

Alopecia Areata Treated with Homoeopathic Medicine Phosphorous- An Evidenced Based Case Report

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ABSTRACT:

Alopecia areata is an autoimmune disease characterized by non scarring hair loss in single or multiple areas on the skin. While it may affect the scalp, it may occur in other parts of the body as well. The onset is sudden as one or more hair patches leaves the area bald. Alopecia areata can be seen in any age group. Alopecia areata is a cosmetic problem and it can cause psychological upset in the patient hence its management should be done at the earliest. Homoeopathy plays a definite role in treating alopecia areata and rejuvenating hair follicles.. Homoeopathic literature mentions many medicines for alopecia areata which demonstrates the scope of homoeopathy in alopecia. A 65 year old female presented with complaints of hair loss and baldness in the scalp since 4 months which was gradual in onset and progression. After analysis, repertorisation and in consultation with materia medica an individualised homoeopathic medicine Phosphorous 200 was prescribed for a duration of 3 months and there was significant improvement seen in the follow ups with complete cure of the patient.

KEYWORDS: Alopecia areata, Autoimmune, Homoeopathy, Individualized, Phosphorous

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INTRODUCTION:

Alopecia is characterized by loss of hair. Alopecia areata usually presents with well defined, localized, non-inflammatory, non-scarring patches of alopecia usually on the scalp but it may occur in areas like eyebrows, eyelashes, beard, body hair. [1] It usually starts as a single bald patch located anywhere on the scalp or appear on some hairy areas. In majority of cases the patch persists for 3 to 4 months after which the hairs start regrowing spontaneously. In

smaller percentage of patients the patch of alopecia continues to increase in size, and involve other areas leading to alopecia totalis which is total loss of all the hairs in the scalp. [2] The lifetime incidence of alopecia areata is approximately 2% worldwide. [3,4] At any given point of time, approximately 0.2% of population has Alopecia Areata, and approximately 1.7% of population experiences an episode of Alopecia Areata during their life time. [5]

The pathological features seen are acute follicular inflammation that attacks the hair bulb in the subcutaneous fat. This inflammation terminates the anagen stage forcing the follicle into catagen. Since the bulge area is spared a new hair bulb and shaft grows at the start of the anagen phase once the inflammation has subsided or has been controlled. [6] Alopecia areata is associated with other autoimmune diseases such as vitiligo, lupus erythematosus, psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, thyroid disease, allergic rhinitis, pernicious anaemia, diabetes mellitus and rheumatoid arthritis [7].

There are many varieties of alopecia and it is classified as non scarring and scarring variety.

Alopecia areata, telogen effluvium, anagen effluvium androgenic alopecia areata are non scarring. Chronic cutaneous lupus erythematosus, lichen planopilaris, cellulitis of scalp, sarcoidosis, neoplastic, morphea are scarring type of alopecia. [8]

In clinical presentation, most patients presented one to several 1 to 4 cm of hair loss on the scalp. The skin can be smooth and shiny and may have short stubs of hair. The hair shaft in alopecia areata is poorly formed and breaks on reaching the surface. [5] Pathognomic 'exclamation mark' hairs are seen which is visible as broken hairs tapering towards the scalp. [1,6]

Trichotillomania, tinea capitis, telogen effluvium can be considered as differential diagnosis. [1,6]

In patients in whom the duration of the disease is less than 3 months should not be given any treatment because in many cases the hairs are likely to regrow spontaneously. If patient has extensive and progressive alopecia are treated with systemic corticosteroids given in a small dose of 1 to 1.5 mg dexamethasone per day. This has to be continued for approximately

6 to 9 months. [2] Important investigations include full blood count, renal and liver function tests, iron studies, thyroid function test, autoantibody screen and syphilis serology [1]

Today in this modern era the most common form of alopecia areata treatment is the use of corticosteroids, powerful anti-inflammatory drugs that can suppress the immune system and as a result can have a number of other side effects. Homoeopathy is a system of medicine based on the Law of similars in which a treats similar patterns of symptoms experienced by an individual. Homoeopathic medicines are believed to stimulate a self-regulatory healing response in the patient. Since alopecia areata is a autoimmune disorder homoeopathy can be the safest and harmless mode of treatment. There have been evidenced based case reports, wherein alopecia areata was successfully treated with individualised homoeopathic medicine like phosphorous, tuberculinum, carnosin and lycopodium. [3,4,5,7,9].

CASE DETAILS:

A 65 year old female patient presented with the complaints of hair loss and baldness in a single area on the scalp since 4 months. The onset of the complaint was sudden and gradual in progression. Initially there was thinning of hair around that area which eventually led to baldness. There was also complaints of dandruff along with general thinning of hair which was < after bath. She occasionally complaints of heart burn < morning hours before food. Patient also complaints of chronic cough since many years which is < by cold air.

Patient has history of acidity and takes allopathic medicine. No significant family history of alopecia areata or autoimmune disease.

Physical generals :

Appetite: good, non vegetarian
 Thirst: desires cold water , large quantity
 Craving and aversion: nothing significant
 Bowel habits: 1/day, satisfactory
 Bladder habits: 5 to 6 times /day
 Perspiration: profuse on scalp, oily scalp
 Sleep: good 8 hours/ day , refreshed
 Thermal: chilly

Menstrual history: attained menopause at 58 years.

General physical examination:

No signs of pallor, cyanosis, clubbing, lymphadenopathy, icterus, oedema
 Pulse: 80 beats/min BP: 130/80 mm hg

Local examination of skin/scalp:

Single patch of baldness visible with approximately 6 cm with presence of dandruff noted in few areas
 Greying of hair and thinning of hair noticed, oily scalp
 Skin appears shiny on the bald spot.
 Exclamation mark hairs noted
 No signs of redness or scarring noted.

Diagnostic assessment

Table-1: REPERTORISATION RESULT [ISIS Homoeopathic software]

	phos	ars	lyc	dry	graph	calc	hep	alum	sep	sulph	kal-p	psor	fl-ac	acon	merc	nat-m	bar-c
1 HAIR affections of, in general baldness patches, in	2	2	1	-	2	2	2	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
2 DANDRUFF	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	3	1	2	1	-	-	3	2
3 PERSPIRATION, Scalp oily	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
4 HEARTBURN morning	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 COUGH, < COLD AIR	3	2	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	2
6 FOOD and drinks cold drinks, water desires	5	3	2	5	2	2	-	2	2	1	2	1	1	5	3	2	-

The case was diagnosed as Alopecia Areata on the basis of clinical examination and exclamation mark hairs was seen which is diagnostic of alopecia areata. The diagnosis comes under ICD 11, code ED70.20.

Totality of symptoms

- Hairfall in patches
- Baldness in single area
- Dandruff
- Profuse perspiration scalp, oily
- Heartburn < morning
- Cough < cold air
- Desires cold water
- Chilly patient

THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION:

The medicine that was selected based on individualization, repertorisation result and in consultation with materia medica was Phosphorous.

3/2/2023 Rx.1) Phosphorous 200, 5 pills OD

2) Jaborandi Q as external application 5 drops mix with coconut oil to apply weekly twice for 30 days. The date wise follow ups are summarized in the table-2:

Table-2: Timeline and follow up:

Date	Follow up	Prescription
6/3/2023	No change noted on bald patches Dandruff slightly better Cough improved Generals good	1) Phosphorous 200 5 pills OD 2) Rubrum 200 5 pills BD 3) Jaborandi Q

		Local application X 30 days
10/4/2023	Small new hairs start appearing on bald patches Dandruff better Heart burn present < night No new complaints (figure 2)	1) Phosphorous 200 5 pills OD alternate days 2) Rubrum 200 5 pills BD 3) Jaborandi Q Local application X 30 days
8/5/2023	Bald patch covered with thin black hair Slow and continuous improvement is seen Heartburn improved Generals good	1) Rubrum 200 5 pills BD 2) Jaborandi Q Local application X 30 days
12/6/2023	Significant improvement of hair growth on the head without any recurrence of new bald spot. Bald patch completely covered with hair. Generals good.	1) Rubrum 200 5 pills BD 2) Jaborandi Q Local application X 30 days


Figure 1: 3/2/2023

Figure 2: 6/3/2023

Figure 3: 10/4/2023

Figure 4: 12/6/2023

DISCUSSION:

The 65 year old female patient presented with bald spot on an area in the scalp region. This case was treated with individualized homeopathic medicine Phosphorous covering many symptoms. It showed complete regrowth of the hair in the scalp within a period of 3 months. After referring materia medica it was found that the mode of action of Phosphorous is on the mucous membrane where it causes inflammation and degeneration . It produces a picture of destructive metabolism. Phosphorous has marked action on the skin and it stimulates the hair follicles. Phosphorus has symptom of dandruff, falling out of hair in bunches, in spots^[10]. Round patches in scalp completely deprived of hair; falling off of the hair in large bundles on the forehead and on the sides above the ears; the roots of the hair seem to be dry; the denuded scalp looks clear, white and smooth; dandruff copious, falls out in clouds^[11]. Copious dandruff and itching of scalp. Falling of hair in large bunches , in spots ^[12].

Jaborandi is also another good remedy indicated for baldness. It is used mainly as external application as it forms the principal ingredient in some hair restorer tonics^[12] Homoeopathic literature mentions many medicines for Alopecia mainly Floricum acidum, Graphites, Lycopodium, Natrum muraticum, Phosphoricum acidum, Phosphorus, Pix liquida, Selenium, Sepia, Silicea, Syphilinum, Thallium, Vinca minor^[4]. More awareness is required to be given about scope of homoeopathy in dermatological cases to the general population. Peoples acceptance of homoeopathic system of medicine for all types of conditions needs to be sensitized.

CONCLUSION:

In this case, a complete hair regrowth of a single bald patch after administration of the homoeopathic medicine is a proved evidence of the role of homoeopathy in treating alopecia areata. The findings of this study will help clinicians learn more, which will benefit patients with alopecia areata, especially those who wants to avoid conventional method of treatment and using homoeopathy as an alternative treatment.

Limitation of Study:

As this is a single case study further studies need to be done for scientific validation of results.

Patient consent:

Images and other clinical data were reported in this journal with the patient's agreement. The patient is aware that her initials and name will not be used publicly.

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