

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

### Clinical Verification of *Ichthyolum* - A multicentric observational study

P.S. Chakraborty<sup>1\*</sup>, Subhash Kaushik<sup>2</sup>, S.S. Nain<sup>2</sup>, Pramodji Singh<sup>3</sup>, Ojit Singh<sup>4</sup>, K.C. Das<sup>5</sup>, Darshan Singh<sup>6</sup>, V.K. Singh<sup>7</sup>, M.K. Rai<sup>8</sup>, P.K. Pradhan<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy, New Delhi

<sup>2</sup> Central Research Institute, Noida

<sup>3</sup> Homoeopathic Drug Research Institute, Lucknow

<sup>4</sup> Regional Research Institute, Imphal

<sup>5</sup> Regional Research Institute, Kolkata

<sup>6</sup> Regional Research Institute, Shimla

<sup>7</sup> Clinical Verification Unit, Patna

<sup>8</sup> Clinical Verification Unit, Vrindaban

<sup>9</sup> Clinical Research Unit, Portblair

**Introduction:** *Ichthyolum* is reported to have pronounced action on various systemic affections in various literatures. On the basis of this literature, Council conducted a thorough proving on this drug earlier and subsequently clinical verification, to ascertain its clinical importance in Homoeopathy.

**Objectives:** The primary objective was to clinically verify the symptomatology of *Ichthyolum* as observed during its proving conducted by Council on this drug and the secondary objective was to ascertain the clinical symptoms.

**Method:** In the multicentre study, a total of 131 patients from all age groups & both sexes were enrolled from the O.P.D.s of the respective institutes & units of the Council. If *Ichthyolum* was found to be the similimum or covering maximum number of symptoms of the patient, the case was enrolled. The medicine was prescribed in different potencies as per the need of the case and in accordance with the homoeopathic principles. The progress was noted in a predefined follow up sheet to determine the effects of the medicine.

**Result:** It was found that 35 symptoms including 22 symptoms elicited during drug proving were verified, along with a good number of clinical symptoms, which were relieved completely or partially, exploring the wider area of the medicine for its therapeutic use.

**Conclusion:** *Ichthyolum* can be considered as an important medicine for Acne, Conjunctivitis, Constipation, Coryza, Cracked Lips, Dysentery, Eczema, Flatulence, Headache, Insomnia, Nausea, Psoriasis, Restlessness, Tonsillitis & Vertigo. The noted clinical symptoms are acne and scaly eruptions on whole body specially on joints, burning after itching, warts and polydypsia. All these verified symptoms confirm the scope of its therapeutic action.

**Keywords:** Clinical verification; Homoeopathy; *Ichthyolum*.

## INTRODUCTION

The clinical verification of symptoms, obtained during proving, is the keystone of the homeopathic

system of medicine. It is a link between pathogenetic symptoms and curing of patients presenting these symptoms. Before Hahnemann, the clinical application of the medicines were guided by the speculative indications, mainly on the basis of authority and without conducting a proper and thorough experiment of drug substances to claim their clinical usefulness. It was Hahnemann who introduced the logical concept of drug proving by conducting a safe and thorough experimentation of a drug, directly on human beings, in order to find out its clinical usefulness, in a scientific

### Address for correspondence

\*Dr. P.S. Chakraborty,

Scientist -3

Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy,

61-65, Institutional Area, Janakpuri, New Delhi -110058.

Email: [drpsch@yahoo.co.in](mailto:drpsch@yahoo.co.in)

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and easily acceptable way, otherwise known as clinical verification.<sup>1</sup>

*Ichthyolum* or *Ichthyol* is a natural product, having thick reddish brown colour with bituminous odor & taste. Its chemical name is Ammonium Ichthyol Sulphonate  $C_{28}H_{36}S_3O_6(NH_4)_2$ . One of its important constituent Ichthyosulphonic acid, is soluble in water but insoluble in strong alcohol or concentrated ether and is obtained by dry distillation from a bituminous mineral found in the Tyrol which is rich in fossilized remains of fish. It has been in use by the other systems of medicine as an external application in burns, in enlarged glands, diseases of skin like erysipelas, eczema, acne, rheumatic gout, urticaria etc. and internally for tuberculosis, measles, pertusis and rheumatism. Both internally & externally it has been used for catarrhal & ulcerative conditions of the eyes, nose & throat.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

It is an anti-inflammatory, anodyne, antipruritic, antiseptic and astringent due to presence of sulphur in it. In larger doses it increases peristalsis and has a laxative action on the bowels. When applied locally, it acts as a reducing agent and exerts a peculiar contractile effect upon the vascular tissues and thus reduces heat, swelling & pain.<sup>5</sup> Merck has reported that it is readily oxidisable and moreover is a powerful vasomotor constrictor & having the ability to penetrate the unbroken skin.<sup>2</sup> Clinically it is reported to be used by modern system of medicine in various skin affections like acne, erysipelas, eczema, rheumatism, neuralgia, peritonitis, catarrh, phthisis, acute bronchitis, chronic metritis, inflammatory conditions of the tubes and ovaries, erosion of cervix, leucorrhoea, pruritus vulva, cystitis, urethritis, burns, frost-bite and injuries.<sup>5</sup>

Ichthyolum was introduced to Homoeopathy by Dr. Wm. H. Dieffenbach of New York and has not been proved thoroughly, except for some fragmentary proving.<sup>2</sup> The mother tincture (Q), having drug strength of 1/10 of *Ichthyolum* is prepared by adding purified water in sufficient quantity. The subsequent higher potencies like 6X and higher are prepared with dispensing alcohol.<sup>6</sup> Its homoeopathic uses as mentioned in literature, indicates its usefulness in winter cough of old people, polyarthritis, chronic rheumatism, in uric acid diathesis, gout, tuberculosis and also in aiding nutrition.<sup>3,4,7</sup>

The Council therefore conducted a thorough proving of this drug during the period of 2000-2001 at its two Drug Proving centres at Midnapur and Ghaziabad. The symptoms observed during the proving, along with the symptoms found in other available *Materia Medica* were subjected to Clinical Verification.

## OBJECTIVES

Primary objective: To clinically verify the symptomatology of *Ichthyolum* as observed during the proving conducted by the Council on this drug.

Secondary objective: To ascertain the clinical symptoms (which were not observed during the proving of the drug but disappeared in the sick during the application of the medicine, either partially or completely).

## METHODOLOGY

Patients for the study were enrolled from the OPDs of eleven Institutes/ Units of the Council, viz. Central Research Institute, Noida (U.P.), Homoeopathic Drug Research Institute, Lucknow (U.P.), Dr. Anjali Chatterji Regional Research Institute of Homoeopathy, Kolkata (W.B.), Regional Research Institute, Puri (Odisha), Regional Research Institute, Shimla (H.P.), Regional Research Institute, Gudivada (A.P.), Regional Research Institute, Imphal (Manipur), Clinical Research Unit, Port Blair (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), Clinical Verification Unit, Ghaziabad (U.P.), Clinical Verification Unit, Patna (Bihar), Clinical Verification Unit, Vrindaban (U.P.)

131 patients comprising of 62 males and 69 females were prescribed *Ichthyolum* according to the similarity of symptoms, during the period from October 2005 to March 2010. The medicine was procured from the licensed pharmacy in various potencies, viz. 30C, 200C and 1M. The patients were from all age groups and both sexes. Patients who were on any medication for one week prior to being enrolled in the study were put on a wash-out period of 7 days. The patients, who were suffering from any systemic disease and were under regular medication for that, were excluded from the study and treated in the general OPD of the institute. An informed written consent was obtained from the eligible subjects before initiating the study.

The presenting symptoms and signs of the patients were recorded in a predefined case recording proforma. After doing the anamnesis of each enrolled case, special attention was given to the peculiarity of complaints, their peculiar sensations, modalities and any associated or concomitant symptom with the main symptom and also the causation, the physical and mental generals., thermal reactions, cravings, aversions, perspiration, sleep, dreams, appetite, thirst, stool, urine etc.

Taking into consideration the totality of the case, the symptoms were repertorised using a repertory prepared for this purpose by the Council and finally the *Materia Medica* was consulted to see if the characteristics of the patient matched with those of *Ichthyolum*.

Thus, if *Ichthyolum* was found suitable for the patient on the basis of similarity, it was prescribed in 30C potency. The changes in presenting symptoms and signs were recorded during the follow-up visits. Any kind of improvement was followed by placebo. If there was no change in the symptoms and signs for a considerable period, next higher potencies like 200C & 1M potencies were prescribed. If no change was observed, even after change of potencies, the case was closed and considered as a clinical failure. If the patient presented with new symptoms of mild intensity, placebo was prescribed; while appearance of severe symptoms, sufficient to cause considerable discomfort to the patient, called for change of medicine.

## RESULTS

The data of all the cases was collected, compiled and analysed. The clinically verified symptoms are given in Table-1 along with the number of patients prescribed

on the basis of symptoms available or proving records (drug proving profile generated by CCRH) and also the number of patients who got relief after administration of *Ichthyolum*. The numerical superscripted along with the symptoms in the Table-1 denote the literature cited. Part of the main symptom (character, modalities, concomitants, etc.) which was not observed during the proving but disappeared in the patients during the study either partially or completely and are not mentioned in the referred literature, has been kept along with the main symptom in italics. In the column 'Improvement status', the first figure denotes the number of patients who had the symptom and to whom the medicine was prescribed and the second figure denotes the number of patients who got relief of the same symptom. The table -2 contains those symptoms which were not found in the proving literature of the medicine, but found to have disappeared clinically after the application of *Ichthyolum*, otherwise known as *clinical symptoms*. The details of participants have been given in figure 1.

**Table 1: Clinically verified symptoms observed during the study**

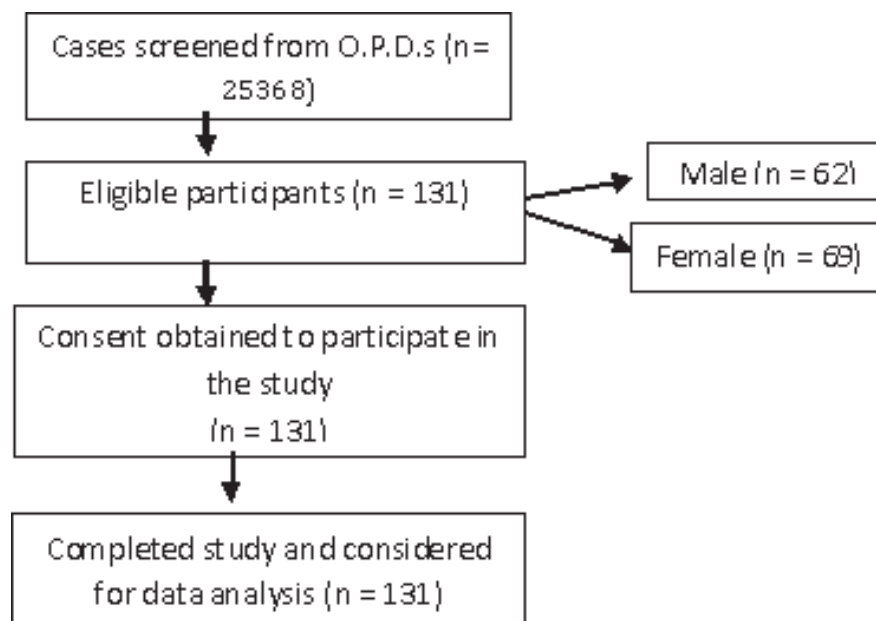
Location	Symptom	Improvement Status
MIND	Great mental irritability <sup>7,8</sup> with pain in chest <sup>8</sup>	3,2
	Forgetful, lack of concentration <sup>2,3,7</sup>	6,1
	Restlessness <sup>8</sup>	7,7
VERTIGO	Vertigo <i>agg.</i> while sitting <sup>8</sup>	4,4
	with dizziness <sup>8</sup>	1,1
HEAD	Frontal headache <sup>2,3,7,8</sup> <i>agg.</i> in evening <sup>8</sup> <i>amel.</i> by washing head & face with cold water <sup>2,8</sup>	7,6
	Pain and heaviness on vertex <i>agg.</i> from heat of sun <i>amel.</i> cold-open air & hard pressure <sup>8</sup>	8,6
EYE	Pain & heaviness in eyes, <i>agg.</i> from reading, <i>amel.</i> from rest <sup>8</sup>	15,13
NOSE	Bland discharge from nose with constant sneezing <i>agg.</i> from change of temperature <sup>2</sup>	1,1
FACE	Burning in acne on face after scratching and itching in acne <sup>8</sup>	1,1
MOUTH	Tongue white coated in the centre, <sup>2</sup> <i>both edges and tip is normal in colour</i>	11,7
	Bitter taste in mouth <sup>8</sup>	14,12
	Lower lip dry, cracked in centre with sore pain <sup>2</sup>	1,1
THROAT	Burning pain in throat <i>amel.</i> from cold water <sup>2</sup>	1,1
	Pain in right tonsil <i>agg.</i> from swallowing, <sup>2,8</sup> <i>amel.</i> from gargling with hot saline <sup>8</sup>	10,10
	Dryness of pharynx with desire for cold drinks which ameliorates the troubles <sup>2</sup>	1,1
STOMACH & ABDOMEN	Appetite increased <sup>2,3,7,9</sup>	5,5
	Nausea <sup>3,7,8,9</sup> with loose stool <i>agg.</i> in morning <sup>8</sup>	4,4
	Nausea with bitter taste in mouth <sup>2</sup>	3,2
	Flatulence <sup>8</sup>	4,3
	Flatulence with pain in abdomen <i>agg.</i> before stool, <i>amel.</i> after stool <sup>8</sup>	16,14
	Gripping (pain) in umbilical region <sup>2,3,7</sup> with urging for stool, <i>amel.</i> by bending forwards <sup>2</sup>	5,4
RECTUM & STOOL	Constipation-hard, offensive stool <sup>8</sup>	15,13

Location	Symptom	Improvement Status
<b>U R I N A R Y SYSTEM</b>	Stool – loose watery, yellow <sup>2,8</sup> and frequent <sup>8</sup>	
	Burning pain in urethra <sup>2,8</sup> and meatus <sup>2,3,7</sup> while in urination <sup>8</sup>	11,7
<b>COUGH</b>	Urine increased in quantity and in frequency <sup>3,7,9</sup>	6,4
	Cough dry, irritating worse at night <sup>2</sup> and in morning	2,1
<b>BACK &amp; EXTREMITIES</b>	Cough dry worse from change of weather <sup>2</sup> followed by vomiting	1,1
	Cough hacking <sup>2</sup>	1,1
	Pain in right shoulder joint extending to deltoid <sup>2</sup>	1,1
	Weakness of right arm, as if paralyzed <sup>2</sup>	1,1
	Dull aching pain in calf <sup>2</sup> , right side, inability to sit still	1,1
<b>SLEEP SKIN</b>	Lameness in right shoulder and right lower extremity <sup>2,3,7</sup> on beginning to move, amel. from continued motion <sup>2</sup>	1,1
	Sleep disturbed <sup>8</sup> , due to itching	6,4
	Eczema – itching, heat and irritation <sup>3,7,9</sup>	3,1
	Psoriasis, <sup>3,7</sup> eruptions on legs, thighs, back and abdomen with mild itching sensation	4,1
	Mild itching, heat and irritation in eruptions <sup>3,7,9</sup>	5,2

**Table 2 : Clinical Symptoms**

Location	Symptom	Improvement Status
<b>NOSE</b>	Chronic coryza with whitish thick discharge and stuffed up feeling	1,1
<b>FACE</b>	Dryness of face with itching	1,1
	Small pimples with burning sensation <i>agg.</i> on scratching	18,10
	Itching <i>amel.</i> by washing with cold water	2,2
	Multiple small eruptions on forehead without itching	7,5
<b>MOUTH</b>	Taste bad	2,2
<b>THROAT</b>	Enlarged both tonsils, painful worse on swallowing and better by hot saline water	2,2
	Inflammation of right tonsil	2,2
<b>STOMACH &amp; ABDOMEN</b>	Profuse thirst for large quantities	7,5
	Appetite decreased	1,1
<b>R E C T U M &amp; STOOL</b>	Soft stool	1,1
<b>EXTREMITIES</b>	Pain in knee joint better from continued motion	1,1
	Numbness of arms and fingers <i>amel.</i> by pressure	1,1
<b>SKIN</b>	Eczema on both palms and soles	1,1
	Acneform eruptions on both the thighs with itching	1,1
	Itching eruption on fingers of both hands	3,2
	Warts on wrist	7,5
	Scaly eruption with itching worse from heat, night	4,2
	Scaly eruption on elbow joints, ankle joints and lobes of ears (Psoriasis)	2,1
	Eruptions in small spots, reddish in color	1,1
<b>GENERALITIES</b>	Hypersensitive to cold	1,1

**Figure 1:** Flow chart showing the participants in this study.



**REPERTORY**

A concise repertory of the verified symptoms according to the structure of the Kent's Repertory of the Homoeopathic Materia Medica has been compiled for quick reference. Rubrics and sub-rubrics in italics are new rubrics i.e. not mentioned in Kent's repertory while rubrics and sub rubrics in roman letters are existing rubrics of the said repertory which were reconfirmed through verification in this study

*washing head and face with cold water amel.*

**Vertex**, *heaviness with*

air, cold, amel.

air, open, amel

*heat of sun, from*

pressure, amel.

**MIND**

**CONCENTRATION**

difficult

**FORGETFUL**

**IRRITABILITY**

*chest pain, with*

**RESTLESSNESS**

**VERTIGO**

**SITTING**, while

*dizziness, with*

**HEAD**

**PAIN, Forehead**

evening

**EYE**

**PAIN** *heaviness, with*

reading

rest, amel.

**EAR**

**ERUPTIONS**, *scaly*

lobes, on

**NOSE**

**CORYZA**

chronic, long-continued

*stuffed up, feeling, with*

**DISCHARGE**

bland  
*change of temperature, from*  
*constant sneezing, with*  
thick  
white

**OBSTRUCTION**, sensation if

## FACE

### CRACKED lips

lower lip, *centre in*  
*sore pain, with*

### DRYNESS

*itching, with*  
lips, *lower, in*  
*centre*

### ERUPTIONS

acne  
*burning and itching, with*  
*scratching, after*  
pimples, forehead  
burning, with  
*scratched, after*

### ITCHING

*washing with cold water, amel.*

## MOUTH

### DISCOLORATION

**Tongue**, white, centre

### TASTE

bad  
bitter

## THROAT

### DRYNESS

*pharynx*

*desire for cold drinks, with*

**ENLARGEMENT** of tonsils

**INFLAMMATION, Tonsils, right**

### PAIN

burning  
cold, drinks amel.

**Tonsils, right**

*gurgling with hot saline, amel.*

*swallowing, on*

## STOMACH

### APPETITE

diminished  
increased

### NAUSEA

morning  
*bitter taste in mouth, with*  
*loose stool, with*

### THIRST

extreme large quantities, for

## ABDOMEN

### ERUPTIONS

*psoriasis, itching with*

### FLATULENCE

### PAIN

stool, before  
after, amel.  
cramping, griping,

### Umbilicus

bending, forward amel.  
*urging for stool, with*

## RECTUM

### CONSTIPATION

**STOOL**

**FREQUENT**

**HARD**

**ODOR**

offensive

**SOFT**

**THIN**, liquid

**WATERY**

**YELLOW**

**BLADDER**

**URINATION**

frequent

**URETHRA**

**PAIN**, burning

urination, during

meatus

**URINE**

**COPIOUS** (increased)

**COUGH**

**DRY**

morning

night

temperature, from change of

*vomiting, follows*

**HACKING**  
**IRRITATING**

**BACK**

**ERUPTIONS**, psoriasis

*itching, with*

**EXTREMITIES**

**ERUPTION, Elbow**

psoriasis

**Hand, palm**

*eczema*

**Hand, Fingers**

*itching*

**Thigh**, pimples, itching

*psoriasis*

*itching, with*

**Leg**

psoriasis

*itching, with*

**Ankle, psoriasis**

sole of

*eczema*

**EXCRESCENCES** (Warts)

*on wrists*

**LAMENESS**

**Shoulder, right**

*beginning to move, on*

*continued motion, amel.*

**Lower Limbs**

*right*

*beginning to move, on*

*continued motion, amel.*

## NUMBNESS

### Upper Arm

#### Fingers

*pressure, amel.*

## PAIN

### Shoulder

right

*extending to deltoid*

### Knee

motion, continued, amel.

aching

*calf, right*

*inability to sit still*

### WEAKNESS, Upper Arm, right

*paralyzed, as if*

## SLEEP

### DISTURBED

*itching, from*

## SKIN

### ERUPTIONS

eczema

*heat, irritation & itching, with*

itching

*heat & irritation, with*

scaly

*night*

## GENERALITIES

**HEAT**, vital, lack of

## DISCUSSION

During the study, 35 (thirty five) symptoms including 22 (twenty two) symptoms of drug proving conducted by the Council were verified, along with a good number of clinical symptoms, which were relieved completely or partially. *Ichthyolum* has been used in old school therapeutics as an external application and internally in skin affections, rheumatism, scrofula, nephritis and gonorrhoea. But as revealed from this study, it has prompt action on gastrointestinal system, eyes, tonsils, mouth, head and urinary system.

Dryness and burning pain are the two characteristic symptom of this medicine. While dryness is marked in lips, pharynx and rectum (producing dry, hard stool), the burning pain is marked in skin (acne), throat and urethra.

Its usefulness in gastrointestinal system is marked with flatulence with pain in abdomen, worse before stool and relieved after stool. Its action is also proved in cramping pain in umbilical region with urging for stool and relieved by bending forwards. Apart from this, it is also beneficial to the patients complaining of nausea with bitter taste in mouth and loose stool.

Its action on head is centered in frontal region worse in evening and better from cold application, and this may be associated with heaviness feeling in vertex which gets worse from sun heat. Its usefulness in vertigo is marked with aggravation while sitting.

In upper respiratory tract, its action is more marked in catarrhal condition of nose with bland discharge and constant sneezing worse from change of temperature.

Its action on glandular system is manifested in tonsillitis, which is more marked on right side and pain is better from hot saline gurgles.

It is found in the study that most of the symptoms of *Ichthyolum* were relieved from cold applications including frontal headache, pain and heaviness in vertex, burning pain in throat, dryness of pharynx and itching of face. Hence it becomes a general modality of the drug.

The study shows that *Ichthyolum* can be considered as an important medicine for certain clinical conditions like headache, vertigo, eye pain, acne, tonsillitis, dyspepsia, abdominal colic, constipation, diarrhea, urinary tract infections, dry cough, disturbed sleep, warts and itching eruptions on skin. It may also be used in mental restlessness, forgetfulness and insomnia.



Besides these, the medicine was also found to relieve acne and scaly eruptions on whole body specially on joints, burning after itching, eczematous eruptions, enlarged tonsils, warts on wrist joint and polydipsia. All these symptoms have emerged as clinical symptoms of *Ichthyolum*.

## CONCLUSION

The study confirms many symptoms of the drug proving conducted by the Council and at the same time many existing symptoms of other Materia Medica were re-confirmed, signifying its more effective clinical use. All these verified symptoms provide more information about this medicine and confirm the scope of its wider therapeutic action. This medicine is reported to have wider use in modern system of medicine in the treatment of all forms of rheumatism, arthritis, sciatica and gout either externally or internally in inflammatory conditions of female reproductive organs, as reported in literature but not observed during the trial of this drug under our study. Hence, enough scope is still remaining to explore the therapeutic usefulness of this medicine in homoeopathy. Therefore, further studies may be conducted to re-verify the symptoms repeatedly & to deduce its more clinical importance so that more reliable characteristics of *Ichthyolum* can be ascertained.

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**परिचय :** विभिन्न साहित्य में शरीर की आंतरिक व्यवस्थाओं पर इकथायोलम के प्रभाव देखे गये हैं। इस साहित्य के आधार पर परिषद् ने होम्योपैथी में इसकी नैदानिक महत्त्व का पता लगाने के उद्देश्य से पहले पूर्ण सत्यापन और तदुपरांत नैदानिक रूप से सत्यापन किया।

**उद्देश्य :** इस अध्ययन का प्रारंभिक उद्देश्य परिषद् द्वारा इकथायोलम के प्रमाणन के दौरान अवलोकित किये गये लक्षणों एवं इकथायोलम के लक्षणों को नैदानिक रूप से सत्यापित करना था और द्वितीय इसके नैदानिक लक्षणों का सत्यापन था।

**पद्धति :** इस बहुकेंद्रिक अध्ययन के दौरान, परिषद् के विभिन्न संस्थानों/इकाईयों के बाह्य रोगी विभागों से सभी आयु समूहों के महिला एवं पुरुषों के कुल 131 मरीजों को नामांकित किया गया। यदि इकथायोलम सिमिलिमम पाया गया या मरीजों के अधिकाधिक लक्षण इसमें पाये गये, तभी रोगी को अध्ययन में नामांकित किया गया। रोग एवं होम्योपैथी सिद्धांतों के आधार पर विभिन्न पोटेंसियों में औषधि दी गयी। औषधि के प्रभावों को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु प्रगति को एक पूर्व-निर्धारित अनुवर्तन पत्र में दर्ज किया गया।

**परिणाम :** यह पाया गया कि औषध प्रमाण के दौरान उल्लेखित 22 लक्षणों सहित 35 लक्षणों का सत्यापन हुआ, जो कि पूर्णतया या अर्धरूप से पाये गये, जिससे कि इस औषधि का विस्तृत चिकित्सीय क्षेत्र परिलक्षित होता है।

**निष्कर्ष :** इकथायोलम को मुँहासे, नेत्र लेश्मलाशोथ, कब्ज, प्रति याप, फटे होंठ, पेचिश, त्वचा शोथ, अफारा, सिरदर्द, अनिद्रा, मितली, सोरियासिस, बेचैनी, गलागंड और श्वेत कुष्ठ के उपचार हेतु एक महत्त्वपूर्ण औषधि स्वीकारा जा सकता है।

उल्लेखित नैदानिक लक्षण मुँहासे और पूरे शरीर पर विशेष रूप से जोड़ों पर हुल्की फुँसियाँ, खुजली के उपरांत जलने, मस्से और अति पिपासा पाए गये। ये सभी सत्यापित लक्षण इस औषधि के चिकित्सीय प्रभाव को सत्यापित करते हैं।

**खोजशब्द :** नैदानिक सत्यापन, होम्योपैथी, इकथायोलम।