Laryngopharyngeal reflux disease with vocal cord oedema treated with individualised homoeopathic medicine: A case report

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Abstract

Introduction: The diagnosis of laryngopharyngeal reflux disease (LPRD) is still ambiguous due to limited and cumbersome diagnostic standards. To achieve regression of both symptoms and laryngeal findings due to LPRD, it typically requires more vigorous and sustained treatment. In certain patients with chronic acid or non-acid reflux, surgery may be helpful. Case Summary: This is the case of a 68-year-old man who was diagnosed with LPRD and had vocal cord oedema. Individualised homoeopathic medicine, *Natrum sulphuricum*, was prescribed, and the patient improved steadily in terms of signs and symptoms and had no further complaints at the end of 16 months. The patient's improvement was assessed using the outcome related to the impact on daily living scale (ORIDL). Clinical improvement was correlated with objective evidence from the laryngoscopy report. The Modified Naranjo Criteria for Homoeopathy score (+8 on the −6 to +13 scale) determines if the patient's progress can be attributed to the homoeopathic treatment. This case report implies that homoeopathy may be an appropriate choice for treating LPRD with vocal cord oedema cases. This is the rare instance of a documented LPRD case report associated with vocal cord oedema followed by a successful therapeutic homoeopathic treatment. For further conclusion regarding the disease, more studies are warranted.

Acknowledgments and Source of Funding

Acknowledgments - The authors gratefully acknowledge the patient for his active cooperation and participation. Financial support and sponsorship - Nil.
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Abstract

Introduction: The reflux of gastric contents into the larynx, pharynx and other areas of the upper aerodigestive tract leading to throat symptoms is referred to as laryngopharyngeal reflux disease (LPRD). The frequency of this inflammatory illness is incredibly high; according to epidemiological studies, it is around 5–30%.[1] LPRD is associated with symptoms of laryngeal irritation such as throat clearing, coughing, and hoarseness of voice. The main diagnostic methods currently used are laryngoscopy and pH monitoring. The most common laryngoscopic signs are redness and swelling of the throat.[2]

As a relatively recent clinical diagnosis, LPRD is thought to have a wide range of clinical presentations that are treated by several branches of medicine, frequently without a clear diagnosis.[3] It is still regarded in gastroenterology as a symptom of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GERD).[2] Although it has a connection to GERD, it has a different set of symptoms and after-effects. A step-up-type programme of dietary and lifestyle modifications combined with pharmacologic antisecretory therapy constitutes the mainstay of medical treatment.[4]

Patients with LPRD initially consult with their primary care providers, and since more advanced treatment may require a multidisciplinary approach, it is crucial to have a cohesive strategy across specialists when caring for these patients.[3] Some laryngopharyngeal reflux (LPR) patients experience inadequate disease resolution despite receiving medical care.[4] Untreated LPRD can be one of the aetiological causes of laryngeal cancer. The development of the disease can be

Case Summary: This is the case of a 68-year-old man who was diagnosed with LPRD and had vocal cord oedema. Individualised homoeopathic medicine, Natrum sulphuricum, was prescribed, and the patient improved steadily in terms of signs and symptoms and had no further complaints at the end of 16 months. The patient’s improvement was assessed using the outcome related to the impact on daily living scale (ORIDL). Clinical improvement was correlated with objective evidence from the laryngoscopy report. The Modified Naranjo Criteria for Homoeopathy score (+8 on the −6 to +13 scale) determines if the patient’s progress can be attributed to the homoeopathic treatment. This case report implies that homoeopathy may be an appropriate choice for treating LPRD with vocal cord oedema cases. This is the rare instance of a documented LPRD case report associated with vocal cord oedema followed by a successful therapeutic homoeopathic treatment. For further conclusion regarding the disease, more studies are warranted.

Keywords: Laryngopharyngeal reflux disease, Modified Naranjo Criteria for Homoeopathy, Natrum sulphuricum, Outcome in relation to impact on daily living, Vocal cord oedema, Homoeopathy

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INTRODUCTION

The reflux of gastric contents into the larynx, pharynx and other areas of the upper aerodigestive tract leading to throat symptoms is referred to as laryngopharyngeal reflux disease (LPRD). The frequency of this inflammatory illness is incredibly high; according to epidemiological studies, it is around 5–30%.[1] LPRD is associated with symptoms of laryngeal irritation such as throat clearing, coughing, and hoarseness of voice. The main diagnostic methods currently used are laryngoscopy and pH monitoring. The most common laryngoscopic signs are redness and swelling of the throat.[2]

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Pal and Nahar: Laryngopharyngeal reflux disease with vocal cord oedema and Homoeopathy

Personal history
The patient came from a middle-class background. He used to smoke and drink, but he quit both 16 years ago, after suffering from a cerebral vascular accident.

Clinical findings
The weight of the patient was 66 kg, and his height was 5 ft 5 inches. On inspection, there was no cyanosis, jaundice, oedema or pallor. His blood pressure was slightly high and recorded as 160/86 mm Hg at the time of presentation.

Generals
The patient had a good memory. He would get irritated and angry over minor issues and have vomiting during acute episodes. The patient had a thermal reaction towards hot. Though he had a good appetite, he could not digest milk in any form and it, which led to flatulence. He had a clear tongue, consumed 3-3.5 litres of water daily, had regular bowel movements, and had no micturition-associated problems. He said that he was barely perspiring and left no unpleasant odours or stains on his clothes. He felt refreshed after sleep.

Analysis of the case
Following an analysis of the symptoms, the distinctive mental, physical and specific symptoms were taken into account to represent the case’s overall symptoms [Table 1].

Repertorial analysis
The Kent philosophy’s guiding principles were used to frame the repertorial totality. The Kent Repertory using Radar Opus 3.0.16 software was used to repertorise the case once the symptoms were turned into rubrics. [Figure 1]. After repertorisation, it was shown that Natrum sulphuricum covered all the symptoms with the highest score.

Miasmatic analysis
Table 1 presents the miasmatic analysis of each of the symptoms. The patient had a background of several miasms with a psoro-sycotic pre-dominance.

Diagnostic assessment
The patient underwent fibre-optic laryngoscopy on August 01, 2021, and it was found that false vocal cords were oedematous on the left side, arytenoids were congested and oedematous, and the final impression was LPRD with left false cord oedema [Figure 2a].

Therapeutic intervention
First prescription
Nine doses (1 dose = 1 drop) of potentised homoeopathic medicine, i.e., Natrum sulphuricum 6 C were given in 30 ml of distilled water. The medicine prescribed was manufactured by a good manufacturing practice certified pharmaceutical company. The patient was advised to take 10 drops from 30 ml of distilled water once early in the morning, on an empty stomach, and again in the evening 30 minutes before any kind of food or beverages for consecutive 15 days. The medicines were prescribed for a limited duration as per the need and was followed by placebo pills for rest of the period. The patient was advised to maintain

benign or malignant and life-threatening, and its entire form can considerably affect life quality in patients. Additionally, problems with compliance and the ineffectiveness of acid suppression may prompt the use of alternative therapeutic techniques. As a first line of treatment for patients with suspected LPR, a double-dose empiric trial with proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) has been suggested. The initial trial of medicines is at least 6 months at a twice-a-day dosage (depending on the severity of LPR changes seen on examination) because of the high sensitivity of the mucosal membrane in the pharynx and larynx. PPIs are not superior to placebos in the treatment of LPR, according to a recent comprehensive evaluation. LPR disease is still linked to recurrent symptoms and a poor quality of life that comes at a high cost to the patient and society. If this ailment can be successfully treated with homoeopathic medications without the use of surgery, it will provide patients with a cost-effective, non-invasive therapy option.

After a thorough literature search, not a single article on the homoeopathic treatment of LPRD and vocal cord oedema could be found, although there were many articles where homoeopathic medicines were reported to be beneficial in cases of other laryngeal disorders and GERD. Following the HOM-CASE CARE guidelines, the treatment outcome of a patient with LPRD and vocal cord oedema is described in this case report. Such documentation is intended to strengthen the point that Homoeopathy can reverse pathological changes in cases that are curable, in addition to relieving symptoms.

Patient information
A 68-year-old male patient came to the outpatient department of Dr. Anjali Chatterji Regional Research Institute for Homoeopathy, Kolkata, on September 7th, 2021, with a complaint of pain in the throat during deglutition and a constant tendency to hem and hawk to get the throat cleared. He was also complaining of a sensation of obstruction in the throat while swallowing and dyspnoea during walking or physical exertion. He also complained of a constant rattling cough, shortness of breath during coughing episodes and heartburn, especially after meals.

His complaints started six months ago, and he took conventional medication without any improvement.

Past history
The patient had a cerebrovascular accident (CVA) in 2007 and was on allopathic medicines for hypertension (HTN) and dyslipidaemia since then. The ultrasonography (November 25, 2020) of the kidney, ureter, bladder (KUB) and prostate showed post-void residual urine volume = 18.25 cc, and no other abnormalities were detected in the investigation.

Family history
Both his parents had hypertension. No LPRD-related illness was present in the family history.

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Table 1: General and miasmatic analysis of the symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom category</th>
<th>General analysis</th>
<th>Psora</th>
<th>Syctosis</th>
<th>Syphilis</th>
<th>Tubercular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental general</td>
<td>Irritated and angry on minor issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical general</td>
<td>Hot patient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cannot digest milk in any form</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular.</td>
<td>Pain in throat while eating during deglutition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant tendency to hem and hawk to get the throat cleared</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sensation of obstruction in the throat while swallowing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dyspnoca during walking or physical exertion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant rattling cough with shortness of breath during coughing episodes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartburn especially after meals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathological finding</td>
<td>False cord oedema</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical history</td>
<td>History of – cerebrovascular accident (ischemic stroke)</td>
<td>Predominance of Psoric miasm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dyslipidaemia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family history</td>
<td>Family history of hypertension</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Repertorial sheet

Table 1 shows the general and miasmatic analysis of the symptoms. The symptoms are categorized into general and particular, with a focus on the miasmatic analysis for Psora, Syctosis, Syphilis, and Tubercular. The table provides a detailed analysis of various symptoms, including mental and physical general symptoms, as well as particular symptoms like pain in the throat during deglutition, dyspnoca, and heartburn after meals.

A healthy diet (avoiding spicy, fatty, and oily food) with minimal amount of saturated fat and carbohydrates, so that the chances of recurrence (if any) can be minimised. The patient was also counselled to control his anger outbreaks as he was supposedly suffering from a psychosomatic problem.

Basis of prescription

Different Materia Medica references were consulted, and the initial prescription was chosen after taking into account the patient’s complete symptomatology, repertorial analysis, medical history, family history and active miasmatic status. In light of the above context, Natrum sulphuricum was chosen.

Follow-up and outcomes

The patient was periodically followed up for 1 year and 4 months. Table 2 provides information on changes in symptoms and signs as well as medications prescribed at each visit.

A fibre optic laryngoscopy report was used to document the treatment’s outcome both during the initial visit and 16 months later (Figures 2 and 3).

The outcome in relation to impact on daily living (ORIDL) scale was used as a validated outcome measuring tool to assess the patient’s perception of how the results have influenced his way of life. The patient recorded the ORIDL score for his primary complaint and overall well-being at each follow-up. The ORIDL score for both aspects was +4 at the conclusion of the 16-month period [Table 2]. In the follow-ups, the patient was questioned regarding compliance with the medication regime and his ability to manage anger episodes. It was discovered that the patient followed the recommendations and had no complaints about the tolerance of the intervention.

Throughout the entire time, the patient received homeopathic care, and no unfavourable or unexpected events were reported. He also didn’t mention any initial worsening of his pre-existing problems or any other complaints that would have indicated a homeopathic aggravation. In the 16-month follow-up, the Modified Naranjo Criteria for Homoeopathy (MONARCH), a causal attribution assessment instrument, was used to determine whether there was a causal link between the homeopathic intervention and the treatment’s success. Table 3 lists the scores attained in each of the ten MONARCH domains. The score was +8 on a scale from ‘−6 to +13’.

Discussion

LPRD is a clinical condition brought on by the direct and indirect effects of refluxed stomach contents on the upper aerodigestive tract.
The patient, in this case, reported having LPRD with vocal cord oedema. He had received homoeopathic care for about a year and 4 months. The patient was receiving combined treatment for his complaints of hypertension and dyslipidaemia. On his initial appointment, he was instructed to continue his homoeopathic treatment for the course of the treatment along with his anti-hypertensive and dyslipidaemia medications at the same doses. After a follow-up of 6 months, his blood pressure returned to normal. As an adjunct therapy to modern medicine, homoeopathic medicine demonstrated its positive effects. In the present case, apart from potentised *Natrum sulphuricum*, another medicine, *Ruta 200C*, was given for the acute trigger
finger. However, the symptoms of LPRD started decreasing after the prescription of Natrum sulphuricum. It may be further clarified that the patient did not have any medicine other than homoeopathy during the six months of follow-up.

Both subjective and objective changes were included in this case report as proof of the patient’s improvement. The patient was questioned about the overall impact of the treatment on his primary complaint and his general sense of well-being at every follow-up appointment.

Here, we did not monitor the oropharyngeal pH values, which may be a limitation of this case. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first example that has been documented and shows how homoeopathic treatment effectively manages LPRD with vocal cord oedema. Additionally, this exhibits crucial clinical judgement about the repetition of dosage and potency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not sure/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Was there an improvement in the main symptom or condition for which</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the homoeopathic medicine was prescribed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Did the clinical improvement occur within a plausible timeframe relative to the medicine intake?</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Was there a homoeopathic aggravation of symptoms?</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Did the effect encompass more than the main symptom or condition (i.e., were other symptoms, not related to the main presenting complaint improved or changed)?</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Did overall well-being improve (suggest using validated scale or mention about changes in physical, emotional, or behavioural elements?)</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A. Direction of cure: did some symptoms improve in the opposite order of the development of symptoms of the disease?</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Direction of cure: Did at least one of the following aspects apply to the order of improvement of symptoms:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- from organs of more importance to those of less importance?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- from deeper to more superficial aspects of the individual?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- from the top downward?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Did ‘old symptoms’ (defined as non-seasonal and non-cyclical symptoms that were previously thought to have resolved) reappear temporarily during the course of improvement?</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Contd)
### Table 3: (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not sure/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Are there alternative causes (i.e., other than the medicine) that-with a high probability-could have produced the improvement? (Consider known course of disease, other forms of treatment and other clinically relevant interventions)</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Was the health improvement confirmed by any objective evidence? (e.g., investigations, clinical examination, etc.)</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Did repeat dosing, if conducted, create similar clinical improvement?</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total score = +8 (maximum score = +13, minimum score = −6).

### Conflict of interest
None declared.

### References

### Patient perspective
The patient conveyed that he was very happy after taking the homeopathic medicine for his complaints. He also reported that he had a sense of satisfaction because his vomiting episodes resulting from his anger issues had also resolved.

### Conclusion
This case study demonstrates how homeopathy can be used to treat LPRD with vocal cord oedema. *Natrum sulphuricum* was found effective as an individualised remedy, and the results were favourable. However, a case series or controlled clinical trials are required to validate the results.

### Declaration of patient consent
The authors obtained written informed consent from the concerned patient to publish his case records and reports without revealing his identity.

### Financial support and sponsorship
Nil.
Reflex laryngopharyngeal reflux disease with vocal cord oedema treated by homoeopathy: a case report

Introduction: Le diagnostic du reflux laryngopharyngeal (LPRD) est encore ambigu en raison de normes diagnostiques limitées et lourdes. Pour obtenir une régression des symptômes et des résultats laryngés dus au LPRD, il faut généralement une intervention chirurgicale plus vigoureuse et plus soutenue. Chez certains patients souffrant de reflux acide ou non acide chronique, une intervention chirurgicale peut être utile. Résumé de cas: Il s’agit du cas d’un homme de 68 ans qui a reçu un diagnostic de LPRD et qui avait un œdème des cordes vocales. Un médicament homéopathique individualisé, Natrum sulphuricum, a été prescrit, et le patient s’est amélioré régulièrement en termes de signes et de symptômes et n’a plus eu de plaintes au bout de 16 mois. L’amélioration du patient a été évaluée à l’aide du critère de jugement lié à l’effet d’impact sur la vie quotidienne (ORIDL). L’amélioration clinique a été correlée avec les preuves objectives du rapport de laryngoscopie. Le score des critères de Naranjo modifiés pour l’homéopathie (+8 sur l’échelle de « -6 à +13 ») détermine si les progrès du patient peuvent être attribués au traitement homéopathique. Ce rapport de cas implique que l’homéopathie pourrait être un choix approprié pour traiter la LPRD avec des cas d’œdème des cordes vocales. Il s’agit du rare cas documenté d’un rapport de cas LPRD associé à un œdème des cordes vocales suivi d’un traitement homéopathique thérapeutique réussi. Pour plus de conclusion concernant la maladie, d’autres études sont nécessaires.

Laryngopharyngeal Reflux disease with Vocal Cord Oedema: a Case Report


Vöckel-Körd-Indimaat diésa Laryngopharyngeal Reflux Disease with Vocal Cord Oedema: a Case Report

La enfermedad por reflujo laríngeo del faríngeo-con edema de las cuerdas vocales tratada con medicina homeopática individualizada: reporte de un caso

Introducción: El diagnóstico de la enfermedad por reflujo laríngeo del faríngeo (DRLP) es aún ambiguo debido a los estándares diagnósticos limitados y enigmáticos. Para lograr la regresión tanto de los síntomas como de los hallazgos laríngeos debido a la LPRD, generalmente se requiere un tratamiento más vigoroso y sostenido. En ciertos pacientes con reflujo ácido o no ácido crónico, la cirugía puede ser útil. Resumen del caso: Este es el caso de un hombre de 68 años que fue diagnosticado con LPRD y tenía edema en las cuerdas vocales. Se prescribió un medicamento homeopático individualizado, Natrum sulphuricum, y el paciente mejoró constantemente en términos de signos y síntomas y no tuvo más quejas al cabo de 16 meses. La mejoría del paciente se evaluó mediante la escala de resultados relacionados con el impacto en la vida diaria (ORIDL). La mejoría clínica se correlacionó con la evidencia objetiva del informe de la laringoscopia. La puntuación de los Criterios de Naranjo Modificados para...
la Homeopatía (+8 en la escala de -6 a +13) determina si el progreso del paciente puede atribuirse al tratamiento homeopático. Este informe de caso implica que la homeopatía puede ser una opción adecuada para el tratamiento de la DRLP en casos de edema de las cuerdas vocales. Este es el raro caso de un informe de caso documentado de LPRD asociado con edema de las cuerdas vocales seguido de un tratamiento terapéutico homeopático exitoso. Para obtener más conclusiones sobre la enfermedad, se justifican más estudios.

**喉咽反流病伴声带水肿接受个体化顺势疗法治疗：病例报告**

**简介：** 由于诊断标准有限且繁琐，喉咽反流病（LPRD）的诊断仍然不明确。为了实现LPRD引起的症状和喉部表现的消退，通常需要更积极和持续的治疗。对于某些慢性胃酸反流或非胃酸反流患者，手术可能有帮助。**病例摘要：** 这是一名68岁男性的病例，他被诊断为LPRD并患有声带水肿。开具了个体化的顺势疗法药物 Natrum sulphuricum，患者的体征和症状稳步改善，并且在16个月结束时没有进一步的抱怨。使用与对日常生活量表的影响（ORIDL）相关的结果评估患者的改善。临床改善与喉镜检查报告的客观证据相关。改良的 Naranjo 顺势疗法标准评分（“-6 至 +13”量表上的 +8）确定患者的进展是否可以归因于顺势疗法治疗。该病例报告表明顺势疗法可能是治疗声带水肿病例的LPRD的合适选择。这是与声带水肿相关的记录在案的LPRD病例报告的罕见实例，随后是成功的治疗性顺势疗法治疗。为了进一步得出关于该疾病的结论，需要更多的研究。