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Review Article

Homeopathy and Cancer: A Review

Bhasker Sharma[1], Parveen Kumar Sharma[2]

[1] B.H.M.S, M.D (HOMOEOPATHY), Ph.D (HOMOEOPATHY), Harma Homoeopathy Chikitsalya And Research Center,Siddharthnagar,Uttar Pradesh

[2] Director, Tantia University, Sriganganagar, Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT

Background:Homoeopathy can be used as an alternative method for the cure of Cancer. Studies on the use of Homoeopathy in treatment of cancer have been reported but clinical trials on effects of Homoeopathy in the treatment of cancer are rare. Some studies report that homoeopathic medicines have beneficial effect on some cancer cell lines via apoptosis and immune modulation. Thus, the present review article shows how homeopathy affects cancer.

INTRODUCTION

Many cancer patients use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) treatments. Homeopathy is one of the most popular CAM modalities for cancer patients in seven out of 14 European countries.1 Homeopathy has traditionally been very popular in India and South America too, and is increasingly sought after also in the US.2 In Europe, Homoeopathy is used in cancer care extensively from 6% in cancer diagnosis3,4 and almost 24% in breast cancer females.5,6According to the 2003 report of the World Health Organization, cancer is the 2nd largest cause of death in developed countries.7

Use of homeopathy in treatment of Cancer

A homoeopathic medicine, Chelidonium in ultra-low doses showed anti-tumour and anti-genotoxic potential against hepatocarcinoma that was induced by azo-dye mice.8 A homoeopathic medicine, Sulphur, showed anti-apoptotic effect in non-small cell lung carcinoma cells.9 Sabal serrulata mother tincture showed the reduction of prostate tumour xenograft size significantly in anin vivotrial. Moreover, Sabal serrulata decreased PC-3 cell proliferation and DU-145 cell proliferation.10 Thuja along with Conium and Sabal serrulata in combination can assure more effective treatment against BPH.11 Lycopodium clavatum 5C and 15C administration have any anticancer effects on human cervical cancer cell line HeLa cells by causing cell death through apoptosis in cancer cells. It induced DNA fragmentation, the increases in the expressions of protein, mRNA of caspase 3 and Bax and the decreases in the expressions of Bcl2 and Apaf and in the release of cytochrome-c.12

Homoeopathic medicine after chemotherapy

A randomised controlled trial (RCT) was carried out to estimate the efficacy of Traumeel S in cancer patients for stomatitis occurred due to chemotherapy after autologous

* Corresponding author*:* Dr. Bhaskar Sharma,Harma Homoeopathy Chikitsalya And Research Center,Siddharthnagar,Uttar Pradesh

or allogeneic stem-cell transplantation. During the first 7 days of trial, subjective symptom scores of patients were recorded. Intervention group showed significant reduction of duration and/or severity of stomatitis compared to control group.13

Homoeopathic medicine after breast cancer

A pilot study was carried out to find the effectiveness of Homoeopathy in breast cancer survivors having estrogen withdrawal clinical features. All the patients were divided randomly in two groups to receive either homoeopathic medicines or placebo. Individualised homoeopathic medicines were prescribed to homoeopathic treatment group and the medicines mostly includes were Arnica, Belladonna, Carcinocin, Natrum muriaticum, Sepia and Sulphur. No significant difference was observed between intervention and placebo group regarding both primary and secondary outcome measures at follow-up.14

Relation between dosage and effectiveness of homeopathic medicine on cancer

MTS/PES assay was used to assess cell viability. For lower potencies, NaCl 0.9% and for high potencies water 15–20c was used as control. Both lower and higher potencies of cadmium pretreatment significantly increased cell viability in primary lymphocytes after toxic doses of cadmium compared to cells that have pretreatment of control. Low doses pretreatment effect was also significant in cancerous lymphocytes; however, high potencies showed no effect in cancerous lymphocytes.15

Homeopathy And Radiotherapy

In observational study published in 2003, homeopathic treatment reduced symptoms in breast cancer patients with estrogen withdrawal symptoms.16 In a study that enrolled 25 breast cancer patients, who received radiation therapy and then complained of radiation-induced itching at treatment sites, homeopathic treatment provided improvement in this symptom in 21 of the patients.17

In a randomized controlled study conducted on 66 breast cancer patients, who received postoperative radiotherapy, homeopathy became helpful in the treatment of radiotherapy-induced dermatitis.18 In another randomized controlled study, the homeopathic medication Traumeel S was observed to significantly reduce the severity and duration of chemotherapy-induced stomatitis in children treated with stem cell transplantation.19

Mechanism of Homoeopathic Medicines in Cancer

Sabal serrulata, Conium maculatum and Thuja occidentalisshowed no direct cellular anticancer effects in an experimental animal study but slow the progression of cancer and decrease cancer occurrence and mortality significantly in induced prostate cancer in rats.20 However, in anin vitro model, Hydrastis canadensis 30c and Condurango 30c showing gene modulating effects compared to placebo (succussed alcohol 30c). A recognised epigenetic model was treated with above-mentioned homoeopathic potencies. Results of the study indicated that these homoeopathic dilutions acted through modulation of gene expression.21 Anin vitro study showed apoptogenic effect of homoeopathic remedy, Sulphur, in non-small cell lung carcinoma cells.22

Conclusion

Homeopathy can be helpful in the treatment of cancer. The studies are being carried out to study the effect of homeopathy in the treatment of cancer. Studies shows that Homeopathy extended survival time in cancer patient or can be used as an adjuvant with conventional treatment or remove side effects of conventional treatment.

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