

Chapter 31

Homeopathic First Aid: Natural Remedies for Common Ailments

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ABSTRACT

Homoeopathy is an alternative medicine system that was established in the late 18th century by Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician. The foundation of this concept rests upon two fundamental principles: the "Law of Similars" and the "Law of Infinitesimals. It gained popularity in the 19th century due to its efficacy in treating epidemics, but experienced a fall over the majority of the 20th century. This popularity had a significant surge during the late 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries across many regions worldwide. Homoeopathy, an individualised and holistic medical approach, plays a key part in modern healthcare by providing natural and non-invasive treatment choices. The significance of this approach rests in its capacity to target the underlying causes of illnesses, taking into account the patient's physical, emotional, and psychological conditions. Homoeopathic medicines, which are generated from natural components and undergo extensive dilution to minimise adverse reactions, are especially attractive due to their mild methodology, rendering them suited for a diverse array of patients, including youngsters and the elderly. The individualised approach of homoeopathic therapy improves patient contentment and compliance and cultivate a more profound doctor-patient connection.

KEYWORDS

Allopathic, Integrative medicine, Homeopathy, History of medicine, Person-centered, Evidence-based medicine, Herbal medicines, Holistic care

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INTRODUCTION

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) refers to any diagnosis, treatment, or prevention method that supplements conventional care. The utilization CAM has had a significant surge in recent years, gaining substantial prominence in the fields of medicine, economics, and sociology (Bartlett et al., 2013). Homeopathy, a component of CAM, is a medical profession aimed at restoring health to the sick and achieving a rapid, gentle, and lasting remedy. At first, a homeopathic practitioner, also referred as a homeopath, conducts a comprehensive assessment of all the symptoms, including both typical and atypical, associated with a condition. Subsequently, the homeopath administers an individualized remedy or a blend of various remedies, selected for their efficacy in alleviating the particular ailment or illness (Ge et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2020).

As global renaissance has been taking place in homoeopathy, which was an important part of healthcare in the 1800s. This alternative way of treating disease is based on the Principle of Similars and the use of very small amounts (Shaikh et al., 2009).

When a patient present with symptoms, clinical indicators, or a sick state, a homoeopath will utilize a combination of medications that mimics those effects in a healthy person. These homeopathic medications are made by repeatedly diluting and shaking them, and are often administered in potentized versions (Hashempur et al., 2018). Currently, the practical use of homeopathic research in the field of high-altitude (HA) medicine is still in its early stages (Zhang et al., 2018). With increasing attention on alternative therapeutic approaches, several clinical investigations have been carried out in the field of homeopathy (Kass et al., 2020). This chapter provides a concise

overview of scientific discoveries and identifies areas that need additional investigation to develop homeopathic treatments for HA-related medical disorders, specifically acute mountain sickness (AMS). The text examines essential homeopathic treatments, such as homeopathic coca, Aloe vera extract, and other possible contenders for addressing HA ailments (Singh et al., 2015).

The Origin and Principals of Homeopathy

A common belief is that the German physician Samuel Christian Hahnemann (1755–1843) was the first to practice homeopathy. Scottish physician William Cullen (1710–1799) indicated that the bitter taste of Cinchona bark (*Cinchona officinalis*) was an efficient treatment for malaria in herbal document that he came across in 1790. But Hahnemann still wasn't convinced and decided to run some trials anyhow (Kass et al., 2020). He started giving them higher and higher amounts of Cinchona bark powder to see what the long-term effects would be. The effects that were seen were very much like the signs that are usually linked to malaria. He came to the conclusion that Cinchona bark worked because it might give healthy people symptoms similar to periodic fever (Bartlett et al., 2013). He conducted experiments with various other medications in a like fashion, employing him, family members, and acquaintances as test subjects. It was a common occurrence, he noticed, for a treatment to have the opposite effect on healthy people as it did on sick ones (Iqbal et al., 2011). An old term for this procedure was a "proving"; modern homeopathy uses the term "human pathogenic trial." The "like cures like" notion, or *similia similibus curantur*, was the cornerstone of homeopathy, according to Hahnemann's exhaustive and painstaking investigation of this phenomenon (Bannuru et al., 2018).

In his alternative theory, Hahnemann postulated that very small doses of drugs, obtained by thorough dilution or trituration, are more effective when given. Thirdly, he postulated that most chronic diseases are actually manifestations of psora or suppressed itching.

In the 1820s, Hahnemann made an unexpected discovery. He found that his remedies were actually made more potent when he combined serial dilution with succussion, which is shaking drugs. He proposed a method of dilution and shaking that he named potentization or dynamization for making medicinally active substances that are normally inactive (Wu et al., 2019). Initially, Hahnemann mainly used these methods to lessen the negative effects of the numerous toxic ingredients he employed in his medications (Brown et al., 2006). On the other hand, he later claimed that the potentization process was responsible for releasing the drugs' vital or "spirit-like" qualities. It was in Hahnemann's latter years that the limit of molecular dilution, Avogadro's number, was found. Back then, homeopaths all over the globe were recording that dilutions lower than Avogadro's number—extremely high potencies—were still producing noticeable therapeutic effects. Some people have decided to treat any evidence of homeopathy's effectiveness as a result of human mistake or a mistaken belief because such claims are highly implausible (Atif et al., 2018).

Therefore, it is just as important for a homeopath to choose the right potency as it is to choose the best treatment for a patient's ailment. The number of diluted solutions and succussions that a drug experiences during its processing determines its effectiveness (Cameron and Chrubasik, 2014). The physical manifestations of an illness, particularly in the body's structures or functions, are the primary targets of low potencies (Sweileh et al., 2009). On the other hand, larger potencies address more profound pathological conditions that impact the emotional and mental aspects of a medical condition, and their effects are more enduring. Low potencies are typically administered in combination with other substances and used to treat long-lasting diseases that primarily affect the physical body (Dubey et al., 2024).

Worldwide Prevalence and Further Scope of Homeopathy

If you're experiencing the acute symptoms of a physical, mental, or other kind of sickness, homeopathy may be the way to go. A wide variety of substances, including living organisms, minerals, chemicals, and even some plants, are used to make homeopathic treatments (Kumar et al., 2020). The medicinal substances are subjected to a quick shaking process in between each dilution stage and a succession of dilutions to decrease toxicity. Some researchers have found that homeopathic medications are not very likely to have serious side effects. Several researchers argue that the concepts underlying homeopathy are scientifically dubious. However, many governments throughout the world still recognize the validity of homeopathic treatment and medicine, and they even include it in publicly financed healthcare systems (Koley et al., 2015). Consider India: their Ministry of Health incorporates homeopathy, and there are an estimated 300,000 homeopathic practitioners in the country. Nearly half of France's doctors and nurses use homeopathic remedies, sometimes in combination with allopathic prescriptions. The United Kingdom's National Health Service has provided homeopathy since its inception in 1948 (Bowker et al., 2006; Monami et al., 2009).

Even though it was originally practiced in Germany, homeopathy is widely used in India. Homeopathy is one of the medical modalities that have received formal recognition in India. Several placebo-controlled, randomized trials and laboratory studies have documented unforeseen effects of homeopathic remedies (Harding et al., 2001). Nevertheless, the available information regarding the efficacy of homeopathy for particular clinical problems is scarce and of lower quality compared to studies conducted on allopathic treatment. Additional and enhanced research, devoid of any bias towards or against the system, is necessary (Clegg et al., 2006). Until there is a more comprehensive understanding of homeopathy, physicians should acknowledge the potential of homeopathy and continue to engage in dialogue with patients who choose to utilize it (Jeffcoate et al., 2004).

Homeopathic Remedies for High-altitude Ailments

AMS, High-Altitude Pulmonary Edoema (HAPE), and High-Altitude Cerebral Edoema (HACE) are more serious conditions that can affect climbers who reach elevations above 2500 m, as discussed above. AMS, acute precipitation effect (HAPE), and hemorrhagic shock event (HACE) are mostly caused by an individual's susceptibility as well as high altitude exposure duration and severity (Harding et al., 2000). Various therapeutic systems, such as homeopathy, play a role in preventing and treating medical disorders associated with exposure to harmful substances. A wide range of homeopathic remedies, primarily derived from plants, are being utilized to address diseases related to headaches (Heydari et al., 2010).

Aloe Vera

Succulent aloe vera Linn. Is a member of the Liliaceae family of plants (Fig.1). The plant exhibits a diverse array of biological actions, including as anti-inflammatory, hepatoprotective, immunomodulatory, anti-cancer, anti-allergic, antibacterial, antioxidant, and anti-ulcer properties. The polysaccharides acemannan and glucomannan are what induce these effects. People who live at high altitudes are particularly vulnerable to frostbite, the most severe form of cold injury (Chakrabarti et al., 2002). Frostbite is a serious cold ailment that can damage tissues and even cause amputation of digits. After being exposed to cold, the patient was given aloe vera tincture topically (Q) and orally (200 strength) for seven days (Fuggle et al., 2020). Afterwards, supplementary and supplementary therapy were gradually given. According to the findings, tissue damage was avoided by reestablishing microcirculation, which stopped necrosis in the injured areas. It was also shown that other detrimental effects of being outside in the cold, like losing your appetite and weight, were lessened. As a result, this formulation facilitated tissue regeneration (Driest et al., 2017).



Fig. 1: The succulent herb, Aloe vera.

Applying DIP-1 directly to the skin has been shown to improve the symptoms of UV-induced erythema, blistering and hyperplasia edema that occur after high-altitude exposure (Widatalla et al., 2009). The bioactive molecule prostaglandin E2, which is responsible for the redness and inflammation of skin in both humans and animals exposed to UV radiation, is what gives DIP-1 its protective action (Choi et al., 2012). It also controls the activity of vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), a potent substance that increases blood vessel permeability. Research has shown that DIP-1 increases NO signaling in human endothelial cells, which in turn promotes the regrowth of dermal fibroblasts and epidermal keratinocytes (Farzaei et al., 2014). Several human investigations have confirmed that DIP-1 promotes thermogenesis in areas damaged by frostbite and provides protection against skin damage caused by UV radiation at high elevations (Rhodes, 2000).

Arnica montana

Common injuries such as bruises, wounds, rheumatism, and swelling are among the 66 pathological disorders that have traditionally been treated with *Arnica montana* (*A. montana*) in homeopathic medicine. *A. montana* flowers has 0.04% sesquiterpene lactones, which is also known as dihydrohelenalin tiglate (Rutten, 2019).

The antioxidant capabilities of homeopathic *A. montana* (Fig 2) (*Arnica* 30cH) were demonstrated in a 2013 study by Camargo et al. (2013). Their research demonstrated that the administration of homeopathic *A. montana* resulted in enhanced mitochondrial oxidative stress as well as lipid peroxidation in the liver of rats (Eftekhar et al., 2013).

Calotropis gigantea

In the arid parts of Asia and Africa, one can find the poisonous *Calotropis gigantea* plant. Some common names for this plant include "shallow wort," "giant milkweed," and "crown flower." In India, the plant is referred as "aak," "akauwa," or

"arka". The plant can be distinguished by its dense oblong foliage and scentless purplish blooms (Fig. 3). *C. gigantea* is commonly employed in Ayurveda, Chinese, and homeopathic remedies to alleviate symptoms of asthma, coughing, colds, fever, diarrhea, constipation, leprosy, leukoderma, and rheumatism. The homeopathic Materia Medica also lists its use in treating elephantiasis, vomiting, toothaches, and purging. Using an alcoholic extract of *C. gigantea*, DIPAS, an Indian company, makes DIP-2, a skin permeation enhancer (Niempoog et al., 2012).



Fig. 2: *Arnica montana*: a plant that produces yellow-colored flowers.

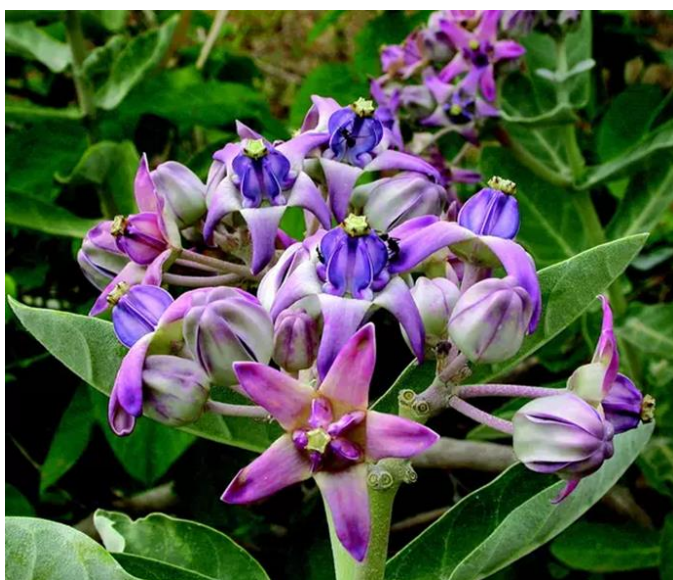


Fig. 3: *Calotropis gigantea* (© Keystone Foundation under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License [CC BY 4.0] <https://indiabiodiversity.org/species/show/32452>)

This formulation has DIP-1 as one of its active constituents. DIP-2 exhibits a variety of actions, including anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antibacterial, vasodilatory, and wound healing properties (Al Sulaibi et al., 2020).

Carbo Vegetabilis

The homeopathic medicine carbo vegetabilis is prepared by burning vegetable charcoal with minimal oxygen. This mechanism replicates the energy metabolism observed in tissues with limited oxygen supply, where hydrocarbon molecules combine with oxygen to produce water and carbon dioxide. At high altitudes, when the body's metabolic processes in the tissues are deprived of oxygen, hypoxia occurs (Pourakbari et al., 2019). Homeopathic treatment utilizing vegetable charcoal, specifically *Carbo vegetabilis* (Carbo veg), is thought to be in accordance with the primary concept of homeopathy. Patients taken Carbo veg for altitude disease typically experience dyspnea and a strong desire for air circulation, either from natural wind or by using a fan. Frequently, individuals experience lightheadedness and may perceive a sensation of heaviness in the head, eyes, eyelids or other parts of the body. Abdominal bloating, accompanied by excessive gas, is a frequent occurrence (Rogoveanu et al., 2015).

Lycopodium clavatum

Lycopodium clavatum is an easily identifiable plant that is known by several names, including wolf's claw, ground pine, foxtail, clubfoot moss, Sulphur and club moss (Fig. 5). Many European countries, as well as tropical and subtropical regions, are home to this pteridophyte. This medicine is used in homeopathy to treat fevers, constipation, aneurysms, and bronchial and chronic lung disorders (Roos, 2005). It also helps control chronic kidney problems, reduces gastrointestinal inflammation, and facilitates digestion. *Lycopodium clavatum* has been shown in numerous studies to have anti-inflammatory, anti-free radical, anti-cancer, anti-microbe, nerve-protecting, immune-system-modulating, and liver-protecting properties. It can also help relieve chronic fatigue and lethargic moods. Indigenous Americans frequently use *Lycopodium clavatum* spores to alleviate nosebleeds and promote wound healing (Banerjee et al., 2014).



Fig. 5: *Lycopodium clavatum*: a pteridophyte growing in the wild (© MikeN under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International [CC BY-NC 4.0] <https://www.inaturalist.org/photos/41653704>).



Fig. 6: The herbomineral, Shilajit. (This picture is reproduced from Al-Salman et al., (2020) under a CC BY 4.0 - Creative Commons).

Shilajit (*Asphaltum punjabianum*)

The Ayurvedic medicine practiced in India places great emphasis on the use of shilajit, also known as mineral pitch or shilajatu. As a homeopathic medicine, it is also used by people in Pakistan and India. The Ayurvedic medical tradition of India highly recommends the use of shilajit, mineral pitch, or shilajatu (Kumar et al., 2020). It is also a homeopathic treatment that people from India and Pakistan frequently use. The dehydrated secretion of the herb *Asphaltum punjabianum*, which grows on rocks, is collected to make shilajit (Lohmander et al., 2007). The substance that is characterized as the herbomineral medicine has a color that varies from pale-brown to blackish-brown. Shilajit is supposed to help with metabolism by increasing energy production, balancing anabolism and catabolism, and enhancing the body's capacity to absorb nutrients and flush out impurities (Miller and Clegg, 2011). It also supports the body's synthesis of red blood cells and improves the efficiency of the immune system. Shilajit (Fig 6) has a number of health benefits, including increasing physical strength, prolonging life, revitalizing the body, and having anti-aging qualities (Rothschild et al., 2012).

Others

Along with Aloe vera, the most common medicines suggested for chilblains are Pulsatilla 200 and Agaricus muscarius 200. Approximately 66 percent of patients reported positive outcomes from this therapy. Agaricus causes symptoms that are similar to frostbite and is quite harmful in cold weather (Milgrom, 2006). The symptoms of pulsatilla worsen in the evening and with heat exposure. Neuroendocrine symptoms such as anxiety and depression are frequently found among individuals at high elevations. Homeopathic remedies such as L72 for anxiety, Aconitum and *Argentum nitricum* (for adults) can be utilized to address anxiety and depression linked with HA. These medications are effective due to their broad, non-specific effects rather than targeting individual symptoms (Lotz, 2010).

Conclusions

A variety of treatments are available for many medical conditions and diseases through the alternative medical approach of homeopathy. The available information regarding the efficacy of homeopathy in treating certain clinical diseases, such as pathophysiology's triggered by HA, is sparse. Hence, further investigation is necessary to have a deeper comprehension of the homeopathic idea and its potential in alleviating diverse health conditions, such as high-altitude illnesses.

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