relieved 11 patients out of 19</p> <p><i>Cannabis sativa</i> relieved 3 patients out of 4</p> <p><i>Kali carb</i> relieved 20 patients out of 33</p> <p><i>Lachesis</i> relieved 5 patients out of 8</p> <p><i>Pulsatilla</i> relieved 25 patients out of 39</p> <p><i>Grindellia</i> relieved 9 patients out of 14</p> <p><i>Carbo veg</i> relieved 20 patients out of 28</p> <p><i>Nux vomica</i> relieved 11 patients out of 15</p> <p><i>Natrum sulph</i> relieved 18 patients out of 24</p> <p><i>Pothos</i> relieved 3 patients out 4</p> <p>Other useful remedies- <i>Ipecac</i>, <i>Sepia</i>, <i>Hepar sulfuris</i>, <i>Sambucus</i></p>	<p>273 cases were of Extrinsic asthma and 140 of intrinsic asthma</p>

*-The data of these studies are included in the compiled study of 5 centers of Clinical Research Series

Table 3: Summary of personal experiences of Clinicians

Author	Published title	Remedies found useful	Indications
K.G.K. Sastry ^[20]	Asthma an Enigma	Acute paroxysms: <i>Arsenic alb., Antim ars., Merc.sol., Hepar Sulph., Sambucus, Carbo veg.,</i> Chronic paroxysms: Acute attacks which responded to <i>Merc. sol.</i> and <i>Hepar sulph.</i> yielded completely → to <i>Kali iod.</i> Cases of Hep. sulph yielded to → <i>Natrum sulph.</i> with a sycotic base Cases of <i>Sambucus</i> yielded to → <i>Lachesis</i> and <i>Lycopodium</i> Cases of <i>Carbo veg.</i> yielded to- <i>Kali carb.</i> Complementary Remedies: <i>Arsenic</i> and <i>Thuja</i> <i>Dulcamara</i> and <i>Natrum sulph.</i> <i>Belladonna</i> and <i>Calc. carb</i>	<i>Natrum mur.:</i> Asthma attacks with psychological background <i>Carbo veg.:</i> Asthmatic attacks precipitated by stormy weather; tendency to catch cold, cold and clammy perspiration, air hunger < Early morning, > propping forward <i>Kali carb.:</i> Plethoric constitutions with early morning aggravation at 3:00 to 4:00 a.m., general sensitiveness to cold and irritability during the attack <i>Merc.sol.:</i> Asthmatic attack aggravated at night, frequent catching of cold and metallic taste in mouth
M.L. Sehgal ^[21]	Treatment of Cases of Bronchial asthma by a New Approach	<i>Opium, Ignatia, Chamomilla, Antim crud., Nuxvom., Lilium tig., Cocc.indicus</i>	<i>Opium:</i> Fear, Extra vagance of; Indifference to suffering; Irritable during pain <i>Ignatia:</i> Disconcerted, Irritable during pain <i>Chamomilla:</i> Impatient from pain, Anger interruption from <i>Antim crud.:</i> Imbecility, Foolish behaviour, Idiotic actions, Affectionate, Love sick, Anger, touched when weeping <i>Nux vom:</i> Quiet, wants to be, desires response & tranquillity, Anger <i>Lil. tig:</i> Fear of suffering, Desire to talk to someone <i>Cocculus:</i> Anxiety for others, Averse to being disturbed, Recognize everything but cannot move
S.K. Zutshi ^[22]	Clinical Cases of Bronchial Asthma	<i>Kali phos., Lycopodium., Kali nit., Calcarea carb., Thuja</i> Infantile asthma: <i>Aconite, Arsenic alb., Antim tart.</i>	<i>Kali phos:</i> Laboured breathing under depressed conditions or of examination fear in young school going children <i>Lycopodium:</i> Asthmatic patients having tendency to catch cold easily, rales in right lung, fan like motion of alae nasi, cold blooded patient < evening <i>Kali nitricum:</i> Asthma worse in early morning hrs. with excessive dyspnoea and increased expectoration with difficulty in drinking even a sip of water. Frequent bouts of cough not relieved even after expectoration <i>Calcarea carb:</i> Mentally active boy prone to catch cold, asthmatic attacks < night. Dry loose cough < morning. Suffocative bouts with heavy chest & sore feeling in chest < mental and physical exertion <i>Thuja:</i> History of repeated vaccination in mother, Intelligent child, timid in nature, attacks of asthma < wet weather, > Lying in knee chest position
V.K. Gupta ^[23]	My Experiences in treatment of Bronchial Asthma	<i>Kali nitricum, Apis., Calcarea sulph., Spigelia</i>	<i>Kali nitricum:</i> Immense exhaustion after acute attack of asthma, Dryness of mouth with increased thirst but unable to take sips of water <i>Apis:</i> Difficult stringy expectoration, has to wipe out expectoration from tongue, puffy face and presence of albuminuria <i>Spigelia:</i> Difficult respiration, > lying on right side

Arsenic iodatum and enhances the action of the latter if given as an intercurrent remedy as evident in the prescribed 74 cases. Significant improvement (>75%) was noticed in 82.6% of patients, moderate improvement (50-75%) noticed in 8.7% of patients and mild improvement (25%) noticed in 8.7% of patients. In another study conducted by the same institute on 207 patients, the symptomatology of *Arsenic alb./Iod, Kali carb.* and *Natrum sulph.* was verified as quoted in

Materia Medica, with new symptoms added as proving symptoms in these patients. The same institute also conducted a study on 107 patients exhibiting the role of *Arsenic album* in Bronchial Asthma^[12]

Drug oriented studies:

- *Cinchona, Ipecac, Aralia racemosa, Natrum sulph. Justicia* and *Cassia sophera* were the useful remedies found at RRI, New Delhi, CVU, Vrindavan and CRI (H), Calcutta^[15,16,17]

- However, there were certain other publications on asthma including “Wheezing Syndrome- A Synopsis” and “Study of 413 Cases of Bronchial Asthma treated with Homoeopathic System of Medicine” consisting of the case reports which have already been included in the compiled data of the 5 institutes/units published as Clinical research series
 - a. The paper on ‘Wheezing Syndrome’ consists of data of 313 patients at the CRU (H), Shimla with drawing of certain other observations like existing of a definite link between asthma and cold virus, chronic sinusitis, outside settlers in hills and dust mite. The outsiders coming from plains and settling in hills get asthma surfaced easily as compared to the natives of the hills due to sudden exposure to a vast variety of allergens coupled with high humid climate which is an established asthma precipitant. The homoeopathic remedies, *Viburnum opulus* and *Cassia sophera* Q were found beneficial in controlling acute attacks of asthma which developed a confidence in patients and ensured better compliance for further treatment. A large number of patients showed improvement with *Viburnum opulus* Q alone but most of the patients were benefitted both with *Cassia sophera* Q and *Viburnum* Q. The author has also tried to establish the role of ‘Placebo Effect Psychology’ in the treatment of asthma. Common Characteristic Variant Symptoms (CCVS) and Pivotal Expression were some of the expression based prescription. CCVS are the common characteristic variants of the disease and often inappropriately classified as individualizing symptoms. E.g. In some patients of asthmatic bronchitis where cough is an important common symptom, may experience nauseous feeling on coughing. This is a CCVS and not an individualizing symptom. Similarly the “Pivotal Expression” expresses patients idiosyncrasy which can be located, palpated or could be seen in a cause, in a modality, in a concomitant, in a pathology, in a generality or even in a common symptom^[18]
 - b. “Study of 413 Cases of Bronchial Asthma treated with Homoeopathic System of Medicine” concluded with 273 cases of extrinsic asthma and 140 cases of intrinsic asthma. Remedies including *Arsenic alb.*, *Kali carb*, *Pulsatilla*, *Carbo veg*, *Nux vomica*, *Natrum sulph.*, *Hepar sulph.*, *Spongia*, *Blata* Q were needed the most and also effectively controlled the acute paroxysms of asthma.^[19]

DISCUSSION

Patient surveys around the world show consistency in the reasons why people choose homoeopathic medicine as a form of treatment. Dissatisfaction with the results of conventional treatment, the adverse effects of drugs, and the invasiveness of conventional medicine are some of the reasons for choosing Homoeopathy. In developing countries, cost effectiveness is a major factor for opting this system of medicine. Homoeopathic medicines in high dilutions are probably safe and unlikely to provoke any severe adverse reactions. The high acceptability and the second most commonly used treatment in India, Homoeopathy evokes a greater patient response as evident from the observational studies and clinical trials conducted till date worldwide and by the Council.

Homoeopathy plays a major role in the management of asthma both in its acute and chronic asymptomatic phase with a check on subsequent recurrence of episodes in terms of frequency, duration and intensity. A vital part of individualized Homoeopathy is to measure the ‘package of care effect’ implying the effect of the medication as well as the consultation in treatment of diseases which needs to be explored in future studies. Prolonged use of homoeopathic medicines also succeeded in reducing the drug dependence on inhalers and bronchodilators, etc., The level of patient satisfaction can be gauged from the fact that the drop out rate was small and many patients followed up for a considerable period of more than 1 year a period sufficient to monitor annual recurrence.

With international interest in propagating Homoeopathy, there is a parallel push for more research. Some authors dispute the idea that randomized controlled trials are the optimum research method for Homoeopathy research. Difficulties lie in attempting to measure the outcome because the practice remains highly individualized. The outcomes of treatment in real-life settings when measured by patient satisfaction surveys about quality of life changes have presented positive evidence in many studies. Observational studies, a highly relevant and important measurement tool, show that patient satisfaction is high and that Homoeopathy improves quality of life.^[24] The studies conducted so far have derived certain conclusions defining the scope of Homoeopathy in both the acute and the asymptomatic chronic phase of asthma. Therefore, observational and case studies

cannot to be dismissed as low in the hierarchy of significance in Homoeopathy research which can be determined further and authenticated with the pragmatic trials.

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive search including the findings of the clinical research studies published by the Council suggests that the evidence on the usefulness of Homoeopathy in asthma is limited. The review reveals that future risk minimization is achieved by ensuring the absence of asthma exacerbations, no side-effects from medications and the prevention of accelerated decline in lung function over time. Bronchodilators, inhalers etc., should not be abruptly withdrawn to prevent sudden aggravation. They need to be gradually tapered off along with the use of homoeopathic medicines. Homoeopathic medicines act as efficiently when given in drug dependent patients as adjunct, as in non-drug dependent patients taking Homoeopathy alone. Remedies based on keynote symptoms, acute totality during the attack, constitutional prescribing and most important by the expressions of the patients exhibited during the attack were brought forth.

Management of acute attacks successfully with Homoeopathy played an important role in the treatment/research outcome. The patients who observed relief with Homoeopathy during acute attack subsequently reported for follow up thereby enabling the investigator to prescribe a constitutional similimum during the asymptomatic phase.

As only the observational studies were carried out in this field by the Council which reported positive results including high levels of patient satisfaction but the lack of a control group, makes it difficult to assess the extent to which any response is due to Homoeopathy. The above studies were based on the symptomatology of the patients and the pathological parameters including PFTS., clinical scores and Quality of Life scores were lacking. However, on the basis of this review alone it is not possible to draw firm conclusions on the effectiveness of Homoeopathy for asthma. Consequently, further research of pragmatic design including qualitative studies is desirable.

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Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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