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Abstract

Alstonia constricta has been used in Homoeopathy for many conditions like debility, diarrhea, dysentery, fevers, excessive lactation, leucorrhoea, palpitation, debility of uterus, as reported in various literatures. Most of these symptoms have been reconfirmed during the study and beside these loose stool with vomiting, chronic diarrhea, intermittent fever with profuse sweating, intermittent fever with diarrhea, dry cough etc. were also relieved by the medicine additionally while treating some other conditions and thus unfolding the hidden character of the medicine in various clinical conditions during the study. A total of 3854 patients participated in this multicentre study at various Units/Institutes under Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy to confirm the symptom of Alstonia constricta, as mentioned in the homoeopathic Materia Medica.

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CLINICAL VERIFICATION

Alstonia Constricta – A Multicentric Clinical Verification Study*

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Key words: homoeopathy; clinical verification; *alstonia constricta*

Introduction

The clinical verification is one of the important step in homoeopathy for confirming the symptomatology of the drug generated during the proving of the drug on healthy human beings. The clinical confirmation of signs and symptoms, observed during proving is essential for validation of symptoms of the drug and its therapeutic application.

Alstonia constricta was proved by Dr. Cathcart, of Australia, who found it to produce great debility and prostration, or low fever, often with diarrhea. It is exceedingly bitter. Dr. Dietz, who has tested it clinically, gives the following as leading indications: Debility from lack of digestive power in the stomach or general assimilative power. Tongue generally has a dirty white coat, especially at base; though it may

be clean. It has no relation to purely nervous debility. Clarke found it efficacious in treating nausea agg. in morning, before breakfast, or at irregular times, especially when depending on reflex irritation from disturbance of pelvic organs. An empty, gone feeling in stomach or whole abdomen at irregular times; generally with tearing, dragging-down sensation in hypogastrium, as if everything would escape from the vulva. Pale face, flushing on least excitement. Food seems to remain in stomach a long time undigested. Diarrhoea of undigested food immediately after eating; has to leave table before finishing a meal. (This symptom was cured by *Alston. c. I X* in a patient who had taken much iron, after the failure of *Puls., Sep., Sil., Nat. m.*) Leucorrhoea and bearing-down sensation agg. by walking. Swollen feeling in right ovarian region. Sharp shooting pain from left side of stomach through to back (spleen). At the moment she falls asleep; wakes up suddenly, becoming wide awake, with violent palpitation of the heart and throbbing in blood-vessels, accompanied by a numb sensation of the tongue. agg. by exertion. amel. by lying down.¹

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The Plant

Alstonia constricta is a tree up to 12 meters high², and a native quinine bark of Australia (New South Wales and Queensland). Its botanical name is *Alstonia constricta* F. Muell and common name is Fever bark. It belongs to natural order *Apocynaceae* and its vernacular name in English is - Bitter bark, native quinine bark.³

Description: The bark is in quills or channeled pieces, often of considerable size. Outer surface brown or yellowish brown in colour and deeply fissured both longitudinally and transversely; inner surface cinnamon brown in colour and deeply striated. The transverse section exhibits an abundant, dark brown cork, within which is a yellowish brown secondary bast. The latter exhibits under the microscope abundant bast fibres in tangentially arranged groups. The taste is very bitter. The aqueous infusion is yellowish and shows a well marked blue fluorescence.⁴

Physical Characteristics: *Alstonia constricta*- This bark contains the alkaloids alstonine (chlorogenine) and



Alstonia constricta

porphyrine; also alstonidine and porphyrosine concerning which little definite is known. Porphyrine in acid solution exhibits a blue fluorescence.⁴

Medicinal use: The bark of *Alstonia constricta* is a source of a remedy against malaria, toothache, rheumatism and snake bites. The latex is used in treating coughs, sore throats and fever. The latex is used in treating coughs, sore throat and fever.²

Methodology

Participants for the study were drawn from the OPDs of respective Institutes / Units of the Council. Their presenting symptoms and signs were recorded in the predefined case recording proforma to prescribe a medicine from the list of medicines assigned for clinical verification study. The medicine, which was found suitable for the patient on the basis of similarity was prescribed in Q (mother tincture) and the changes in presenting symptoms and signs were recorded during the follow-up visits. If there was no change in symptoms and signs for a significant period, next higher potencies like 3x, 6c and 30c were prescribed and in case no change was observed, even after change of potencies, the case was closed.

Study settings:

- Regional Research Institute (H), New Delhi
- Homoeopathic Drug Research Institute, Lucknow (U.P.)
- Homoeopathic Research Institute, Jaipur (Rajasthan)
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In this multicentric trial of the medicine, 3854 participants (1977 males and 1877 females) were prescribed *Alstonia constricta* during the period April 1982 to March 2004. The medicine was procured from the licensed pharmacy in various potencies viz. Q, 3x, 6c and 30c.

Results

The data of all the cases were collected, compiled and analyzed. The clinically verified symptoms are given in Table-1 along with the number of patients prescribed on the basis of available symptoms and number of patients who got relieved. The symptoms superscripted with '1', '5' & '6' are in confirmation with the literature mentioned under reference. Moreover during the study part of main symptom (modalities etc.) have also been found to be relieved in patients which

Table 1: Clinically verified symptoms observed during the study

Location	Symptom(s)	Improvement observed (% in bracket)
Stomach	Nausea worse in morning ¹	50 / 41 (82)
	Empty feeling in stomach with weakness ¹	31 / 28 (90.32)
Rectum	Diarrhoea immediately after eating ^{1,6}	88/77 (87.5)
	Diarrhoea due to contaminated water ⁶	18/16 (88.88)
	Loose stool ^{1,5,6}	719/517 (71.90)
	worse after eating ^{1,6}	50/40 (80)
	mucoid ^{1,6}	28/21 (75)
	watery ⁶	355/233 (65.63)
	painless ⁶	57/42 (73.68)
Loose stool with undigested food particles ¹	157/102 (64.96)	
Painless watery stool mixed with blood ⁶	66/57 (86.36)	
Female genitalia	Leucorrhoea ¹	51/38 (74.50)
	worse on walking ¹	14/13 (92.85)
	with bearing down sensation ¹	11/5 (45.45)
Fever	Intermittent fever ⁶	804/580 (72.13)
	Intermittent fever with diarrhoea ⁶	206/161 (78.15)
	with weakness after fever ⁶	21/8 (38.09)
Generalities	Debility ¹	66/45 (68.18)

are not mentioned in literature. In the column 'improvement observed' the first figure denotes the number of patients who had the symptom and to whom the medicine was prescribed and the second figure denotes the number of patients who got relief in the said symptom.

The following symptoms in Table-2, (totally new and not found in source literature) are the additional symptoms that were relieved either fully or partially. These, therefore, emerged as *clinical symptoms* not mentioned in the Homoeopathic Materia Medica on *Alstonia constricta*.

Table 2: Clinical Symptoms

Symptom(s)	Improvement Observed (% in bracket)
• Bitter taste in mouth	38/29 (76.31)
• Thirst for cold water	6/3 (50)
• Nausea with vomiting	3/2 (66.66)
• Loss of appetite	199/149 (72.86)
• Sour eructation after eating	2/2 (100)
• Gripping pain in abdomen around umbilical region worse before and after stool	2/2 (100)
• Diarrhoea with rumbling in abdomen with weakness in legs	3/3 (100) 3/3 (100)
• Violent cramping pain in hypogastrium makes him to go for toilet worse in early morning and at night	8/6 (75)

Symptom(s)	Improvement Observed (% in bracket)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loose stool worse in morning offensive yellowish worse from fatty, fried food with nausea and vomiting with pain in abdomen around navel pain better by passing stool 	<p>29/17 (58.62) 1/1 (100) 245/144 (58.77) 92/65 (70.65) 42/27 (64.28) 51/46 (90.19) 11/7 (63.63)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loose stool from indigestion Leucorrhoea profuse thick profuse, thin, whitish worse on exertion worse before menses with weakness during pregnancy with bearing down sensation, as if the child would come out, better by lying down with vertigo and weakness 	<p>26/21 (54.60)</p> <p>14/13 (92.85) 5/4 (80) 3/3 (100) 2/2 (100) 11/5 (45.45) 2/2 (100) 2/2 (100)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dyspnoea alternates with constipation 	1/1 (100)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cough with scanty expectoration worse at night 	2/2 (100)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry cough 	27/27 (100)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever with chill worse at night Irregular satges with coryza with decreased appetite with diarrhoea with frontal headache with white coated tongue 	<p>53/43 (81.13) 4/4 (100) 5/5 (100) 4/3 (75) 1/1 (100) 25/18 (72) 42/34 (88.95) 44/35 (79.45)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermittent fever worse in morning worse at night worse in after noon worse 11 a.m. and 10 p.m. with bitter taste in mouth with headache with thirst with profuse sweating malaria parasite +ve with thick coated tongue 	<p>10/10 (100) 561/396 (70.58) 4/4 (100) 2/2 (100) 135/112 (82,96) 4/3 (75) 98/65 (66.32) 170/125 (73.52) 14/12 (85.71) 4/4 (100)</p>

Discussion

Keeping in view the pre-defined criterion the study was focused mainly on the verification of symptoms of *Alstonia constricta* as available in literatures. The sphere of action has been found to be primarily on G.I. Tract, Female reproductive organs and Intermittent kind of fevers.

In G.I. Tract, the action of the medicine has been primarily manifested through 'Diarrhoea' and it has been verified in 517 participants after being prescribed to

719 (71.90%) as shown in Table -1. The modality of stool is worse from fatty, fried food which has been verified in 65 patients after being prescribed to 92 (70.65%) (Table-2). The prominent character of stool is watery and yellowish which was verified in 233 and 144 patients respectively. The medicine may be thought of for the complaints of 'diarrhoea immediately after eating', since (87.5%) improvement was obtained in 77 patients after being prescribed to 88. Painless character of diarrhea is another special feature of *Alstonia constricta* which has been verified in 42 participants after being prescribed to 57(73.68%).

Diarrhoea with undigested food particles is another indicative symptom of *Alstonia constricta*, since 102 patients were relieved after being prescribed to 157 patients (64.98%). The medicine has been found useful in treating the dysenteric complaints as well, since (21 out of 28) participants having mucus in stool and (57 out of 66) patients having stool mixed with blood have been improved after the treatment with the medicine.

In intermittent kind of fevers *Alstonia constricta* was found to be a very useful medicine since 580 participants were improved after being prescribed to 804 (72.13%) (Table -1). The fever of this medicine is marked with chill and profuse sweating since 292 out of 390 patients and 125 patients out of 170 were improved respectively after the administration of the medicine. The prominent modality has been verified is 'agg. at night' in 396 patients out of 561 (70.58%) (Table-2). In cases of 'intermittent fever with diarrhea', 161 patients were improved after being prescribed to 261 patients (78.15%). The medicine was also found to be useful in alleviating weakness after fever since 18 out of 21 patients were improved (38.09%). (Table-1)

Alstonia constricta is a useful medicine in 'leucorrhoea' and in 'general debility' also, since 38 out of 51 cases and 45 out of 65 patients were improved respectively after the administration of the medicine. (Table -1)

Apart from above, it has been observed that *Alstonia constricta* is also a remedy which can be thought of in dry cough, loose stool from indigestion, bitter taste in mouth and anorexia, since these have emerged as clinical symptoms of the medicine during the trial. (Table-2)

Study shows that *Alstonia constricta* has some positive role in alleviating the signs and symptoms of various clinical conditions as mentioned above. In many cases symptomatic relief was not followed by pathological improvement and the statistical analysis also could not be done, which can be considered as a weakness of the study. Also it can not be said that the clinical symptoms are very genuine of the medicine since that fact can not be established. But at the same time it is also a fact that a large number of patients have received treatment for many of their complaints over a long period of study, as witnessed above, that speaks about the usefulness of the medicine in various clinical conditions which is a strength of the study. It is also a fact that most of the symptoms have been verified and re-verified in different seasons and different regions of India where the participants were exposed to their different food habits and different climatic conditions which have not restricted the action of medicine on the participants, which again proves that homoeopathic

medicines acts unconditionally. Therefore, the symptoms verified during the study can not be discarded in considering its reliability.

Repertory

A concise repertory of the verified symptoms, according to Kent's Repertory of the Homoeopathic Materia Medica has been compiled for the purpose of quick reference. Rubrics / sub rubrics in italics are new rubrics, i.e., not mentioned in the above referred repertory while rubrics / sub rubrics in roman letters are the existing rubrics of the said repertory which were reconfirmed by this study.

Physicians may include these rubrics in their personal repertories for their day to day reference in practice.

STOMACH

APPETITE, wanting
fever, in
EMPTINESS
weakness, with
ERUCTATIONS, sour
eating, after
NAUSEA
morning
THIRST
cold drinks
VOMITING
morning

ABDOMEN

DISTENSION
PAIN, cramping, gripping
Umbilicus, region of
stool, before
after
amel.
RUMBLING
diarrhea, *with*

RECTUM

DIARRHOEA
morning, *early*
night
chronic
with pain, cramping, in hypogastrium,
makes to go for toilet
eating, after
immediately, after
fever, intermittent, during
indigestion, from
painless
water, *contamination from*
weakness, *in legs with*

STOOL

BLOODY

MUCOUS

ODOUR

offensive

UNDIGESTED

WATERY

morning

eating, after

fatty, fried food, agg.

nausea and vomiting, with

pain in abdomen, with

pain less

YELLOW

bitter taste in mouth, with

chill, with

headache, with

malaria parasite positive

thick coated tongue, with

thirst, with

weakness, after

perspiration, profuse, with

IRREGULAR stages

GENERALITIES

WEAKNESS

empty feeling in stomach, with

leucorrhoea, from

GENITALIA – FEMALE

LEUCORRHOEA

copious

exersion, from

lying down, amel.

menses, before

pregnancy, during

thick

thin

white

vertigo with

walking, agg.

weakness, with

with bearing down sensation as if the

child would come out

COUGH

NIGHT

DRY

EXPECTORATION

SCANTY

RESPIRATION

DIFFICULT

alternating with, constipation

FEVER

NIGHT

CHILL, with

CORYZA, with

DIARRHOEA, with

HEADACHE, frontal, with

TONGUE, coated, white

INTERMITTENT

morning

11 a.m

afternoon

night

10 p.m.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the symptoms of *Alstonia constricta*, as available in literature have been reasonably verified to be correct. A number of clinical symptoms also have been relieved by the medicine which were earlier not reported anywhere and shows its wider scope of therapeutic action. Further clinical trials with suitable study design are required to validate such conditions and to enhance the usefulness of this medicine.

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