

# Treatments for Rheumatoid Arthritis for Homeopathic Patients

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**Abstract:** Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a systemic autoimmune disease. The human immune system attacks its own healthy cells, characterized as compulsive and progressive with severe inflammatory attacks. This paper examines the literature available on the subject.

There are about 20 to 40+ new cases in India per lac population for every year. Stress and environmental causes are common factors for increased cases of RA. There is no known prevention for the condition other than reduction of the risk factors like cigarette smoking, coffee and oral contraceptive pills.

Rheumatoid Arthritis is mostly difficult to cure, but in Homoeopathy the scope is more than other systems medicine.

**Keywords:** Rheumatoid arthritis, RA, Gathiya, Scientometrics, Rheumatoid arthritis research, homeopathy

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## Introduction

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) takes root in the Greek derivative for watery and inflamed joints according to Paget, S. A., Lockshin, M., & Loebl, S. (2002). It is known as "Gathiya" in India. It is an autoimmune and incendiary disease. The human immune system attacks its own healthy cells, causing painful inflammation in the joints of the body like the hands, wrists, knees, toes, etc causing damage to the joint tissue generating chronic pain. RA produces negative impact on other tissues throughout the body and results in problems of organs lungs, heart, and eyes. Major symptoms like weakness, dry eyes, eyes burning, dry mouth, loss of appetite, low fever, and itching also occur. A total of 1% of India's population has suffered with this disease National Herald (2020). About a million people across the world fall victim of RA. More and more individuals from developing countries account for the rising burden of the affliction Smolen, J. S., Aletaha, D., & McInnes, I. B. (2016). It is seen most frequently during middle of the age and while talking in gender identification, women are apparently more affected than men Arthritis-

India (2014). It can affect the children as young as 6 months of age, in what is known as Juvenile Idiopathic arthritis.

Homoeopathy has been helpful in treating cases of rheumatoid arthritis. The efficacy of Homoeopathy is assured provided the patient comes to us early and the medicine selected cures the disease from the root. Homeopathy does not believe in surface level cures. There are two main pathological characteristics of Rheumatoid Arthritis i.e. inflammation and proliferation.

The synovium shows signs of a chronic inflammatory reaction, with infiltration of lymphocytes (especially CD4 Tcells), plasma cells and macrophages. It then proliferates and grows out over the surface of the cartilage, producing a tumour like mass called “pannus”.

### **Frequent Symptoms in Rheumatoid Arthritis**

The commonly experienced symptoms are:

- (i) Joint pain: the pain is worst on waking in the morning and may improve with gradual taking up of some activity. There is often pain at night and disturbed sleep.
- (ii) Morning stiffness: often lasting for several hours
- (iii) Fatigue and general stiffness in movement is common
- (iv) Disability can result on use or disuse of individual joints.

Some of the commonly observed signs of the disease are:

- (i) Swelling: soft tissue swelling caused by effusion
- (ii) Burning sensation in joints
- (iii) Tenderness on pressure and on movement
- (iv) Limitation of movement with muscle wasting around the affected joint
- (v) Deformities occurring during the latter stage of the disease.

Common joint deformities observed are in RA: Swan-neck deformity and Ulnar deviation of fingers. The following is the classification of RA based up the severity of the rheumatoid arthritis symptoms experienced by the patient.

### **Classification of Disease on the basis of Severity in RA:**

Class I: No restriction of ability to perform normal activity

Class II: moderate restriction, but adequate for normal activities

Class III: Marked restriction, inability to perform most duties related to occupation of self care.

Class IV: Incapacitation or confinement to wheel chair or bed.

### **Corroboration by Radiological findings:**

It shows that characteristic changes are evidenced in symmetrical patterns of involvement of the joints for example:

- a. Soft tissue swelling
- b. Joint space narrowing
- c. Marginal erosion.
- d. Mouse eaten appearance due to erosion
- e. Joint deformity
- f. Bone end may show osteoporosis and cyst can be observed to develop

### **The Homoeopathic Concerns in Rheumatoid Arthritis**

Homoeopathic curative system of medicine regards disease as primarily feelings and an altered state of life and mind, manifesting itself in morbid functions. For a homoeopathic physician the totality of the morbid functions and sensation of one patient is the disease and the totality of symptoms constitutes the true and only conceivable portrait of the disease. Totality of symptoms are to be considered in the treatment of a patient. It is the only guide to homoeopathic treatment. Classification of the diseases by Hahnemann is based on many clinical criteria that remain unchanged forever. They are divided into acute and chronic diseases. Acute diseases are considered a transient explosion of latent psora whereas true chronic diseases are known to be caused by a chronic miasm. Rheumatoid arthritis is a degenerative disease.

**Rheumatoid arthritis:** A miasmatic view from the standpoint of clinical feature: (From the standpoint of Homeopathy the curative aspects are governed by certain cardinal features like :

Psora:

- (i) Neuralgic pain is usually relieved by quiet, rest and warmth made worse by motion.
- (ii) Cramps in the lower extremities especially the calves of the legs, the feet, toes and ankles.
- (iii) Numbness of the extremities with tingling in the fingers.

### **Drugs Management of Rheumatoid Arthritis:**

- (i) Arnica Montana: It is recommended when the whole body feels bruised and sore. There is restlessness and excessive sensitiveness in the whole body. Heat is experienced in the upper parts of the body while there is coldness of lower extremities.
- (ii) Bryonia Alba : Relief is felt in rest, both mental or physical. Excessive dryness of the mucous membranes of the entire body is felt. All types of pains are apparently relieved by pressure. The patients are irritable.
- (iii) Ledum Pal: Symptoms like Swelling of feet and legs up to knees level Rheumatism begins in the lower limbs. Pains are tearing, throbbing, long lasting ever sudden shooting, sharp pains.
- (iv) Guaiacum: The Rheumatic pain is aggravated with heat and motion. There is offensive smell of sweat and urine. There is a feeling of heat in affected limb.
- (v) Mercurius: here is feeling of heat in bed at night and profuse sweating. There is excessive thirst and excessive salivation. There is also difficulty in lying on right side.

- (vi) Pulsatilla : there is experienced wandering pain which shifts rapidly from one part to another with swelling and redness of the joint. Rheumatism is caused by getting wet especially at the feet. There is pain is sharp. Patient is drum.
- (vii) Rhus Toxicodendron: The Pains are worse after midnight especially in wet rainy weather. There is Lameness, stiffness and pain on moving after rest. Restlessness, anxiety, tendency to keep changing position often to obtain relief from pain. The Tongue is most often dry, sore, red, cracked with triangular red tip.
- (viii) Ruta Graveolens: Restless turning and frequent change in position frequently when lying in bed. Backache is relieved only by lying flat on the back.
- (ix) Sulphur: Standing is the worst position as they extremities cannot stand. Aversion to being washed and clean. Sensation of burning on vertex, palm and sole. Feeling faint in the stomach cannot wait for lunch.
- (x) Thuja Occidentalis: Used when Rheumatic pain gets aggravated in cold weather and rainy season and at 3 a.m. Warts and wart-like excrescences upon mucus and cutaneous surfaces.
- (xi) Kali Bichromicum: It alternates with gastric symptoms, like dysentery. Pain in small spots. Pain shifts rapidly from one part to another. Pain appears and disappears suddenly. Patient feels cold.
- (xii) Colchicum: The pains are drawing tearing, pressing, light or superficial during worm weather, affects the bone and the deeper. Arthritic pain in joints is so severe that the patient screams with pain on touching a joint. The Urine is dark, scanty suppressed, drops with white sediments, sometimes bloody, brown, black, inky. The smell is painfully acute, Patient experiences nausea and faintness from the odor of cooking food.
- (xiii) Syphilinum: Patient experiences constant pain all days. The Pain increases and decreases gradually. Frequent change of position is required. There is a hereditary tendency to alcoholism.
- (xiv) Tuberculinum: A family history of tubercular affliction has best the selected remedy failing to give relief and there is a constant. Desire for milk and an aversion to meat. Emaciation is rapid and patient is losing flesh even while eating well.
- (xv) Medorrhinum: Experience of intense burning heat, sensation beginning at the nape of the neck and extending down to the spine. Burning of hands and feet. Keeping them uncovered always. Insatiable craving for liquor, salts, sweets, ice, acid, orange, green fruits. Memory loss and restless and fidgety legs and feet.

### Clinically Trials in RA

Brien, Lachance, Prescott, McDermott, Lewith (2011) presented their findings on clinical benefits of homeopathy in rheumatoid arthritis patients that are attributable to the consultation process conducted 56 completed treatments. Receiving a homeopathic consultation significantly improved, swollen joint count, current pain, weekly pain and negative mood of the patients. They derived that the Homeopathic consultations are associated with clinically relevant benefits for patients with active but relatively stable RA.

Homeopathy is a popular complementary medical intervention [complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)] for chronic conditions. There is evidence for the therapeutic benefits of the consultation process on health outcomes.

Research into the homeopathic consultation has identified contextual factors such as empathy and empowerment [16], which may mediate the homeopathic process. Homeopathy consultations involve a complete exploration of the patient's emotional, spiritual and physical well-being to enable treatment of the whole person not just the illness.

Patients receiving a consultation were randomly prescribed individualized homeopathy, a fixed combination of remedies. Complex homeopathy involves homeopathic mixtures of commonly prescribed remedies for specific problems and can be used without a consultation. The aim was to identify whether therapeutic benefits were attributable to the homeopathic remedy, the homeopathic consultation or both. The trial was exploratory as we wished to explore how the consultation process may potentially be eliciting clinical benefit using relevant measures.

Consultations conducted covered (e.g. detailed clinical history, current symptoms and medication, assessment of emotional and mental states, etc.) to identify the relevant information to prescribe. The content of the consultations varied between patients and between consultations; homeopathic intervention is individualized and patient centred and led by the patient's narratives.

Homeopathic intervention in patients with chronic, active but relatively stable RA has significant clinical benefits that are attributable mainly to the homeopathic consultation process. There appeared to be no specific benefit from the homeopathic remedies themselves. Although no significant group differences in either of the primary outcomes were observed, statistical and clinically relevant improvements did occur for those receiving consultations in some equally valuable and relevant secondary outcomes.

## Results and Findings

The findings confirm previous work demonstrating that therapeutic benefits do arise from processes within the homeopathic consultation involving communication skills, empathy, hopefulness, enablement and narrative competence (Mercer 2005 and Hartog C. 2009). The homeopathic consultation necessitates a very detailed understanding of the patient and is a unique and personalized approach.

A pilot study comparing the relative values of homeopathic treatment and salicylate therapy in rheumatoid arthritis has been previously described (Gibson, Gibson, MacNeill, Gray, Dick & Buchanan, 1978). There were, however, two main criticisms of this study. Firstly, the patients who received homeopathic treatment were allowed to continue their previous orthodox anti-inflammatory therapy whereas the patients who received salicylates had to discontinue all other previous anti-inflammatory drugs. Secondly, since the patients who received homeopathic treatment were seen by different doctors from those being given salicylate, it could be argued that the better response of the patients on homeopathy was due to the doctor and not the drug.

Onset of symptoms is usually following a sudden fright, bereavement, physical injury or other profound emotional or physical trauma; complaint affected by climatic conditions, for instance damp or dry weather, heat, frost or wind; complaint markedly affected by other factors such as movement, rest or time of day; outstanding factors affecting the patient, not necessarily associated with the disease, such as marked craving or aversion for certain foods.

**Table 1: The Homoeopathic Remedies Most Commonly used for Rheumatoid Arthritis are Detailed**

1	Arnica	Nux vomica
2	Arsenicum album	Opium
3	Bryonia alba	Pulsatilla*
4	Calcarea carbonica	Rhododendron
5	Causticum	Rhus toxicodendron*
6	Ignatia	Ruta
7	Lachesis	Sepia*
8	Lycopodium	Sulphur*
9	Morgan	Sycotic co
10	Natrum muriaticum	Thuja

\*Remedies of wide action in rheumatoid arthritis used more often in patients with poor prescribing symptoms.

All the patients were mobile and none had advanced or 'burnt out' rheumatoid arthritis. Apart from one patient who had received gold several years previously, none of them had received corticosteroids, chrysotherapy, D-penicillamine or levamisole.

Since the selection of a homoeopathic remedy depends on the patient's symptoms and on the reaction to environment as a whole, treatment should be more effective in patients with good prescribing symptoms than in those with poor prescribing symptoms.

Another important point in the discussion of homoeopathic treatment is the lack of toxic effects. It therefore appears that homoeopathy is a safer and probably no less effective alternative to present-day second-line drugs. Since approximately half of all side effects reported annually are due to anti-rheumatic therapy (Girdwood, 1974), this in itself is a very important consideration.

### **Other Aspects of RA Treatment**

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) can have a big impact on your quality of life. This autoimmune condition can cause pain, swelling, and stiffness in the joints, that threatens, mobility. While there are numerous treatment options available, like prescription medications and physical therapy exercises etc. patients with RA explore various treatment options, including homeopathic remedies. Homeopathy is an alternative medicine approach to treating health conditions which use naturally occurring products, like herbs and spices.

Homeopathy is an approach to medicine that traces its roots to Germany in the 1800s. This school of medicine uses naturally occurring materials from plants, animals, and minerals to make medications. The medications are made as tablets that are dissolved under the tongue. They can be delivered as topicals, tablets, or tinctures (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. Homeopathy: what you need to know).

Homeopathic practitioners believe that symptoms of a disease can be treated using materials that produce similar systems in healthy individuals.

Many people confuse homeopathy with nutritional supplements. While supplements are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) but homeopathic medications are.

While there are no homeopathic medications approved by the FDA (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. Homeopathy: what you need to know), including for the treatment of RA, some homeopathic practitioners believe that certain spices and herbs can be beneficial. These include:

**Turmeric:** This spice contains a bioactive compound (curcumin) with potent anti-inflammatory properties. Scientific research has shown that turmeric can reduce inflammation and may even reduce pain in RA patients (Daily JW, Yang M, Park S., 2016). More research is needed to confirm the results and determine the optimal dosage.

**Arnica:** When applied topically via a cream, this herb is believed to reduce pain and bruising. One study showed arnica cream to be as effective as an ibuprofen gel at relieving osteoarthritis pain. More research is needed to determine whether this therapy is effective for RA (Cameron M, Chrubasik S., 2013).

**Poison Ivy:** Poison ivy, often called by its scientific name, *rhus toxicodendron*, is used in homeopathy to treat pain and stiffness. An animal study on the anti-inflammatory properties of *rhus toxicodendron* showed that the plant may help regulate inflammation and improve pain. More human studies are needed (Patel DR, Ansari IA, Kachchhi YN, et al., 2012).

**Apis:** Also known as *apis mellifica*, this homeopathic treatment is made from bee venom and is believed to reduce swelling. A Chinese study found RA patients who were treated with bee venom acupuncture saw improvements in their pain and stiffness with no side effects.<sup>5</sup> However, more research is needed to understand how this compound works and its dosage.

**Bryonia:** Bryonia is a vine. The root is used in homeopathy to treat arthritic pain, particularly in the knees and elbows. However, little research supports its use.

In addition to homeopathic treatment, which has not been scientifically proven to be effective, there are other alternative treatments for RA. Fish oil supplements, massage, diet changes, and

exercise can also help manage RA symptoms, with few or no side effects. Conventional treatment for RA consists of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), which have the risk of damaging the stomach lining, causing bleeding ulcers, or corticosteroids, which can cause high blood pressure and bone brittleness amongst other side effects. Homeopathy, on the other hand, provides safe and sure solutions. It relieves pain and stiffness associated with RA as well as strengthens immunity of the body so that patients may live productive and pain-free lives.

In a study conducted by Dr. Batra, Homeopathy 54 patients of RA were treated with homeopathy and 41 patients were treated with high dose of salicylate (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug). The study concluded that patients who received homeopathy did better than those who received salicylate. This study clearly demonstrated that homeopathy provides an effective solution for RA and is safe from side effects. It is strongly suggested that patients opt for homeopathic treatment as early as possible for their condition.

About 20% of the consultations in general practice related to locomotors system. Rheumatoid arthritis affects about 3% of the population. There has been a tremendous advance in this field. Rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory disease that exerts its greatest impact on those joints of the body that are lined with synovium a specialized tissue responsible for maintaining the nutrition & lubrication of the joints. The initial trigger for RA is unknown. There is evidence to suggest abnormalities in components of the immune system that lead to the body developing abnormal immune & inflammatory reactions, particularly in joints

## Conclusion

Homeopathic treatment aims at offering symptomatic relief to patients of RA and correcting altered immunity in order to control the progress of the disease. The treatment also helps in delaying the onset of complications such as deformities or disability as far as possible. Being a holistic system of medicine that heals the body as well as the mind, homeopathy can effectively target auto-immune disorders like RA, especially those in which stress is the known trigger.

Homoeopathy is best suit course of treatment in this disease because there is symptoms similarity with individualization of the patient. If diagnosed early the patient can be cured. In most cases the patients seek up very late when deformities have already been formed and all systems are severely affected. In such cases, a cure is not possible, but the progress of the disease may be brought under control. The treatment is both constitutionally and anti-miasmatically.

RA is a crippling disorder of the small joints & is mainly of adulthood which is the productive age. Since no effective, direct, single pharmacological agent is possible, a Holistic approach to the individual case is required. Homoeopathy fundamentally adopts the "Holistic" approach in all chronic cases. Therefore Homoeopathy as a medical science is reputed to be a medical science for chronic diseases.

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