

Review Article

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## REVIEW ON SCHIZOPHRENIA CASES TREATED WITH HOMOEOPATHY

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### Abstract

**Background:** Schizophrenia is a chronic mental health disorder characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech or behaviour, and impaired cognitive ability. Schizophrenia is one of the top 25 leading causes of disability worldwide. Homeopathy places great emphasis on mental health, both for treating physical and mental illnesses as a whole. We examined literature related to the potential utility of homoeopathy in treatment of schizophrenia.

**Aim and objectives:** The purpose of this study is to find out how effective homoeopathy is in the management of schizophrenia and also to develop a strategy for future scientific research in homoeopathy.

**Materials and Methods:** A systematic literature search was conducted in the international search databases (PubMed, Medscape, Google Scholar, Wiley online library, Springer, Scopus) and AYUSH portal, all relevant reviews, research articles, case series, and case reports published until 2021. We searched all keywords related to schizophrenia, analysing the study design, methodology, homoeopathic medicine prescribed, and results.

**Results and Discussion:** Due to limited number of literature, during the search using keywords, out of these 11 studies only six studies were evaluated for their efficacy in managing schizophrenia. These Six studies are analysed on the basis of their study design, methodology; homoeopathic medicines that was prescribed, and the results. In all these studies individualised homoeopathic medicine was given based on totality of symptoms but no common pattern of potency is followed.

**Conclusion:** The review illustrates the positive role of homoeopathy in treatment of schizophrenia, as the studies didn't include any control group, their positive results should be considered preliminary. A larger number of studies on strong evidence-based parameters, with rigorous study designs including RCTs with validated scales, are essentially required to be conducted to develop evidence base of homoeopathy for schizophrenia treatment.

**Keywords:** Homoeopathy, Schizophrenia, Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS), Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS).

## Introduction

Schizophrenia is a complex, chronic mental health disorder characterized by an array of symptoms, including delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech or behaviour, and impaired cognitive ability<sup>1</sup>. Historically, it was initially named "DEMENTIA PRECOX" (Premature dementia) later, renamed as Schizophrenia<sup>2</sup>. Schizophrenia is ranked among the top 25 leading causes of disability worldwide in 2013<sup>3</sup> affecting approximately 1% of the world's population. Globally, prevalence ranges from 13.1 million in 1990 to 20.9 million cases in 2016 with no sex differences<sup>4</sup>. In India, incidence ranges from 1.5-2.5 per 1000 and annual incidence of 0.35–0.38 per 1000 in urban populations and 0.44 per 1000 in the rural population<sup>5</sup>. In Kerala, lifetime prevalence rate in adult was found to be 0.29%<sup>6</sup>. The early onsets of the disease before the age of 25 years, along with its chronic course make it a disabling disorder for many patients and their families<sup>6</sup>. Schizophrenia is mainly having strong association with several genes providing strong evidence for nine linkage sites 1q,5q,6p,6q,8p,10p,13q,15q, and 22q<sup>6,7</sup> and abnormalities in neurotransmission, either an excess or a deficiency of neurotransmitters, including dopamine, serotonin, and glutamate, aspartate, glycine, and gamma-amino butyric acid (GABA)<sup>8</sup>. Increased risk of schizophrenia

is associated with maternal malnourishment, high maternal infections in winter born babies and vitamin deficiencies, mainly vitamin D due to famine<sup>9, 10, 11, 12</sup>. The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders describes the following as first rank symptoms of schizophrenia: thought echo, thought insertion, thought withdrawal, thought broadcasting, delusions of control, influence or passivity, hallucinatory voices giving a running commentary on the patient's behaviour, or discussing the patient among themselves are other type of hallucinatory voices coming from some part of the body<sup>13</sup>. Positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia can be easily identified and can be classified simply as psychotic behaviour which is not seen in healthy people<sup>14</sup>. According to the DSM-5, the positive symptoms are classified as delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech and disorganized behaviour in varying degrees of severity and the negative symptoms are affective flattening or blunting, avolition, alogia, attention and anhedonia<sup>15</sup>. In people with schizophrenia spectrum psychosis, suicidal ideation is strongly associated with suicide over the next decade, where one in every 20 individuals with schizophrenia will die by suicide<sup>16, 17, 18, 19</sup>. Among both sexes, women make more suicide attempts and experience lower self-esteem in spite of better social functioning<sup>20</sup>. In conventional treatment, discontinuation leads to high relapse rates, even after a single psychotic episode; transition from remission to relapse may be abrupt and with few or no early warning signs<sup>21</sup>. In Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) therapies show a positive role in treatment of schizophrenia<sup>22, 23,24,25,26</sup>. Homeopathy cures the person as whole taking into account mind-body relationships and the multi-level interconnected dynamics of the living system.<sup>25,27</sup>

### **Aim and objectives**

The purpose of this study is to find out how effective homoeopathy is in the management of schizophrenia and also to develop a strategy for future scientific research in homoeopathy.

### **Materials and Methods**

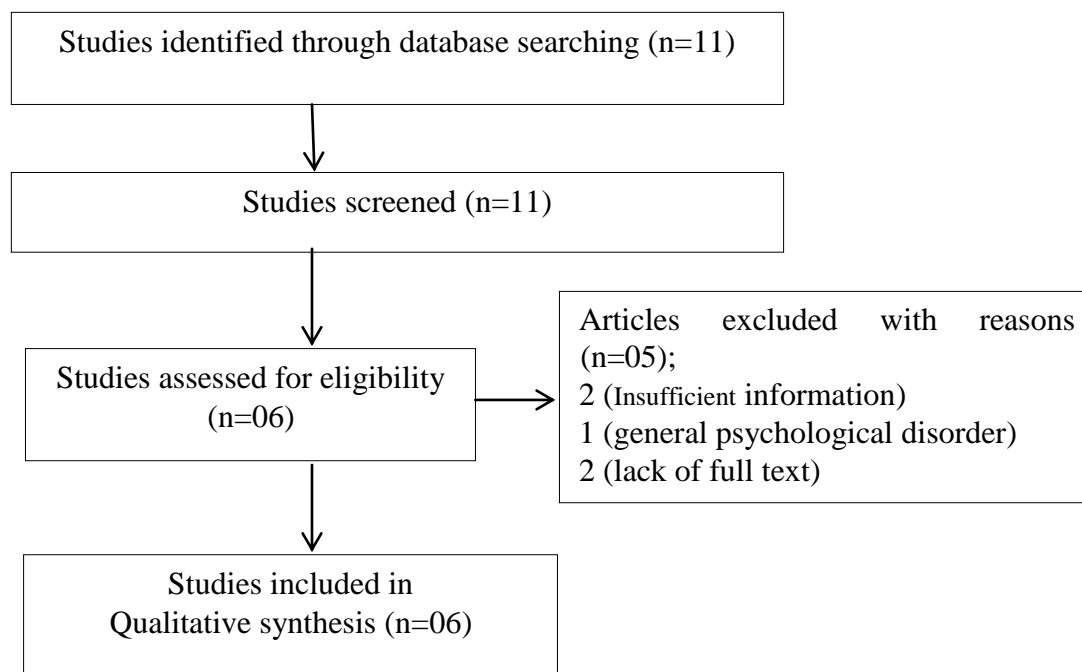
A systematic literature search was conducted in the international search databases (PubMed, Medscape, Google Scholar, Wiley online library, Springer, Scopus) and AYUSH portal, all relevant reviews, research articles, case series, and case reports published until 2021. Due to limited studies unable to blind in selection and extraction process. For this

search all keywords related to Schizophrenia, Homoeopathy, Positive and Negative symptoms of schizophrenia were used. All references were screened for eligibility based on their abstract or full text as per the criteria, analyzing their study design, methodology, homoeopathic medicine prescribed, and outcome. After extracting the data, six (n=6) studies were found to be relevant. Among them, one is a case study, four are prospective observational studies.

## Results

### Number of articles

In the search results using keywords, out of these 11 studies only six studies were evaluated for their efficacy in managing Schizophrenia based on their abstracts due to the limited number of literature. Six studies were analysed for their study design, methodology, homoeopathic medicine prescribed and outcomes. One study is a case report, one study is a review and four studies are prospective observational studies. The full text and abstract of these six studies are analyzed.



**(Figure 1)**

### **Number of participants**

In four observational studies, two have 50 participants; one study has 30 participants and one study has 188 participants. One is single-patient case report.

### **Duration of treatment**

One study has duration of treatment between 15 days to 10 months; in one study the duration of treatment wasn't clearly mentioned. One study has duration of treatment 6 to 8 months. In the remaining two studies the duration of treatment is 1 year.

### **Homoeopathic treatment approach**

All studies followed individualized homoeopathic treatment based on totality of symptoms.

### **Medicines prescribed frequently**

Medicines that are frequently prescribed in the clinical cases for schizophrenia were identified in review as: *Aurum metallicum*, *Anacardium*, *Belladonna*, *Calcarea carbonica*, *Calcarea phosphorica*, *Hyoscyamus*, *Lachesis mutus*, *Lycopodium clavatum*, *Natrum muriaticum*, *Nux vomica*, *Pulsatilla*, *Phosphorus*, *Sepia officinalis*, *Stramonium*, *Sulphur*, *Tarentula hispanica*, *Thuja occidentalis*, *Veratrum album*. The potency used has shown no common pattern, ranging from 30c to 10M. 50 millesimal potency was not reported.

### **Assessment/Outcome parameters**

In two observational studies and one case report, standardized validated scale Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS) was used, while in other two studies no validated scales were used.

### **Treatment outcomes:**

All the studies reported positive outcomes, no side effects and encouraging for further research with more accurate study design. Only preliminary comments are allowed due to the lack of paired control group. Comparison control groups could include patients under conventional treatment; due to ethical issues, related with the severity of the disease, control groups with placebo or no treatment are not feasible.

**Type of publication:**

Out of six studies, four were peer-reviewed and two were not peer-reviewed.

**Table 1: Studies included in the review.**

| Author name                           | Study design   | Summary of results  |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. R Shaw <sup>22</sup>               | <p>Observational clinical study</p> <p><b>Number of Participants</b></p> <p>50</p> <p><b>Intervention</b></p> <p>Homoeopathic medicines, based on the totality of Symptoms, constitutional medicines were used.</p> <p>No validated Outcome Parameters were used</p> | <p>The maximum improvement by the treatment noted among the adults 13 out of 21, and middle age 11 out of 18 whereas the least was in adolescence, on the whole 32 out of 50 patients improved to various degree. The study found six patients (four males and two female) had excellent improvement, 16 (male 16, female 4) had moderate improvement, 6 (male 4, female 2) had mild improvement, and 18 (male 13, female 5) had no improvement</p> <p><b>Medicine used</b></p> <p>Five homoeopathic medicines were found useful in the study. Mostly indicated: <i>Sulphur</i>, <i>Natrum muriaticum</i>, <i>Stramonium</i>, <i>Nux vomica</i>, <i>Hyoscyamus</i>.</p> |
| 2. V A Balachandran <sup>23</sup>     | <p>Observational clinical study</p> <p><b>No. of Participants</b></p> <p>50</p> <p><b>Intervention</b></p> <p>Homoeopathic medicines, based on the totality of symptoms, Constitutional medicines were used.</p> <p>No validated Outcome Parameters were used</p>    | <p>This study found in 15 patients had marked improvement, 15 patients had moderate improvement, and 9 had mild improvement, 4 cases no improvement.</p> <p><b>Medicine used</b></p> <p>Six homoeopathic medicines were found useful in the study. Mostly indicated: <i>Sulphurn</i>=15, <i>Pulsatillan</i>=7, <i>Lachesisn</i>=7, <i>Nuxvomica</i> n=6, <i>Stramonium</i> n=6, <i>Tarentula hispanican</i>=6.</p>  |
| 3. Praveen Oberai et al <sup>24</sup> | <p>Observational clinical study</p> <p><b>No. of Participants</b></p> <p>188</p>   | <p>Out of 188 enrolled patients, 17 cases did not complete the baseline Information. Total 171 patients were analysed as per modified Intention to Treat Principle. Significant difference (P = 0.0001, P &lt;</p>  |

|                                       |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
|                                       | <p><b>Intervention</b></p> <p>Homoeopathic medicines, based on the totality of symptoms, constitutional medicines were used.</p> <p>Outcome of treatment was assessed with Brief Psychiatric Rating Scales (BPRS).</p>  | <p>0.05) in the mean scores of BPRS, using paired t test was observed at end of the study</p> <p><b>Medicine used</b></p> <p>Thirteen remedies were most commonly indicated And found useful in treating schizophrenic patients. Of these <i>Sulphur</i> (22.8%, n = 39), <i>Lycopodium clavatum</i> (21.1%, n = 36), <i>Natrum muriaticum</i> (15.8%, n = 27), <i>Pulsatilla nigricans</i> (8.2%, n = 14), and <i>Phosphorus</i> (7.0%, n = 12) were chiefly indicated and showed varying degree of improvement. These five medicines were administered to 128 patients (74.8%) patients out of 171 enrolled medicines found useful during relapse were <i>Arsenicum album</i>, <i>Belladonna</i>, <i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>, <i>Lycopodium clavatum</i>, <i>Nuxvomica</i>, <i>Phosphorus</i> and <i>Stramonium</i>.</p>   |
| 4.Dr. M.Jayakumar et al <sup>25</sup> | <p>Observational clinical study</p> <p><b>No. of Participants</b></p> <p>30</p> <p><b>Intervention</b></p> <p>Homoeopathic medicines, based on the totality of symptoms, constitutional were used.</p> <p>Outcome of treatment was assessed with Brief Psychiatric Rating Scales (BPRS)</p> | <p>30 cases completed minimum follow-up period of 6 months were analyzed by using Statistical method. Significant difference (P = 0.0001, P &lt; 0.05) in the mean scores of BPRS, using paired t test was observed at the end of the study. Out of 30 patients studied, number of male cases was 17 (56.67%) and female cases were 13 (43.33%). Out of 30 patients studied, the maximum prevalence of Paranoid Schizophrenia was noted in age groups 15 to 25 (30%).</p> <p><b>Medicine used</b></p> <p>The study showed <i>Natrum muriaticum</i> has a significant effect in 6 cases (20%), <i>Sepia</i> was used in 4 cases (13.33%), <i>Aurum metallicum</i>, <i>Hyoscyamus</i>, <i>Sulphur</i> was used in 3 cases each (10%), <i>Lachesis</i>, <i>Lycopodium</i>, <i>Pulsatilla</i>, <i>Stramonium</i> was used in 2 cases each (6.67%), <i>Anacardium</i>, <i>Calcarea phos</i>, <i>Thuja</i> was used in 1 each case (3.33%).</p> |

|                                       |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| 5.Dr. Jayashree Janagam <sup>26</sup> | <p>Case report</p> <p><b>No of participants</b></p> <p>1</p> <p><b>Intervention</b></p> <p>Homoeopathic medicines, based on the totality of symptoms, Constitutional were used.</p> <p>The case was assessed by Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS),</p> | <p>The case was assessed by Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale(BPRS), baseline BPRS score of 86 turned gradually to a subclinical range of 24 in one month</p> <p><b>Medicine used</b></p> <p>This case report shows Slight improvement in sleep was noticed after the <i>Stramonium</i> 200 but the chief complaints were still the same so the potency increased to 1M. From the very next day, onwards the patient started showings are marked improvement.</p> |
| 6. Gaurav Gupta. <sup>28</sup>        | Schizophrenia and Homoeopathy: A Review  | Schizophrenia is a psychiatric condition which affects the mental process of patient; Homoeopathy can be used as an effective method of treatment.   |

## Discussion

This is only a small literature review, attempting to collate the existing studies to identify their strong and weak aspects and to develop suggestions for future studies. Systematic review cannot be attempted due to variation in the studies which had not allowed to develop a fixed criteria for study inclusion/exclusion. Moreover, meta-analysis was not attempted due to variation in patient's inclusion/exclusion criteria and poor usage of assessment parameters. We found that a very small number of homeopathic studies have been performed on the treatment of schizophrenia; some of them are observational studies and one is a case report. We found no RCTs for treatment efficacy in schizophrenia. Drugs mentioned in the study Praveen oberai et al. for relapsing nature of schizophrenia were *Arsenicum album*, *Belladonna*, *Hyoscyamus*, *Lycopodium Clavatum*, *Nux vomica*, *Phosphorus* and *Stramonium*. Two observational studies and one case report had used BPRS scale evaluating the outcomes. Rating scale like Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS), Scale for the Assessment of Positive Symptoms (SAPS) and Scale for the Assessment of Negative Symptoms (SANS) could be used in specific for schizophrenia which helps in



differentiating the action of homoeopathic medicines in positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia. The sample size or numbers of patients were varying in all the studies. In case of further research, sample size calculation can be determined based on the effect size of previously conducted studies which helps in increasing the power of the trial which plays a key-role in increasing the validity and reliability of the trial. Follow up should be prolonged because of the chronic nature of the disease course, with relapse and remitting periods. Praveen oberai et al study used ICD 10 for diagnosis and mentioned that homoeopathic treatment reduced the relapse due to the stoppage of antipsychotic medication.<sup>24</sup>Suggested standard diagnostic criteria such as ICD-10 or DSM-5 should be used in order to improve the quality of further studies.

### **Conclusion**

Our literature review illustrates the positive role of homoeopathy in the treatment of schizophrenia. There is lack of adequate number of studies on strong evidence-based parameters. Randomized controlled trial, with validated scales in comparison with other treatments, conventional or complimentary should be conducted in order to develop evidence in homoeopathy for schizophrenia treatment.

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Nil

### **Conflicts of interest**

None declared.

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