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Dr. Ambala Sriharitha
Associate Professor, Department of Homoeopathic Materia Medica, MNR Homoeopathic Medical College, Fasalwadi, Sangareddy, Telangana, India

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Ambala Sriharitha
Associate Professor, Department of Homoeopathic Materia Medica, MNR Homoeopathic Medical College, Fasalwadi, Sangareddy, Telangana, India

A randomised single blind controlled study to evaluate the efficacy of variolinum as a chickenpox preventive

Dr. Ambala Sriharitha

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Abstract
Acute and extremely contagious, varicella (chickenpox) is caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV), a member of the herpes virus family. In Hyderabad's urban and rural areas, chickenpox incidences were steadily increased in the month of Jan-Feb 2023, just as in other regions of the nation. According to official records, the state-run Fever Hospital has received between 10 and 12 cases of chickenpox each day, while Niloufer Hospital had seen between 20 and 25 cases per day in the month of February. According to Hahnemann's guidelines, Homoeopathic medicine is not only effective for curing disease but also for preventing it. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of Variolinum as a preventive measure to control the outbreak of the chickenpox disease, a six-month project was undertaken, and that project is the subject of this article.

Keywords: Chickenpox/varicella, variolinum, homoeopathy, preventive

Introduction

Epidemiology: The varicella virus is widespread throughout the world. It is an endemic disease with seasonal recurrence in the winter and spring and sporadic epidemic that depend on accumulation of susceptible individuals. The varicella virus spreads quickly. Attack rates of 87% among susceptible family siblings and around 70% among vulnerable hospital patients have been documented.

Incubation period: Varicella has an average incubation period of 14 to 15 days, with a range of 10 to 23 days.

Route of entry: Virus enters through mucosa of upper respiratory tract or oropharynx. From there it disseminates via blood and lymphatics. After incubation period, approximately 2 weeks later the skin lesions occurs in successive crops. The rash is preceded by 2 to 3 days of fever, chills, headache, malaise, anorexia, back pain, dry cough.

Rash: Varicella rash begins on face and scalp, spreads rapidly to trunk with relative sparing of the extremities. New lesions appear in crops but their distribution remain central. The striking feature of the rash is in its rapid progression. In 12 hours from rose coloured macule to papule, vesicle, pustule and crusts is seen. Characteristic is typically all stage lesions can be seen in one area of skin. The most distressing symptom is pruritus, present throughout vesicular stage. Rash lasts for 1week to 10 days.

Complications: Usually chickenpox is mild disease, but complications do occur like pneumonia, toxic shock syndrome, Reye's syndrome, etc.

Homoeopathic intervention: Homoeopathy is safe and cost effective method of treatment. It aids in lessening the patient's agony. It shortens the suffering time, avoids complications, and promotes quick recovery.
In Murphy repertory, Antimonium Crudum, Pulsatilla, Rhustox, Sulphur are given as first grade remedies, Antimonium Tart, Belladonna, Carbo Veg, Ledum Pal, Merc Sol, Sepia, and Thuja are given in 2nd Grade.
Variolium is prepared from small pox vesicle. It is effective against herpes zoster/singles, varioliform eruptions, eruptive fevers, in fact against all kind of pox viruses according to texts. In synthesis repertory also this remedy is mentioned for chickenpox eruptions.

(Rubric-skin-eruptions-chickenpox). Therefore this remedy was chosen in order to assess its effectiveness in preventing chickenpox.

Materials and Methods

Source of data: Study was conducted in MNR Homoeopathic Medical College, Sangareddy, and Hyderabad.

Study period: For a period of six months, from February 2023 to July 2023, during the chickenpox outbreak.

Method of collection of data: A survey was initially undertaken to find the students who never had chicken pox. Out of 400 students, 74 had no prior history of the chicken pox, which was confirmed by checking with their parents.

Sample size: 60 students out of the total 74 volunteered for the study. Both a control group and an experimental group were created from these 60 individuals randomly.

Study design: Single blind Randomized controlled study.

Methodology

The experimental group received variolinum 1 M, every day on an empty stomach for 3 days once in a month for three months. Similarly placebo was given to the control group for initial 3 months.

The next three months were used as an observation period during which neither group received any kind of intervention.

Caution was taken to use medicine which was purchased from reputed brand company.

Observation and Results

Table 1: Distribution of group according to sex

Sex	Control Group	Percentage	Experimental Group	Percentage
Female	20	66.6%	20	66.6%
Male	10	33.3%	10	33.3%

Table 2: Distribution of group according to age

Age	Control Group	Percentage	Experimental Group	Percentage
18-20	15	50%	16	53.3%
20-22	12	40%	13	43.3%
22-24	3	10%	1	3.33%

Table 3: Distribution of group according to remarks

S. No	Group	No of cases effected	No of cases not effected	Drop outs	Percentage of cases effected	Percentage of cases not effected
1.	Control group	18	12%	0	60%	40%
2.	Experimental group	0	30%	0	0	100%

Discussion and Conclusion

The study was conducted to evaluate the efficiency of Variolinum remedy as a preventive for Chickenpox. In this study both males and females were included in both experimental and control groups. As the study was conducted in the college, young adults (Students) were taken up for the study between 18 to 24 yrs. age group. A Written consent was taken from all the volunteers from both the groups. The volunteers are not aware of their group affiliation (single blind). During the study period, nobody from the experimental group who received variolinum medication developed chickenpox. These volunteers were under observation for the period of 6 months till the outbreak was settled. 18 people, i.e., 60% suffered with Chickenpox from the control group who received placebo. Due to the large number of patients with Chickenpox in the college campus, both groups were equally at risk for contracting the disease, but only control group volunteers suffered with illness. Therefore, it can be deduced from this study that Variolinum can be utilized as a chicken pox preventative. To confirm its effectiveness, more research needs to be done over a longer time period and in diverse age groups.

Conflict of Interest: Not available

Financial Support: Not available

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