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## HOMEOPATHIC MANAGEMENT OF ALLERGIC RHINITIS

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### ABSTRACT

Allergic rhinitis or hay fever is mainly attributed to the pollen grains which is a symptomatic disease affecting the mucous membrane of the nose mediated by IgE-mediated inflammation. Nasal hyperactivity is seen in healthy asymptomatic subjects to unspecific stimuli. Symptoms of allergic rhinitis include burning eyes, itching eyes, dry eyes, tiredness, rhinorrhoea, and sneezing affecting work performance, sleep, and quality of life. Allergic rhinitis increases disease risk for asthma, atopic dermatitis, and upper respiratory tract infections. Increased asthma prevalence reported in allergic rhinitis is attributed to allergic rhinitis itself and not grains. Hence, subjects need close assessment of symptoms and their management combined with low interaction risk and high tolerability. Management options for allergic rhinitis are medical management, desensitization, and allergens avoidance. Avoiding allergens is the least possible owing to the high spread of grains in the environment. Immunotherapy use resulted in acceptable outcomes in subjects with severe allergic rhinitis and the non-feasibility of medical treatment. The use of complementary treatment such as homeopathy in the management of allergic rhinitis uses a combination of two management options including immune system support and relieving the symptoms leading to increased demands. Homeopathic medicine proved to be potent in relieving the disease symptoms as well as leading to immune system desensitization increasing the demand for homeopathic medicine in allergic rhinitis. The present review aimed to assess the efficacy, safety, and use of homeopathic medicine in the treatment of allergic rhinitis.

**Keywords:** Allergic Rhinitis, IgE-Mediated Inflammation, Immune System, Nasal Hyperactivity.

## INTRODUCTION

The human body comprises various organ systems and maintaining a normal physiological state is based on the proper functioning of these organ systems. The normal

function of this organ system is compromised by different pathological conditions of the human body. One such condition affecting the normal physiologic state in humans is allergic rhinitis, also known as hay fever.<sup>1</sup> Allergic rhinitis is the most common disease affecting the respiratory system in humans. The disease affects the social, mental, emotional, and economic state of the affected subjects along with a negative effect on the quality of life in these subjects. Allergic rhinitis mainly affects child subjects affecting their daily activities at home and school. In subjects having allergic rhinitis, a negative effect is seen on classroom productivity, cognitive function, and daily activities.<sup>2</sup>

The symptoms associated with allergic rhinitis include nasal discharge, eye discharge, fever, headache, and/or breathing difficulties. Allergic rhinitis leads to inflammation in the nasal tract and causes the production of various antibodies.<sup>3</sup>

The etiology of Allergic rhinitis or hay fever is mainly attributed to the pollen grains which is a symptomatic disease affecting the mucous membrane of the nose mediated by IgE-mediated inflammation. Nasal hyperactivity is seen in healthy asymptomatic subjects to unspecific stimuli. Symptoms of allergic rhinitis include burning eyes, itching eyes, dry eyes, tiredness, rhinorrhoea, and sneezing affecting work performance, sleep, and quality of life. Allergic rhinitis increases disease risk for asthma, atopic dermatitis, and upper respiratory tract infections. Increased asthma prevalence reported in allergic rhinitis is attributed to allergic rhinitis itself and not grains.<sup>4</sup> Hence, subjects need close assessment of symptoms and their management combined with low interaction risk and high tolerability. Allergic rhinitis affects nearly 10% to 28.5% of subjects having a chronic respiratory illness.<sup>5</sup>

In subjects having allergic rhinitis, a marked effect is seen on the work state, sleep, and quality of life. In affected children, allergic rhinitis affects their performance at school, along with attention and learning difficulties. It also leads to difficulties concerning frequent visits to treating personnel, limitations in daily activities, social constraints, and financial burdens.<sup>6</sup>

The pathogenesis of allergic rhinitis is mainly attributed to contact with the allergen in the susceptible subjects initiating the antigen-antibody reaction, and hypersensitivity. A preventive factor in allergic rhinitis prevalence is attributed to avoiding contact with the etiologic factors.<sup>7</sup>

Allergic rhinitis causes inflammation in the nasal mucous membrane seen after a susceptible subject comes in contact with allergens including strong odor, smoke, dust, mold, or pollens. Allergic rhinitis is more prevalent during the spring and summer seasons owing to more presence of pollens during this time. The chronic nature of allergic rhinitis can lead to different complications including asthma and sinusitis making it vital to treat these conditions.<sup>8</sup>

Conventional medical management of the disease can decrease the symptoms and signs of the disease till the subject are on medications for the cure. However, medical management requires the drug intake for a longer duration which has associated disadvantages of causing the side-effects. Homeopathic management has the advantage of treating allergic rhinitis by acting on the root cause of allergic rhinitis. The appropriate treatment protocol is based on disease features along with evaluating the unique characteristics of the affected individual.<sup>9</sup>

## SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS

The symptoms commonly seen in subjects affected by allergic rhinitis are watery discharge from the eyes, running nose, and sneezing. Along with these symptoms, irritation is seen in the nose which leads to sneezing and watery discharge from the nose. The nasal discharge seen comes from the posterior nares draining to the throat. This process is known as a nasal drip. In the majority of the subjects, the sense of smell is lost after allergic rhinitis.<sup>10</sup>

In subjects having chronic allergic rhinitis, the nose gets blocked after stuffing up. Nasal breathing also becomes difficult in these subjects, and the subjects tend to breathe orally and tend to keep their mouth open. In these subjects, the maximum difficulty is seen during the night as allergic rhinitis leads to difficulty sleeping. Sleep disturbance is also associated with xerostomia owing to oral breathing compared to nasal breathing in these subjects. In allergic rhinitis, ear blockage is also seen in some subjects.<sup>11</sup>

The symptoms include itching and sneezing from the nose. This itching is mainly seen in child subjects causing

nose movements in the pushing and cyclic pattern known as an allergic salute.<sup>12</sup>

The sneezing can be seen as bouts or spells of numbers 10-15, and sometimes more. Nasal congestion and discharge are also seen in allergic rhinitis which may expel or drip down from the nostrils or throat, is watery and thin in consistency, and is a clear fluid.<sup>13</sup> In cases where mucosal thickening is seen in allergic rhinitis, the color of discharge seen can have a greenish tinge or be yellow depicting the infection possibility. In nearly half of the subjects presenting with allergic rhinitis, congestion is seen as associated and is considered to be increased with nasal mucous entrapment or swelling in the nasal membranes. Eye symptoms such as watery output, redness, and itching are seen in half of the allergic rhinitis subjects. The itching provokes the feeling of itching that can lead to thickened skin and redness. In complicated cases, vexing, cough, ear blockage, facial pain, and headaches can be seen.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Management of the Allergic Rhinitis:**

Treatment options for seasonal allergic rhinitis consist of various options including medicine therapy, specific immunotherapy and desensitization, and avoiding the allergens. Avoiding allergens, the most specific etiologic factor in allergic rhinitis is the safest option. However, it is difficult to achieve as pollens are present in large amounts in the environment and contact avoidance is not feasible.<sup>15</sup>

Immunotherapies used specifically as a part of immune desensitization results in acceptable outcomes in subjects having a severe form of allergic rhinitis where medical therapy is not feasible. The disadvantages associated with immune desensitization and long-term medical therapies include risks such as anaphylaxis, side effects, frequent visits to the treating person, and difficulty in identifying the specific allergen associated with the rhinitis.<sup>16</sup>

Compared to desensitization in the immune system, drug therapeutics including cortisone, cromoglicic acid, disodium, and/or anti-histaminic have a better effect on the disease symptoms. The use of complementary treatment such as homeopathy in the management of allergic rhinitis uses a combination of two management options including immune system support and relieving the symptoms leading to increased demands. Homeopathic medicine proved to be potent in relieving the disease symptoms as well as leading to immune system desensitization increasing the demand for homeopathic medicine in allergic rhinitis.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Homeopathic treatment of allergic rhinitis**

Homeopathy is considered the best treatment option for treating various allergic disorders and allergies. This can be attributed to the aim of homeopathy to treat the root causes of the allergy and not the symptoms of the disease. In allergic rhinitis, the root cause considered is the hyperactivity of the immune system. This hyperactive immune system reacts in an aggravated manner when it contacts a certain allergen to which it is sensitized.<sup>18</sup> These agents may not cause any harm by themselves. However, the immune system identifies these agents as offensive factors and acts against these agents as a defense mechanism. Defensively, the immune system works towards washing these agents by the production of mucous in excessive quantities. Homeopathic management acts towards correcting the hyperactivity of the immune system and the repair of the immune system. This makes the body react in a normal manner to the agents that are considered responsible to cause allergies in humans.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Homeopathic medicine to treat allergic rhinitis**

Various homeopathic medications are considered effective in treating allergic rhinitis include:

**Arundo:** Arundo is considered the best homeopathic medicine to treat allergic rhinitis in subjects having severe itching. The subjects with allergic rhinitis begin to feel intensive itching in the nose and the palate. In such cases, Arundo is highly effective in working on the root cause of itching in hay fever and allergic rhinitis. Arundo is also suited in allergic rhinitis cases where subjects report a diminished sense of smell along with excessive itching and burning sensation in their nose.<sup>20</sup>

**MercSol:** Another homeopathic medication considered to have high efficacy in treating allergic rhinitis is MercSol. It is specifically used in subjects having high sensitivity towards cold as well as hot, and the sensitivity to both the stimulus is not tolerated by the affected subjects, then MercSol is best suited to treat hay fever or allergic rhinitis. It is also prescribed in cases with a complaint of watery discharge and excessive sneezing from the nose of the affected subjects. Profuse oral salivation and excessive sweating also indicate the use of MercSol in allergic rhinitis subjects. This medicine helps in keeping the mouth of the affected subjects wet and moist for a long duration. In subjects of allergic rhinitis with a complaint of dry mouth, MercSol increases salivation. Despite of increase in salivation in these subjects, a constant feeling of thirst is reported by these subjects. Along with these complaints, a foul smell is also noted in these subjects again indicative of infection.<sup>21</sup>

**Natrum Mur:** Another potent homeopathic medicine to treat allergic rhinitis is Natrum Mur indicated in cases with excessive sneezing, and in subjects where sneezing is the first reported symptom of allergic rhinitis. Natrum Mur is considered a medicine causing wonders as a homeopathic treatment of allergic rhinitis or hay fever. Natrum Mur is also indicated in subjects having dryness of the mucous membranes and the oral cavity. In cases where the nasal discharge is watery and thin with a high resemblance to the egg white, and in subjects with high desires of taking salty foods and eating salt, Natrum Mur has been advocated and reported a very high efficacy.<sup>22</sup>

**Arsenic Album:** In subjects having intense thirst associated with allergic rhinitis, the arsenic album is reported to be the best homeopathic treatment drug. It also has an established indication in cases where a subject has an intense thirst of the severity that the subject's condition worsens in the open air secondary to hay fever or allergic rhinitis. In subjects presenting the excoriating and copious watery discharge from the nose, Arsenic Album is indicated for the treatment of Hay fever. When anxiety and restlessness are seen as associated with allergic rhinitis and other identified features, an Arsenic album can be given. In subjects with increased thirst and limited water intake and where the symptoms of allergic rhinitis deteriorate during night time, the arsenic album is considered a choice of homeopathic treatment along with indication in subjects with a disproportionately increased sense of weakness is reported.<sup>23</sup>

**Allium Cepa:** In subjects with allergic rhinitis or hay fever along with watery eye discharge and watery eye complaints in addition to a running nose, the best choice of homeopathic management is Allium Cepa. In subjects considered for Allium Cepa, the discharge seen from the nose of the subjects is acrid and thin discharge, whereas, the seen discharge from the eyes seen is bland. In these subjects, the eyes become light sensitive and red along with the burning sensation in the eyes and the nose which is similar to the feeling of cutting an onion. Allium Cepa, as a homeopathic medicine is derived from onions and hence presents symptoms similar to onion cutting. Also, the burning eye feeling reported is similar to the feeling when onions are being cut in the close province of subjects. The symptoms and condition improve while going to the open air.<sup>24</sup>

**Lycopodium clavatum:** Lycopodium clavatum is a homeopathic medicine prescribed in the subjects of allergic rhinitis where symptoms of allergic rhinitis have a marked significant effect on the right side compared to the left side which can later also progress to the left side

of the body of the affected subject. Also, the subjects feel sensitivity towards the cold with a prominent feeling of heat lack. These subjects have a poor response to cold food items and cold air.<sup>25</sup>

**Pulsatilla nigricans:** It is another potent homeopathic medicine for allergic rhinitis in subjects having repetitive coryza attacks along with nose stuffing and sneezing. Along with sneezing, these subjects have marked discharge. The symptoms are seen to worsen in a warm room and improve in the open air.<sup>26</sup>

**Sulphur:** Sulfur is given to subjects of allergic rhinitis where the symptoms show a relapse tendency, and no remedy shows acceptable results and outcomes. The symptoms reported in these subjects include difficulty in breathing, frequent sneezing in the evening and morning, dry cough, congestion, throbbing, and/or local burning.<sup>27</sup>

Other homeopathic drugs that can be used in allergic rhinitis include Nux vomica, Rhus Toxicodendron, Silesia, Colchicum autumnale, Causticum, and Calceria carb Monica depicting high efficacy.<sup>28</sup> **Clinical basis**

Some subjects with allergic rhinitis prefer homeopathic treatment for the management and treatment of the allergic rhinitis symptoms considering the various side-effects associated with the use of side effects associated with conventional medicine used to treat allergic rhinitis or due to contraindications of using conventional medicine in subjects having some systemic diseases or conditions. Following the National Center for Homeopathy, homeopathic medicine fortreating allergic rhinitis has been studied in great detail, and the literature data reported homeopathy is highly effective treatment option for allergic rhinitis. Many medicines of homeopathy used in allergic rhinitis are considered to be effective, safe, natural, and free of adverse effects.<sup>29</sup>

Previous literature data reports that treating allergies with homeopathy is an ideal management technique as homeopathy in allergic rhinitis act as an immunomodulator or immunoregulator by reviving and regulating the immune system. In some subjects with allergic rhinitis, clinicians prescribe homeopathic medicine as a combination of two or more medicine formulations when addressed and indicated.<sup>30</sup>

Various previous literature data reported that using steroids in allergic rhinitis is the only medicine that can affect the outcomes of using homeopathic medicine concerning its pharmacological effects. Subjects on steroid therapy in inhalation, topical, or oral form should be reported to the homeopathic doctor before using any medicine prescribed to the subjects.<sup>31</sup>

The formulations for the homeopathic medicine for allergic rhinitis contain one or more active agents. Choosing a treatment for allergic rhinitis in each subject depends on the symptoms reported by these subjects. Different drug formulations and their doses including the pellets and liquid drops are available to be used in both pediatric and adult subjects. In subjects with allergic rhinitis, homeopathic medicine can also be given in ophthalmic and nasal formulations.<sup>32</sup>

Following the National Institutes of Health National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine data, subjects need to assess the most effective formulation for the allergies in them to the homeopathic health care providers when using the homeopathic treatment options in subjects with allergic rhinitis.<sup>33</sup>

### **Safety and Tolerability of homeopathic medicine in Allergic rhinitis**

The use of homeopathic medicine in allergic rhinitis is reported to have a good safety profile with no major reported side effects. The only reported side effects were allergic reactions that were self-limiting and self-cured. These allergic reactions were seen in the form of pustules and rashes around the mouth. These allergies were reported as late as after 11 days after taking the homeopathic medicine. After these side effects, the subjects showed complete recovery without needing any other treatment. The possible reason for these reactions was attributed to the causal relation of these reactions to the medication.<sup>34</sup>

The use of homeopathic medicine in subjects with allergic rhinitis provides relief of symptoms suggestive of seasonal allergic rhinitis along with improving the quality of life in these subjects. The use of homeopathic medicine serves as a useful treatment modality in treating pediatrics as well as adult subjects having allergic rhinitis.

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