

Role of Homoeopathic Genus Epidemicus in Epidemic and Pandemic Outbreaks – A Review on Historical Perspective

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Abstract

Homoeopathic medications have been used as a method of preventive immunotherapy for over 200 years. Vaccines are considered as an answer to epidemic outbreaks. But at the same time, it shall be recognized that different mode of treatments can also play significant role in managing the epidemics, which could be safer alternatives. Genus Epidemicus, a method used in homoeopathy for preventing the spread of diseases in various disease outbreaks such as chikungunya, dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis and cholera, stands the test of time. This method in homoeopathy for infectious disease-specific immunization is known as homeoprophylaxis. It has been utilized for the management of both epidemic and endemic contagious diseases. Dr Hahnemann suggested that whenever there is an epidemic, it shall be considered as a new and unique and a perfect disease picture can be deduced from seeing several such cases. Based on this he suggests forming a totality and finds the suitable homeopathic remedy. Homeopathy has played a significant role in various epidemics so far. It is the time for integrated approach where different therapies bring in their best for patients benefit and to work at a same platform hand in hand for human betterment.

Key words: Homoeopathy, Epidemics, Pandemics, Homeoprophylaxis, Hahnemann, Genus epidemicus

Introduction and Background

Homoeopathy has always played a significant role in managing epidemics as seen in world's history treating

diseases like scarlet fever, typhus fever, yellow fever, pneumonia, cholera, influenza, hepatitis, dengue, leptospirosis and conjunctivitis during the times of pandemics and epidemics.

Dr. Hahnemann, the founder of Homeopathy has talked about management of Epidemics in his work written in 1810 in the book Organon of Medicine. Dr Hahnemann has explained the way to find a remedy for an epidemic from Aphorism 100 to 104 in Organon of Medicine where he advises to carefully examine each case in all its aspects so as to identify its unique character. He insists that each such epidemic will be different from previous prevailing known diseases, so do not focus on naming the disease but to find the characteristic features to prescribe. He says *“as a careful examination will show that every prevailing disease is in many respects a phenomenon of a unique character, differing vastly from all previous epidemics, to which certain names have been falsely applied -with the exception of those epidemics*

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resulting from a contagious principle that always remains the same, such as smallpox, measles.etc.”¹

He talks of Epidemics in Aphorism 241 where he refers to Epidemics of Intermittent fevers. In aphorism 73, Hahnemann gives the definition of epidemic diseases as “*diseases in which many persons are attacked with very similar sufferings from the same cause (epidemically); these diseases generally become infectious (contagious) when they prevail among thickly congregated masses of human beings* “. Also in its foot note he has mentioned about the successful curative and prophylactic action of Belladonna and Aconite in scarlet fever & purpura miliaris (roodvonk) respectively.

I quote T. Chatterjee here whose words have very aptly described the determination of a Genus Epidemicus.

“The determination of Genus Epidemicus and the mode of treatment not only vary from region to region but also depend, to a large extent, on many other variable factors. Therefore, the search for a Genus Epidemicus of a particular disease in a particular region must, of necessity, depend on the totality of characteristic symptoms of all the affected cases in the same region. It is the totality peculiar to the particular epidemic of a particular region. However, there are cases where the nature of the disease is almost independent of the variable factors and exhibit the same symptoms in development of the disease. In such cases, the prophylaxis would remain the same, though there may be variation in the mode of treatment. Lathyrus in polio, Parotidinum in mumps, Morbillinum in measles, Typhoidinum in typhoid are some of the examples.

The determination of genus epidemicus is a difficult procedure involving intensive study of the affected cases, as pointed out above, in a particular region and consensus among the leading homoeopathic practitioners of that region. It is possible to conceive of more than one genus epidemicus as not merely the similimum but also the near similimum act as prophylactics. Thus, in encephalitis, both Apis and Belladonna have proved to be good prophylactics. Similarly, are Morbillinum and Pulsatilla for measles. But due caution has to be exercised to see (a) that a critical study of each symptom has been made and (b) that personal bias in the matter of observation, recording, evaluation and interpretation of the stable characteristic symptoms has been eliminated. Mutual

consultation amongst leading practitioners is a necessity to ensure (b) above before a genus epidemicus is declared as a prophylactic for a particular region. If the epidemic continues for some time, there is every possibility that the genus epidemicus may change due to change in the behaviour of the variable factors. Even the genetic pattern of bacteria and viruses may change. A fresh study is then called for.”²

In homeopathic original literature many authors like Allen, Grimmer, Mathur K, Guernsey, Tyler, Chatterjee have talked about using the remedies as a preventive and for treatment in cases of epidemics which they have referred to as Genus Epidemics. One such example is where Grimmer talks of using prophylactic Lathyrus for polio and Variolinum for smallpox.^{2,3,4,5,6}

Grimmer says, “For prophylactic purposes, I have always given the epidemic remedy - i.e., the remedy of the genus epidemicus - after I had found it, but where no epidemic remedy is known, we have in Lath., a powerful and certain protection against the ravages of this frightful malady. Over 5000 children have been easily and positively protected by this remedy in my hands: given once a week in the 30th potency, during the period of the epidemic. Later years, I have given the 10M. potency at intervals of 30 days with complete protection”.⁵

Preventive use of Homoeopathy was first applied in 1801 during an epidemic of scarlet fever in Königslütter, Germany, when Hahnemann prescribed a single dose of Belladonna, as the Genus Epidemicus to susceptible children in the town with 100% success.⁷

Some available data from the olden days reveal the prophylactic success of *Belladonna* for another epidemic such as scarlet fever (1820s) where only 7.5% of the 1,646 children who were given the medicine remained unprotected. *Camphora*, *Cuprum metallicum* and *Veratrum album* proved successful in different stages of the Cholera epidemic (1831–1832) and it was reported that mortality rate in European homoeopathic hospitals was 7%–10%, whereas with conventional treatment, it varied between 40 and 80%. *Camphora* saved another epidemic of Cholera (1846), where mortality rate amongst patients treated with Homoeopathy was 5%–16% as compared to 54%–90% amongst patients treated conventionally.^{7,8,9,10,11}

Guernsey refers to the use of Camphora for epidemic of Influenza.³

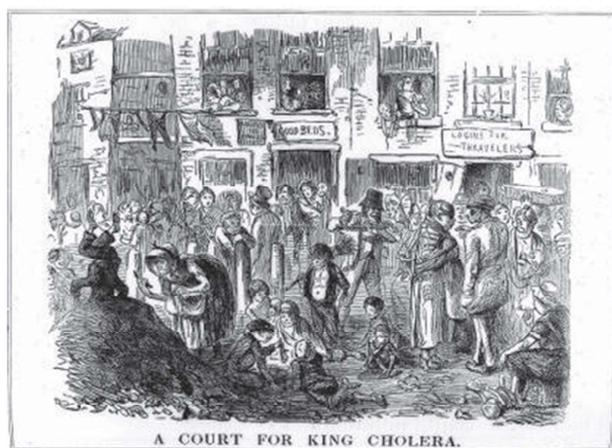
Homeopathic medications have been used as a method of preventive immunotherapy for over 200 years. This method for infectious disease-specific immunization is known as homeoprophylaxis. The intent of homeoprophylaxis is to educate the immune system in order to reduce the incidence of infectious and chronic diseases. It has been utilized for the management of both epidemic and endemic contagious diseases. Homeopathy became popular in both the United States and Europe during the 19th century as a result of its success in treating several epidemics, including typhus, cholera, yellow fever, and scarlet fever. Observational studies of homeoprophylaxis have shown it to be comparably effective to vaccination and without toxicity.¹²

Interestingly Hahnemann has talked of hygiene and sanitization in cases of Epidemics as of a great value as he explains that epidemics spread by contact. He says "After the epidemic has been subdued, the male attendants should not be dismissed until they have whitewashed the whole of the interior walls of the house, not only the sick ward, but every other room, and the females not until they have thoroughly scrubbed all the floors, all the wood-work and all the utensils."¹³

Some insights on epidemics and role of homeopathy in past:

Cholera and Homeopathy

The history of the homeopathic treatment of cholera starts with its very discoverer-Samuel Hahnemann who took up its treatment with the help of his homeopathic medicines and created a revolt against the existing



method of treatment of that time which consisted of bloodletting, leeches, cupping etc. isgusted by this turmoil in the field of treatment of cholera. Hahnemann denounced bloodletting and it was his intuitive faculty of apprehending that made Hahnemann to ever make the most remarkable hit or that ever was made in medicine i.e.,his recommendation of Camphor in cholera. He could understand the type of disease by its description only and found its resemblance in the action of a drug. He laid down three main remedies that would be curative in that disease; in early and simple cases *Camphor*; in later stages with excessive cramping, *Cuprum* with excessive evacuations and profuse cold sweat, *Veratrumalbum*. This is remarkable also historically as homeopathic system in general and the treatment of cholera by it were put to test in hospital under the inspection of a despotic government.¹⁴This interesting fact shows that how Hahnemann is explained the use of different remedies for an epidemic based on different level of severity of cases.

In a letter written by then The Chief Magistrate of the Tischnowitz M. Dieble to Dr. Quin the following data was revealed. That the cholera was extremely spread in the villages that surround the -town and castle. The following table was carried in the letter just quoted.¹⁵

	Cases of Cholera	Cases Cured	Died
Inhabitants. 6671	680	540	140
Under Allopathic treatment	331	229	102
Under Homoeopathic treatment	278	251	27
With Camphor alone	71	60	11

TYPHUS IN 1813

It is a well-known fact in history of Homeopathy that how homeopathy treated innumerable cases of typhoid. We quote Hahnemann from his "Lesser Writings" here to share how he reached Genus Epidemics. "Thus in the year 1813 one patient would be prostrated with only a few symptoms of this plague, a second patient showed only a few but different ailments, while a third, fourth, etc., would complain of still other ailments belonging to this epidemic disease, while they were, nevertheless, all sick with one and the same pestilential fever, and the entire and complete

image of the typhus fever reigning at the time could only be obtained by gathering together the symptoms of all, or at least of many of these patients. Then the one or two remedies, found to be Homoeopathic, healed the whole epidemic, and therefore showed themselves specifically helpful with every patient, though the one might be suffering from symptoms differing from those of others, and almost all seemed to be suffering from different diseases."²

SPANISH FLU 1918

The Spanish Flu of 1918 has been the most discussed epidemic since the start of 2020 due to its similarity to COVID-19 and also for a reason that Homeopathy use has been documented for Spanish Flu with efficacy at many places. It is one of the largest documented use of homeopathy during the influenza pandemic of 1918. The Journal of the American Institute for Homeopathy, May 1921, had a long article about the use of homeopathy in the flu epidemic. Dr. T A McCann, from Dayton, Ohio reported that 24,000 cases of flu treated allopathically had a mortality rate of 28.2% while 26,000 cases of flu treated homeopathically had a mortality rate of 1.05%. This last figure was supported by Dean W.A. Pearson of Philadelphia (Hahnemann College) who collected 26,795 cases of flu treated with homeopathy with these results.^{3,4}

Mortality rate of Spanish Flu patients treated by homeopathic physicians was possibly one-third less than those treated by the other physicians.⁵ Parallel groups of cases everywhere show a homeopathic mortality almost negligible when compared with any other system of therapy.⁶

REVIEW OF SOME STUDIES EVIDENCING USE OF HOMEOPATHY IN EPIDEMICS

Role of Homoeopathy in prevention, control and treatment in epidemic disease conditions including influenza, Japanese encephalitis, dengue and other infectious diseases through clinical and experimental evidence has been frequently reported. Some scientifically conducted research studies in the recent past showing the beneficial role of homoeopathic Genus Epidemicus preventing the spread of diseases in various disease outbreaks such as chikungunya, dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis and cholera have made the application of the '*GE prophylactic*' stand the test of time.^{7,8}

A randomised control study to evaluate the use of *Bryonia alba* as a prophylactic during the outbreak of Chikungunya in Kerala, India indicated its efficacy more than placebo. Cluster analysis showed significant difference between the two groups [rate ratio = 0.76 (95% CI 0.14 - 5.57), *P* value = 0.03]. The result reflects a 19.76% relative risk reduction by *Bryonia alba* 30C as compared to placebo.⁹

A study by Rejikumar et al. in 2006 on 1061 people living in parts of Kerala badly affected by Chikungunya epidemic showed prevention in 82.19% people after administration of homoeopathic medicine *Eupatorium perfoliatum* 200C (three doses daily for 5 consecutive days).¹⁰

The Belladonna, Calcarea carbonicum, Tuberculinum (BCT) regime adopted in a phased manner as a preventive for Japanese encephalitis (JE) in 1999 for a period of 3 years brought down the mortality and morbidity rates of JE significantly in the state of Andhra Pradesh. This intervention was based on symptom similarity, complementary relationship, virulence and underlying miasms.¹¹

Influenza like illness is another area where various studies have been conducted and shown good results for use of homeopathic remedies as a preventive and specific. Two such studies have been conducted in India by CCRH. In 2009-2010 during H1N1 influenza pandemic, CCRH conducted 02 studies in India: A multicentre study in 2009-2010 to capture the symptomatic picture and response after homoeopathic management of patients with Influenza like illness across India. Another multicentre, single-blind randomised, placebo-controlled study in 2009-2010 clearly established the significant effect of individualised homoeopathic treatment in the patients suffering from ILI as well as in controlling complication/sequel rate in the homoeopathic intervention groups. *Arsenicum album* was the most popular choice of prescription, which was also found to corroborate with its selection as the GE for the epidemic previously.^{12,13}

USE OF HOMEOPATHY IN CUBA FOR EPIDEMICS IS A NOTE WORTHY DATA:

Cuba is one country where role of Homeopathy has been well demonstrated in the past few years. One of their large scale and successful study has been for their epidemic of Leptospirosis where they used diluted bacteria as a preventive to stop spread of leptospirosis



in Cuba. Due to the scarcity of time to prepare vaccine they prepared a homeo-prophylactic formulation from dilutions of four circulating strains of Leptospirosis. And this was given to a large population of 2.3. million people and they were able to control the spread of epidemic.

The homeo-prophylactic approach was associated with a large reduction of disease incidence and control of the epidemic. The results suggest the use of HP as a feasible tool for epidemic control, further research is warranted.¹

In another study in an outbreak of epidemic neuropathy (EN) in Cuba (1992-1993), most patients were improved by vitamin therapy. In subjects with residual symptoms, alternative treatments including homeopathy were suggested to ameliorate optic and peripheral signs of the disease. The percentage of improved OPTI patients was significantly higher after the homeopathic treatment vs the period between Ddiag and D0 for optical EN ($P < 0.01$), but not for PERI subjects ($P > 0.05$).²

- According to Finlay Institute, Dec 2009 - Jan 2010, about 9,074,439 individuals, near 90% of Cuban population received *homeopathic preventive medicine (Homeoprophylaxis)* for respiratory diseases, influenza (including AH1N1) with remarkable outcomes and a great reduction rate in mortality.
- Homeopathic interventions were also employed in other diseases in Cuba such as Hepatitis A (population 1400000, year 2004-2007),
- Dengue (population 150000, year 2006-2009),
- Leptospirosis (population 2300000, year 2007-2008),
- Conjunctivitis (population 180000, year 2008-2009) with undeniable successful results.

HOW A HOMEOPATHIC REMEDY CAN BE DERIVED FOR AN EPIDEMIC?

Dr Hahnemann suggested that whenever there is an epidemic it shall be considered as a new and unique. Approach it with an unbiased method. He advises at the very start, physician might not be able to obtain a complete picture of the disease, which falls so true even to the present scenario of COVID-19 where we see the picture of disease changing every few weeks.

He suggests that all cases shall be closely observed and then totality picture of the condition/ disease can be arrived at. He also remarks that a more careful observer would be able to find the totality in first few cases only, but to get a perfect disease picture, it can be derived from seeing several such cases. Based on this he suggests forming a totality and finding the suitable homeopathic remedy. He advised to take only the characteristic peculiar symptoms which represent the change of state including the general symptoms. He further says that since it's a disease spreading from contraction and therefore brings up a similar picture.¹

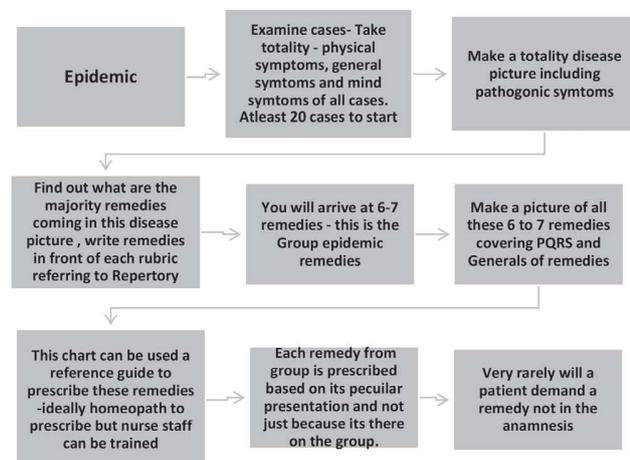
Dr Kent works further to simplify and advise a structured approach to finding a Genus Epidemicus. He says *"From the first few cases the physician has a very vague idea of this disease, for he sees only a fragment of it, and gets only a portion of its symptoms. But the epidemic spreads and many patients are visited, and twenty individuals have perhaps been closely observed. Now if the physician will write down all the symptoms that have been present in each case in a schematic form, following Hahnemann's method they considered collectively will present one image, as if one man had expressed all the symptoms, and in this way he will have that particular disease in schematic form. If he places opposite each symptom a number corresponding to the number of patients in which that symptom occurred, he will find out the essential features of the epidemic including the pathogenomic symptoms. This totality represents to the human mind, as nearly as possible, the nature of this sickness, and it is this nature that the therapist must have in mind. Now take the next step, which is to find in general the remedies that correspond to this epidemic. By the aid of a repertory, he will write after each one of these symptoms all the remedies that have produced that symptom. Having in this way gone through the entire*

schema, he can then begin to eliminate for practical purposes, and he will see that six or seven remedies run through the picture, and, therefore, are related to the epidemic, corresponding to its whole nature. This may be called the group of epidemic remedies for that particular epidemic, and with these he will manage to cure nearly all his cases. The question now arises, which one is the remedy for each individual case? When he has worked out the half dozen remedies, he can go through the *Materia Medica* and get their individual pictures so fixed in his head that he can use them successfully.

Thus he proceeds from generals to particulars, and there is no other way to proceed in homoeopathy.”

He is called to a family with half a dozen patients in bed from an epidemic, and he finds a little difference in each case, so that one remedy is indicated in one patient and another remedy in another patient. There is no such thing in homoeopathy as administering one of these remedies to all in the family because of a diagnostic name. Now, while one of the remedies in the epidemic group will most likely be indicated in many cases, yet if none of these should fit the patient, the physician must return to his original anamnesis to see which one of the other remedies is suitable. Very rarely will a patient demand a remedy not in the anamnesis. Every remedy has in itself a certain state of peculiarities that identifies it as an individual remedy, and so the remedy is fitted to the patient. No remedy must be given because it is in the list, for the list has only been made as a means of facilitating the study of that epidemic.²⁹

A pictorial representation of how a remedy can be derived as per Dr Kent's Method²⁹



Conclusion

Reviewing the history of health and mankind, it is evident that disease and epidemics per se are here to stay. At the same time, it is important to keep the patients' health as a priority and let them choose the best available options based on informed awareness. Homeopathy has a well-structured way of finding the remedy or remedies for an epidemic or pandemic and this method should be rightly used, implemented and documented for benefit to a larger population.

It is the time for integrated approach where different therapies bring in their best for patients benefit and work at a same platform hand in hand for human betterment.

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