



CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME AND HOMOEOPATHIC TREATMENT – A PILOT STUDY

Homeopathy

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ABSTRACT

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is one of those clinical presentations which is most often misdiagnosed to be various other conditions. After the recent news featured in "The Nature" on the reboot of chronic fatigue syndrome in January 2018, this paper is a trial to provide deeper insight into CFS (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) and the possibilities of managing the condition with alternative systems of medicine especially Homeopathy to improve the quality of life of the patients suffering with this illness through a retrospective observational pilot study.

KEYWORDS

1. INTRODUCTION:

CFS was previously known as Myalgic Encephalomyelitis or Neurasthenia. This is an increasingly frequent presentation at the clinics of the medical professionals. But the lack of specific diagnostic tests to confirm the diagnosis poses a challenge for the physicians to pin point the diagnosis, being the reason why majority of the cases with CFS are either non diagnosed or misdiagnosed with other illnesses like depression.[1] The management of CFS also poses difficulties as more frequently than not the prescription includes antidepressants, antivirals, analgesics and sleeping pills whose prolonged usage is inadvisable due to the range of side effects these drugs are associated with. This paper is an attempt

1.1 OBJECTIVES:

- To provide a deeper understanding of CFS.
- To explore the possibilities of alternative treatment especially homeopathy for CFS.
- To present a study on CFS treatment outcomes with Homeopathy.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- TOTAL NUMBER OF SUBJECTS: 100
- PERIOD OF STUDY: 12 months
- INCLUSION CRITERIA:
- All those patients who presented with CFS symptoms are included.
- AGE: >20 years
- GENDER: All genders
- EXCLUSION CRITERIA:
- All those patients who did not present with CFS are excluded.
- AGE: <20 years and seriously ill patients are excluded.
- GENDER: All genders

As CFS is a multisystem complex disease, which is often undiagnosed due to the multiple variations in the manifestation of the disease symptoms, the deeper understanding of the disease will help the medical professionals in diagnosing the condition and the non-medical professionals to report the case as soon as they find few symptoms in either themselves or in their acquaintances, thereby helping the patient's early recovery.

The health care professionals of contemporary medicine, try to treat the multiple variations in the presentation accordingly with analgesics, according to the presentation of the disease, which often requires prolonged treatment, there are fewer options in the contemporary medicines and the prolonged usage of certain indicated medicines may sometimes harm the patient thereby leaving the physician in a confused state to conclude on the treatment protocol. Thus in this article an effort is made to understand the treatment possibility of CFS with homeopathic medicines, which are least harmful and can be used for long term by the patient for his condition.

2. CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME -AN INSIGHT

CFS has first appeared as an epidemic of persistent fatigue which broke out in Lake Tahoe, Nevada in 1984 and 1985. The name Chronic Fatigue Syndrome was coined around 1987. It is noted to be more

prevalent [5] than expected in various countries around the globe. [1][2]. And it is observed to be more common in women than men.[2]

2.1 CLINICAL PRESENTATION:

According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S., the chronic fatigue syndrome criteria after revision in 2017[3] include the following

2.1.1. PRIMARY SYMPTOMS

Primary symptoms are those symptoms which are essential in leading to the diagnosis. They are also known as Core symptoms.

1. Patient's ability to do the similar activities which he used to do before illness is highly reduced, there is a drop in the level of activity along with fatigue which is of more than six month duration.
2. There is unexplained fatigue which is severe, which is not from exertion and it is not relieved after rest.
3. Post exertional malaise (PEM) - All the symptoms become worse after slightest physical or mental exertion which would not have caused a problem before illness. Patients describe this easily getting affected with slightest exertion as collapse or crash. This PEM may either aggravate the condition or actually trigger the condition. Recovery from a crash may take few days or weeks or sometimes even longer. It may make the patient house bound or even completely bed bound causing a lot of difficulty. The cause or trigger is unknown and sometimes even the slightest routine work may bring on the symptoms. This crash cannot be predicted. The period of recovery is also variable. It highly varies from individual to individual and also the period of recovery varies from attack to attack within the individual.

2.1.2 SECONDARY SYMPTOMS

- **Sleep problems:** There is difficulty in sleeping. Most of the times CFS patients do not feel better after a whole night's sleep. Some patients may have trouble falling asleep, or staying asleep. Unrefreshing sleep, disturbed sleep, sleeplessness are the words which define such conditions.
- **Thinking and memory problems:** Most of the patients with this condition find difficulty in quick thinking, paying attention to small details or in remembering things. They describe it as brain fog. Sensation as if their brain is stuck in fog making it difficult for them to think clearly.
- **Orthostatic intolerance:** It means worsening of symptoms while standing or sitting upright. There may be dizziness, weakness, or fainting feeling while standing or sitting up. They may also have changes in vision like blurring or seeing spots.
- **Pain:** Most often than not, patients with CFS experience pain. The area of pain, type of pain and the intensity of pain varies a lot. This pain is not from an exertion or an injury. There is no specific cause for this pain. It may be felt in muscles, joints, head etc. anywhere in the body along with various other symptoms.

2.2 DIAGNOSIS:

There is no specific diagnostic marker test for CFS which makes this disabling and complex disease difficult to diagnose. The diagnosis is done by the exclusion method by excluding various other illness which have similar presentation. To come to a conclusion extensive and detailed case taking and supporting diagnostic tests are required.

2.3 DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS:

- Fibromyalgia
- Depressive disorders
- Sleep disorders
- Substance abuse or dependence
- Hypothyroidism
- Diabetes mellitus
- Multiple sclerosis

2.4 TREATMENT:

There is no specific treatment protocol for the treatment of CFS but symptomatic treatment depending on the type and severity of the presenting complaints is given [3]. But there are lot of drawbacks in the treatment as the prolonged usage of the drugs in analgesics, antidepressants, sleeping pills etc. has their own side effects which may cause further trouble to the patients.

3. CFS TREATMENT OUTCOMES WITH HOMEOPATHY- A RETROSPECTIVE OBSERVATIONAL PILOT STUDY

Homeopathy one of the widely used alternative system of medicine, throughout the world. According to the national institute of health, US, national research register-US, current science group-London and various other research centers, illnesses like fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, myalgicencephalomyelitis had successful clinical trials proving the effectiveness of acupuncture, exercise, cognitive behavior therapy and homeopathic treatment.[4] The purpose of this study is to find out the treatment possibilities of CFS with homeopathic medicines and analyze the outcome. The study is a retrospective observational pilot study conducted at the Faculty of Integrative Medicine (AYUSH) Homeopathy Hospital, Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Dayalbagh, Agra district, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA.

3.1.MATERIALS AND METHOD:

The patients assed in this study were assimilated from the data collected from the records of the outpatient clinic in the Faculty of Integrative Medicine (AYUSH) Homeopathy Hospital, and Saran Ashram Hospital. Both are secondary care hospitals. All those patients who were diagnosed with CFS are followed up. Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROM) method has been employed to collect the data. The analysis of the questionnaire has been used as the tool to identify the relativity of the severity among males and females, and to identify the prevalence of mental symptoms over physical symptoms, and the capacity to withstand the disease. The patients were divided into two broad groups.

- GROUP A:-** CFS patients who received homeopathic treatment
- GROUP B:** CFS patients who received treatments other than homeopathy

Both the broad groups are divided into sub groups based on gender, the distribution of mental and physical symptoms and the patients who continued into CFS from a previous illness for the purpose of better understanding.

3.2. GROUP A CLASSIFICATION OF PATIENTS

Total number of patients included in Group A: 50 Males: 12, Females: 38

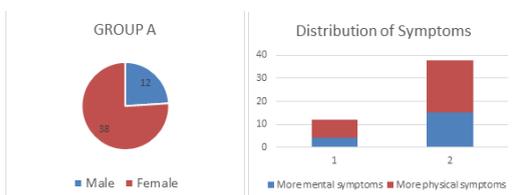


Figure 1 { SEQ Figure * ARABIC } Gender Distribution in Symptom Distribution in Group A

3.3. GROUP B CLASSIFICATION OF PATENTS

Total number of patients included in Group B Males: 17, Females: 33

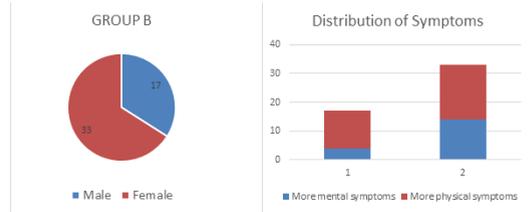


Figure {SEQ Figure * ARABIC} Gender Distribution in Group B

Figure {SEQ Figure * ARABIC} Symptom Distribution in Group

Table 1 {SEQ Table * ARABIC} Distribution of Symptoms among both the groups

DISTRIBUTION OF SYMPTOMS	MALE		FEMALE	
	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP A	GROUP B
Number of patients who presented more of mental symptoms	4	4	15	14
Number of patients who presented more of physical symptoms	8	13	23	19
Number of patients who were using muscle relaxants occasionally along with their respective treatment	0	13	5	33
Number of patients who were given counselling occasionally along with their respective treatment	0	4	15	14
Number of patients who had depression like symptoms previously though they did not undergo any treatment for the same	1	0	3	5
Number of patients who continued into CFS from previous illness	0	1	12	11
Total number of patients	12	17	38	33

3.4. INFERENCE:

Fig 1-4 shows that CFS is more prevalent among females than male. Male patients exhibited more physical symptoms and female patients exhibited more mental symptoms. Although the percentage of cure is almost equal in both the groups, the relapses are observed to be marginally high in group B. Majority of the patients in group B required sleeping pills daily whereas none of the patients in group A received the same.

4. CONCLUSION:

Chronic fatigue syndrome being one of the most complex diseases with unknown etiology, lack of a diagnostic marker test and the multiple and variable symptomatology of the disease pose difficulty in the treatment basing on just the disease causing the need for multidrug therapy in contemporary system of medicine whose prolonged usage may cause harm to the patients. Homeopathy[6] as an alternative system of medicine provides a wide range of medicines[9][10] which may be employed in the treatment of CFS as standalone or add on treatment which may be of benefit to the patient without side effects. Observations from the above study clearly demonstrates that patients who receive homeopathic treatment have improved at par with others and the relapse rate is also low. Irrespective of this, the physician's goal is always to ameliorate the patient to the maximum extent possible in the least harming way[6][8]. Thus, there is no harm in trying various modes of treatments and therapies to improve the patient's condition whether they can used alongside contemporary treatment or used alone, with the primary goal to improve the patient's quality of life to the best possible extent. In this scenario where the prolonged treatment in contemporary medicine may have side effects on the patients and the usage of alternative and complimentary therapies may help the patients to deal with their suffering in a relatively better manner. Homeopathy can be used as a standalone or add on treatment in CFS to reduce the long term usage of harmful medicines which will indirectly improve the quality of life of the patient and also reduce the cost of treatment as homeopathy is much cheaper. Further large scale studies on these lines may benefit the patients suffering from CFS to a great extent.

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