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Use of coffee, restriction in effectivity of homoeopathic treatment in patients of chronic headache: A comparative observational study

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Abstract

Background: Coffee, a globally popular beverage, is often restricted in homeopathic treatments due to its potential effects on treatment outcomes. Although moderate coffee consumption is generally considered safe, its role in homeopathic therapy, especially for chronic headaches, remains contentious. This study investigates whether coffee consumption influences the effectiveness of homeopathic treatment for chronic headache.

Aim: To compare the impact of coffee consumption on the efficacy of homeopathic treatment in patients with chronic headaches.

Methods: A comparative observational study was conducted with 137 patients receiving homeopathic treatment for chronic headaches at the Government Homeopathic Medical College and Hospital, Bhopal. Patients were categorized into coffee consumers and non-consumers. The intensity and frequency of headaches were assessed using a Likert scale at two follow-ups. Non-parametric tests, including Wilcoxon rank sum test and Fisher's exact test, were used to analyze the data. ANCOVA was employed to evaluate the effect of coffee consumption on headache intensity and frequency.

Results: The analysis showed a significant difference in headache intensity during the first follow-up ($p = 0.022$), but no significant differences were observed in headache intensity or frequency during the second follow-up or in the overall ANCOVA results ($p = 0.501$ for frequency; $p = 0.07$ for intensity). The statistical tests revealed no substantial effect of coffee consumption on headache characteristics in the context of homeopathic treatment.

Conclusion: Coffee consumption did not significantly affect the efficacy of homeopathic treatment for chronic headaches in terms of frequency or intensity over time. The study suggests that coffee may not need to be strictly restricted during homeopathic treatment for chronic headaches.

Keywords: Homeopathic treatment, coffee, chronic headache, observational study

Introduction

Coffee lovers come from every corner of the globe; It is one of the most popular drinks in the world ^[1].

Coffee is rich in caffeine and antioxidants, which have several health benefits, including decreased inflammation and free radical damage ^[3].

The society has accepted certain food or dietary articles as a necessity to cope up with changing trends. Although drinking excessive amounts of caffeinated coffee can be harmful, caffeine intake of up to 400 mg per day - or about 4 cups (960 ml) of coffee - is generally considered safe ^[3].

Interestingly, the literature of our homoeopathy, which is the holistic means of cure, has provided us with some set of dietary and regimen related instructions for treatment of acute and chronic diseases, effectively. Even today, Homoeopathic physicians have different opinion on these dietary restrictions.

Thus, the need of the hour, is for a good and strong scientific evidence, to prove if at all these restrictions are necessary or if genuinely necessary can provide concrete evidence for the population to comprehend the importance of dietary restrictions for homoeopathic treatment. This study was aimed at exploring the restrictive effects of coffee against homeopathic treatment of Chronic headache.

Aim: To compare the effect of consumption of coffee during the homoeopathic treatment of patients with chronic headache.

Background

Majority of Homoeopaths restrict all the articles which have strong smell or possess some medicinal property while restriction by some is limited considering the nature of disease and remedy [5]. There are times when the patient faces problems restricting the dietary substances that they're habitual to, and hampering their daily life routine which in modern times isn't practically possible for majority of the population thus leading to discontinuity of the treatment, frequent changing of the doctors, dropouts from homoeopathy etc., which creates a disbelief amongst people towards concept of holistic cure and homoeopathy.

Also, there is another category of Homoeopaths, though meagre in number, usually do not impose any dietary restrictions [5].

Modern times have given rise to modern day practices, new customs, the society has become used to, towards certain food or dietary articles. Coffee consumption has lately been observed to have had a widespread acceptance and inclusion by people across the globe. It is estimated that India now consumes 120,000 tons of coffee per year [4]. Coffee finds its place as a debatable article of diet in homoeopathy, where stalwarts like Dr Hahnemann, dr. Vithoulkas, castro are strictly against its inclusion in diet during treatment whereas others like Dr boeninghausen, Dr kent, Dr Sankaran believe blanket restriction aren't necessary until

there's the question of individual susceptibility.

Methods

This comparative, observational study was conducted on 137 patients receiving homoeopathic treatment for their chronic headache in the outpatient department of Government Homoeopathic Medical College and Hospital, Bhopal. Patients were observed for improvement or deterioration if any, after being categorized as coffee consumers and non- consumers. Improvement status was noted on a likert scale for intensity and frequency of headache under 5 options where 1= Significant deterioration, 2 = Slight deterioration, 3 = no change, 4 = slight improvement, 5 = significant improvement. The relevant responses were encircled during follow up to study any change. Since the variables distribution was non-normal various non-parametric tests used to study characteristics of patients using coffee as a continuous and categorical variable were Wilcoxon rank sum test, Fisher's exact test, Pearson's Chi-squared test at the level of significance 0.05. Coffee consumption was the covariate affecting homoeopathic treatment assessed for frequency and intensity of headache. To assess the effect of coffee on homoeopathic treatment of chronic headache in terms of intensity and frequency of headache across two follow-ups, ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was conducted [2].

Table 1: Status of outcome variables by coffee consumption status-as continuous variables

Characteristic	no, N = 621	yes, N = 751	p-value ²
Frequency (cups/day)	2.00 (1.00, 2.00)	2.00 (1.00, 2.00)	0.5
Intensity Status First	4.00 (3.00, 4.00)	3.00 (3.00, 4.00)	0.022
Frequency Status First	4.00 (3.00, 4.00)	3.00 (3.00, 4.00)	0.4
Intensity Status Second	4.00 (4.00, 4.00)	4.00 (4.00, 5.00)	0.6
Frequency Status Second	4.00 (4.00, 4.00)	4.00 (3.00, 4.00)	>0.9
1Median (IQR)			
2Wilcoxon rank sum test			

This table shows the difference between the intensity and frequency of episodes of headache in coffee consumers (75) and non-consumers (62).

Table 2: Status of outcome variables by coffee consumption status-as categorical variables

Characteristic	No, N = 621	Yes, N = 751	p-value ²
Intensity Status First			
3	25 (40.32%)	43 (57.33%)	0.065
4	36 (58.06%)	29 (38.67%)	
2	1 (1.61%)	3 (4.00%)	
Frequency Status First			
3	29 (46.77%)	37 (49.33%)	0.8
4	30 (48.39%)	34 (45.33%)	
2	1 (1.61%)	3 (4.00%)	
5	2 (3.23%)	1 (1.33%)	
Intensity Status Second			
4	44 (70.97%)	33 (44.00%)	0.003
5	14 (22.58%)	24 (32.00%)	
3	3 (4.84%)	16 (21.33%)	
2	1 (1.61%)	2 (2.67%)	
Frequency Status Second			
4	41 (66.13%)	37 (49.33%)	0.3
3	10 (16.13%)	18 (24.00%)	
5	10 (16.13%)	18 (24.00%)	
2	1 (1.61%)	2 (2.67%)	
1n (%)			
2Fisher's exact test			

Parameter	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	F- value	p- value
Headache Frequency				
Coffee consumption	0.22	1	0.452	0.501
Residuals	131.14	272		
Headache Intensity				
Coffee consumption	1.63	1	3.23	0.07
Residuals	136.89	272		

Results

Status of Outcome Variables by Coffee Consumption Status (Continuous Variables). Intensity Status during 1st follow up showed Significant difference (p-value = 0.022), frequency during 1st follow up showed no significant difference (p-value = 0.4), Intensity Status during 2nd follow up showed no significant difference (p-value = 0.6), frequency during 2nd follow up showed no significant difference (p-value > 0.9) [2].

Status of Outcome Variables by Coffee Consumption Status (Categorical Variables). This table (shows the proportions of patients with different headache intensity and frequency categories) Intensity Status during 1st follow up showed Differences approaching significance (p-value = 0.065), frequency during 1st follow up showed no significant difference (p-value = 0.8), Intensity Status during 2nd follow up showed significant difference (p-value = 0.003), frequency during 2nd follow up showed no significant difference (p-value = 0.3).

ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance); This analysis assessed the effect of coffee on headache intensity and frequency across two follow-ups: Headache Frequency: - Coffee consumption: F-value = 0.452, p-value = 0.501 (no significant effect), Headache Intensity: - Coffee consumption: F-value = 3.23, p-value = 0.07 (no significant effect).

Although there was Significant difference in headache intensity during the first follow-up but No significant differences in other headache characteristics was present. Also through ANCOVA Results there appears no statistical significance of coffee consumption on headache frequency or intensity in terms of homoeopathic treatment [2].

Conclusion

Coffee did not significantly influence the homoeopathic treatment of chronic headaches in terms of frequency or intensity over time [2].

Conflict of Interest

Not available.

Financial Support

Not available.

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