

Using homeopathy for musculoskeletal disorders can deliver significant results

Dr Sujata Naik is a leading international homeopath and researcher, and the first affiliate member of the Faculty of Homeopathy. Here she provides a synopsis of her talk on “Musculoskeletal Disorders and Homeopathy” which she delivered to the Faculty of Homeopathy Midlands group in September 2019.

The term musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) covers any injury, damage or disorder of the joints or other tissues in the upper/lower limbs or the back. MSDs include: upper limb disorders, lower limb disorders and back pain. MSDs are common and the risk of developing them increases with age.

Clinical progression and prognosis depends on the following key factors:

- Does the problem arise from the joint, tendon, ligament or muscle?
- Is the condition acute or chronic?
- Is the condition inflammatory or non-inflammatory?
- What is the pattern of affected areas/joints?
- What is the impact of the condition on the patient’s life?

Homeopathic approach to MSDs

Musculoskeletal disorders include a wide range of ailments from traumatic to degenerative, inflammatory, infective to autoimmune. A multi-dimensional approach tailored to treat the particular condition could be implemented. While individualisation based on totality of symptoms remains the cornerstone of homeopathic prescription, certain specific remedies may need to be administered in certain conditions especially mechanical injuries.

The following broad classification could prove helpful in determining the line of homeopathic treatment and the remedies prescribed under different circumstances:

First aid

Certain homeopathic remedies could be helpful as first aid in management of injuries, sprains or spasms through symptom amelioration and reducing the inflammation, swelling and ecchymoses. Here, choose a remedy having a sphere of action specifically on the musculoskeletal system and having clinically proven its efficacy in the said condition. Remedies like:

- Arnica montana – first remedy following falls, blows, contusions, concussions, after traumatic injuries, sprains.
- Hypericum perforatum – for injuries to nerves, punctured incised or lacerated wounds, arrests ulceration and sloughing.
- Rhus toxicodendron – spraining or straining tendons, affection of fibrous tissue.
- Ruta graveolens – lameness after sprains especially of wrists and ankles.
- Symphytum officinale – acts on joints, tendons and periosteum. Useful in non-union of fractures and after blows from obtuse objects. Very useful for traumatic injuries to the eye.

Classification of MSDs

Origin	Nature	Duration	Distribution
Articular	Inflammatory	Acute	Localised
Non-articular	Non-inflammatory	Chronic	Wide-spread (Systemic)

- *Bellis perennis* – useful in injuries to deeper tissues after surgery, associated with muscular soreness and lameness. Useful for exudation, stasis and cellulitis.

Acute

In acute exacerbations of chronic disorders – for example: rheumatoid arthritis, gout, muscle spasm in cervical spondylosis – it is important to give symptomatic relief to the patient. Here the indicated remedy is based on the presenting totality. The acute homeopathic remedy helps give symptom relief to the patient and may open up the case for further constitutional prescribing on the next follow up.

- *Colchicum autumnale* – for gout.
- *Bryonia alba* – for acute pain, inflammation of affected joint > by rest
- *Nux vomica* – in acute muscle spasm from cervical spondylosis.

Chronic

In chronic conditions, constitutional prescribing is the hallmark for true homeopathic similitum. Only detailed case taking, analysis and repertorisation can result in accurate prescribing. Several autoimmune conditions like psoriatic arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, ankylosing spondylitis have periods of natural exacerbations and natural remissions. The discerning homeopath must work around these modalities when selecting the remedy.

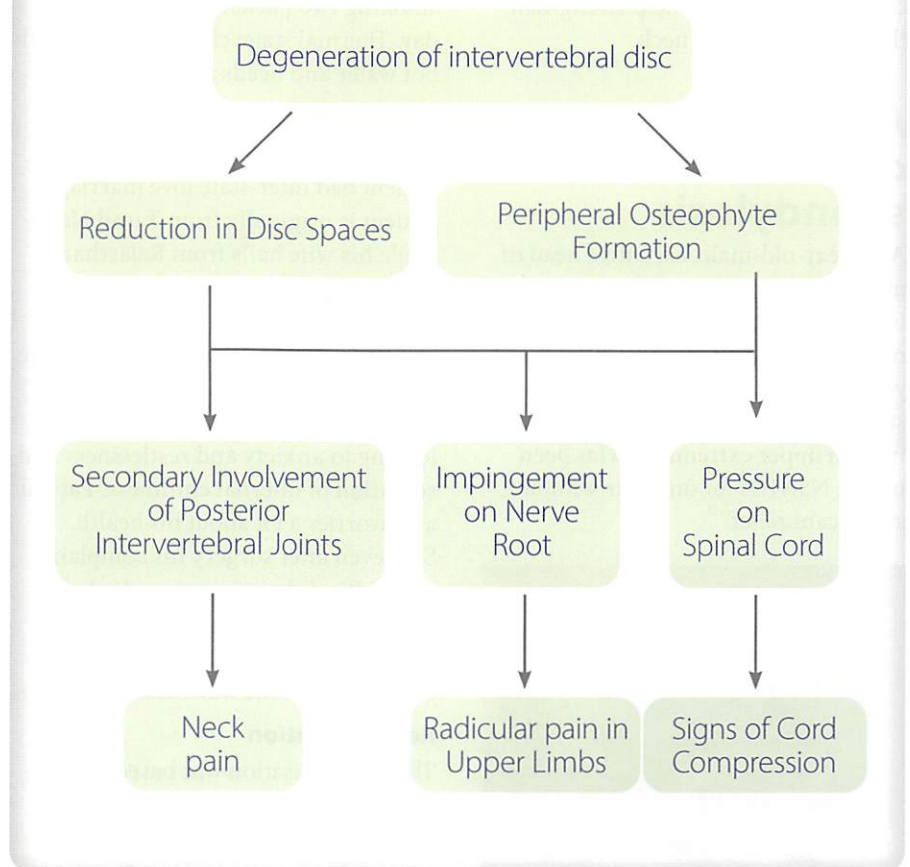
A remedy that covers the constitutional totality of the patient and also has an affinity for the musculoskeletal system could give long-term relief and could also slow down disease progression.

Supportive

Homeopathy could be used in conjunction with the conventional mode of treatment in conditions of advanced pathologies like severe rheumatoid arthritis, spondyloarthroses, psoriatic arthritis, seropositive ankylosing spondylitis and advanced prolapsed intervertebral disc.

It helps to reduce post-surgical symptoms like nausea, acidity, sleep disturbances and urinary complaints.

Pathology of cervical spondylosis



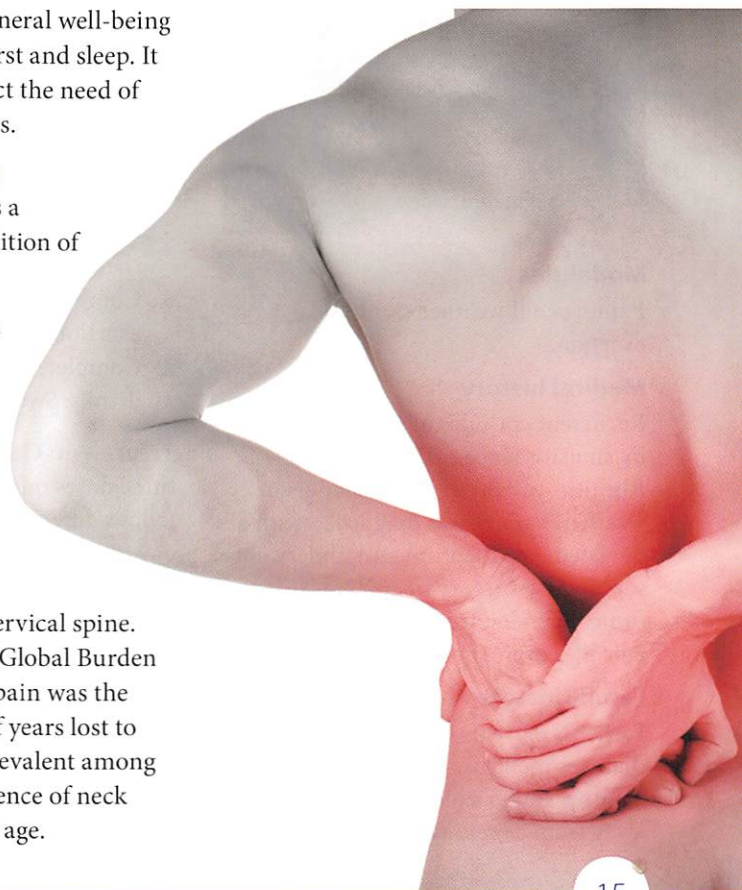
It helps to maintain general well-being including appetite, thirst and sleep. It may also help to restrict the need of NSAIDs and analgesics.

Cervical spondylosis

Cervical spondylosis is a common chronic condition of the neck involving:

- The vertebral bodies (osteophyte formation),
- Intervertebral discs (deformation, disc herniation), and
- Adjacent ligaments.

It is osteoarthritis of cervical spine. According to the 2010 Global Burden of Disease study neck pain was the fourth leading cause of years lost to disability. It is more prevalent among women and the prevalence of neck pain peaked in middle age.



Homeopathic treatment for cervical spondylosis

The homeopathic remedy should be aimed not only at giving symptomatic relief, but to also slow down the degenerative progression of the cervical spine and to help strengthen the ligaments of the neck.

A case of cervical spondylosis

A 34 year-old-male, executive head of marketing in a private firm, presented in August 2015 with pain in the neck region which he had suffered for three years. Pain at nape of the neck with stiffness and tingling and numbness in both upper extremities. Has been taking NSAIDs for one year without significant relief.



Modalities

Pain << cold weather << physical exertion.

Medical history

Recurrent episodes of rhinitis followed by sinusitis since early childhood. Rhinitis << cold weather, change of weather. Patient was diagnosed with a deviated nasal septum and underwent septoplasty surgery in 2009 for the same. No relief from upper respiratory episodes even after surgery.

Family history

Father is 62 years old and suffers from diabetes mellitus. Mother 59 years old, healthy. Father's older sister passed away from cancer two years ago.

Siblings healthy. The patient lives with wife and a seven-year-old daughter in Mumbai.

The patient has a strong desire for eggs and sweets. He's been a heavy smoker for more than seven years, smoking two packets of cigarettes a day. Thermal state: chilly (showers with hot water and needs a thick blanket even in summer).

Life situation and mind

Patient had inter-state love marriage. Patient is originally from Tamil Nadu while his wife hails from Rajasthan. Cultural differences led to many disputes in marriage. This causes immense stress to patient. Has become irritable and short tempered of late. He is not able to concentrate at work, leading to anxiety and restlessness and sensation of internal chilliness. Patient also worries a lot about his health. Says even after surgery his complaint of rhinitis did not improve. And now he also suffers from neck pain. Gets anxious when neck pain starts as it further affects his work and routine

Repertorisation

The repertorisation was based on the following rubrics:

1. Complete, Mind, Anxiety health about
2. Complete, Mind, handle things anymore cannot, overwhelmed by stress
3. (Murphy) Clinical, colds tendency to catch
4. Complete, General coldness, lack of vital heat
5. Complete, Extremities, pain rheumatic: weather cold from
6. Complete, Generalities, exercise, exertion, Agg
7. Complete, Generalities: Food and drinks: Sweets desires

Treatment: Calcarea carbonica 30C, three doses on three consecutive days, followed by Sac lac, four pills twice a day for four weeks.

One-month follow up – Sept 2015

Pain and stiffness at nape of neck decreased remarkably. Tingling and numbness reduced by 50%. Had superficial episode of cold but did not lead to sinusitis. Treatment given: Sac lac four pills twice a day for three months.



Three-month follow up – Nov 2015

Had one episode of acute pain and stiffness following physical exertion at work. Pain << by slightest movement of neck >> by rest 3+, >> hot fomentation.

Treatment: Bryonia 30C, four pills three times a day for three days was prescribed. Experienced relief within 24 hours. Was monitored on Sac lac for six months during which the patient reported no episodes of pain or discomfort.

Six-month follow up – Feb 2016

Pain and stiffness at nape of neck reduced significantly. Anxiety had reduced remarkably and recurrent episodes of rhinitis have also decreased considerably.

Observation

Calcarea carbonicum has a special affinity for glands, skin and bones. For chilly, overweight individuals with low bone health, chronic deficiency of calcium and low vitality. Profuse perspiration, scrofulous tendency and taking cold easily are some of the important characteristics. Rheumatic pains from exposure to cold damp weather, needs covering << slightest exertion. Calcarea carbonicum covered the entire case in totality and therefore proved to be the correct prescription.

A case of ankylosing spondylitis

A 21-year-old civil engineering student presented in March 2016 with pain in both hips radiating to legs. Patient experienced pain in lower back radiating to right hip ten months ago. Gradually both the lower extremities were affected. On investigations he tested positive for HLA-B27 and was diagnosed as a case of ankylosing

spondylitis. The patient complains of difficulty in sitting or standing for more than half an hour due to pain. He also complains of pain in right shoulder and in both metacarpophalangeal joints.

Pain << in morning, after getting up from sleep and >> after movement. Pain is also accompanied by stiffness in lower back. Patient has been on TNF blockers, analgesics and antacids as advised by rheumatologist for the past six months.



Medical history

The patient suffered from tuberculosis in 2011 and received treatment for one year. Typhoid in 2014. In early 2015 the patient contracted malaria falciparum. In September 2015 ankylosing spondylitis was diagnosed.

Family history

Patient stays with his parents and older brother. Patient's father is a bus conductor for state transport while his mother is a homemaker. Father is 53 years old and also under conventional treatment for ankylosing spondylitis since last few years. Mother is 46 years old and healthy. Elder brother is 24 years old, healthy and works as a pharmacist.

Personal history

The patient has a strong desire for spicy food. He requires covering throughout the year. Prefers warm water for bathing throughout the year. Does not like air conditioning. Thermally – chilly. Sweating is moderate and mostly in groins.

Mind

Despite the lower financial conditions of the family, the patient never gave

up on his dream of becoming a civil engineer. He worked hard to pursue it and got a scholarship. He feels bad about missing his studies and site visits due to his ill-health. He does not express his feelings much, especially when angry. He likes to keep to himself, does not interact with anyone and denies food too. Loves music, especially soft devotional songs, as he says this makes him feel better.

Repertorisation

The repertorisation was based on the following rubrics:

1. Complete, Mind Industrious, Mania for work
2. Complete, (Mirilli's themes) Ambition
3. Complete, (Mirilli's themes) Conscientious
4. Complete, Mind, Anger: Ailments from, Agg
5. Complete, (Mirilli's themes) Music
6. Complete, Generalities, Music: Amelio
7. Complete, Mind, Sadness: Music: Amelio
8. Murphy, Mind, Sensitive, mental, Oversensitive, emotional, (See generals, chapter)
9. Complete, Extremities, Pain: Hips
10. Complete, Back, Stiffness: Lumbar region
11. Complete, Generalities Pain: Morning: waking on or after
12. Complete, Extremities, Tuberculosis: Hips

Treatment: Aurum metallicum 30C, three doses on three consecutive days.

Three-month follow up – June 2016

Patient noted marked reduction in pain especially in the shoulder and both metacarpophalangeal joints. Pain has reduced in lumbar region too. Patient is now able to sit for almost two hours without severe pain while he can stand for around 45 minutes without pain. Patient's attendance in college has improved slightly. Still unable to visit construction sites. Stiffness has reduced slightly.

Six-month follow up – Sept 2016

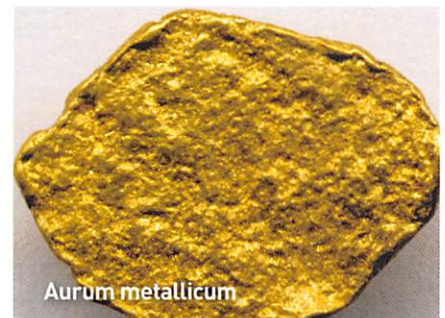
The patient had exams since his last follow up appointment. Sitting for long hours studying caused two episodes of severe pain and stiffness – "flares". Arnica 30C, four, three times a day for one week was prescribed during both

the episodes which gave him relief. The patient was also asked to report every alternate day during that period. Overall, patient is feeling better. He says he feels calmer and better as he was able to take and pass his exams.

One-year follow up – March 2017

For the last two months the patient has not experienced any further improvement in his pain and stiffness. He also said that he still feels angry. Aurum metallicum was repeated as a single dose in 1M potency.

After this last prescription, within two weeks the pain in both metacarpophalangeal joints was getting progressively better. The pain in lumbar region and lower extremities was also reduced. Patient is calmer and carrying his routine very well, including make site visits. The use of analgesics has tapered substantially over 12 months. The patient continues to be under observation.



Aurum metallicum

Aurum metallicum (metallic gold) is a very deep acting remedy with strong affinity for blood, glands and bones. Indicated in chronic pathological conditions like Pott's Spine (TB), osteomyelitis, bone cancers, chronic inflammatory and autoimmune conditions like MS, systemic lupus erythematosus and ankylosing spondylitis. On the mental level, hopelessness, depression are hallmark symptoms. Aurum metallicum, when given at the right time, can reverse the state of hopelessness, relieve the patient of his symptoms and take him to heights of creativity as observed in this case.

Inference

The above cases illustrate the valuable contribution of homeopathy in the treatment of musculoskeletal disorders, both as an alternative as well as an adjuvant therapy.

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