

Microneedling for External Application of Homeopathic Remedies

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Abstract

Homeopathy is used in the treatment of acute as well as chronic diseases all over the world. The potencies remedies are mostly taken orally, so that the mucous membrane of the mouth serves as receptor for the remedial action. However diluted remedies might also be used locally on the skin. For medical and cosmetically purposes the use of Microneedling has gained increased interest in the application of remedial agents or beauty products in the past years. Fine needles, affixed on rollers or stamps, penetrate the upper layers of the skin to break the skin barrier and improve the absorption of the ingredients. A similar effect can be reached with a dermal needle, an instrument known from Traditional Chinese Medicine. A case study was conducted to investigate the effect of a local application of a homeopathic remedy after the use of a dermal needle.

Keywords: Homeopathy • Microneedling • Dermal needle

Introduction

Homeopathic remedies are prescribed by practitioners all over the world for various forms of diseases. They are also taken as home remedies for self-treatment. Though the mode of action of the diluted substances is still unclear, Homeopathy is the leading remedy-based complementary method. The remedies are considered to be natural, with gentle effect and without any adverse effects.

The treatment is mainly based on the administration of diluted substances in form of globules, tablets or watery preparations. After detailed anamnesis and examination of the patient the Homeopath aims to find the remedy which best covers the actual disease picture. Then the most suitable dynamisation is chosen, according to the experience of the therapist, the kind and dynamic of the disease as well as the constitution of the patient. Finally the patient is instructed about how, when and how often the remedy should be taken.

This procedure was laid down by Samuel Hahnemann, German physician and pharmacist in the beginning of the 19th century. Hahnemann had found that the healing properties of natural substances depend on a symptom similarity between the substance and the disease. This law of similar is the fundamental guideline in Homeopathy.

After years of practice Hahnemann had observed that the external application of the remedies would complement the oral intake and could speed up the healing process [1]. He stated that a fluid solution the curative agent in addition to the oral dose should be rubbed in on parts free from eruptions, pains or spasms, especially on arms, legs, thighs and on the back. But his specifications are very vague compared to the detailed instructions he gave for anamnesis, case analysis, repertorisation, remedy and potency selection or posology.

In Homeopathy the effect of the remedy not only depends on the agent itself, but also on potency, time of administration, kind of preparation, etc.

Likewise the external application of the remedies should follow some principles.

Homeopathic remedies

Homeopathic remedies are unique in preparation and administration. Primary substances are mainly taken from plants, minerals and animal products. They are then mixed with carrier substances like alcohol or milk sugar at a ratio of 1:10 (X-potencies), 1:100 (C-potencies) or 1:50.000 (Q-potencies) and stepwise concussed or triturated. In the course of this dynamisation the quantity of the primary substance diminishes, until Avogadro's constant is passed and no molecule of the active ingredient is left. Still these non-molecular remedies are used in homeopathic treatment.

Some studies have shown that even in high potencies above Avogadro's constant there are still some nanoparticles of the primary substance left [2]. Whether these are accountable for the therapeutic effect is controversially discussed.

The dermal needle

In Traditional Chinese Medicine the dermal or cutaneous needle is used since ancient times. The instrument, also called seven star needle or plum blossom needle, is a little hammer with seven star-shaped needles on the head. The dermal needle is especially used for the treatment of sensitive patients or children, when usual acupuncture needles cannot be used. Even patients with needle phobia can be treated with it. The dermal needle is recommended for the treatment of different diseases like headaches, digestive disorders, menstrual pain and other disorders [3].

Unlike usual acupuncture needles, the needles of the dermal needle do not remain in the skin. The instrument is repeatedly tapped and the seven needles only perforate the upper layers of the skin. The depth of penetration

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depends on the power of the tapping and the thickness and texture of the skin.

After repeated tapping a slight reddening and warming of the skin shows increased blood flow and metabolism in the treated area. When used over irritated areas, a little drop of blood might appear. However extensive haematoma have not been observed, so even patients with anticoagulant medication might be treated with the dermal needle.

The tapping can be performed locally on acupuncture points, trigger or tender points, but also on larger areas or single muscles like the *M. trapezius* or *M. erector spinae*, so different reflex mechanisms might be used for curative purposes.

A similar kind of perforation of the skin can be achieved by so-called dermarollers. The dermaroller also acts by means of little thin needles, which penetrate the upper layers of the skin. Even though dermarollers are mainly used for cosmetic purposes, they can also help in the treatment of skin diseases or other medical issues [4]. Dermarollers in contrast to the seven star needles are rolled over the skin, so the treatment of small areas, acupoints, trigger or tender points is impossible.

Application of the homeopathic remedy

After the tapping, the skin barrier is broken up, local blood flow as well as metabolism is increased [5]. The receptivity is enhanced so that fluid solutions or other remedial preparations can be easily absorbed.

Homeopathic solutions are best prepared by giving a few globules, tablets or droplets of the dynamised remedy into water. As the solutions are prepared for each patient anew and do not have to be durable, no alcohol must be added. Additional irritation of the skin can therefore be avoided.

The administration of the solution can be performed by cotton pads or cotton sticks, soaked with the fluid, or via spray bottles. Wound dressings might be applied to prevent infections of the micro-injuries and keep the area warm.

Effects of the treatment

After the tapping there is visible redness of the skin. When the remedy is applied, little wheals appear where the needles have perforated the skin. These abate after few minutes without further intervention.

Unlike in usual homeopathic treatment, the effect of the Microneedling can be immediately felt by the patient. Commonly a comfortable sense of warmth, slight tingling, itching or burning is described right after the administration of the remedy. These sensations mostly disappear after a short time.

Often also a feeling is given, as if there is "something working" in the treated area. This might be felt not only superficially on the skin, but also deep inside the tissues, like in muscles, target organs or cavities (sinuses, etc.).

From several minutes to few hours, a sense of heaviness or general lassitude might come up. This can be interpreted as activation of the vagus, which lasts for few minutes up to an hour. Similar reactions might be also observed after the stimulation of acupuncture points [6,7].

Case Report

A male patient 21-years-old, athletic, in good general condition, 182 cm, 67 kg, number history of injuries of knee, traumatism, etc was presented to the clinic.

Diagnosis

Meniscopathy in the lateral meniscus from overstrain.

Actual complaints: diffuse pain in the outer portion of the left knee since about four weeks. No swelling or other signs of inflammation or traumatism. No skin eruption. The knee is movable, without any friction rub.

Case history

He is a student and earns some money on the side by working in a warehouse, where he has to climb many steps and lift heavy weights. In his spare time he is doing weight training and also started running training several weeks before the knee started aching.

Diagnosis: The diagnosis of meniscopathy of lateral meniscus was made by the general physician, company physician and an orthopedist. X-ray of the knee joint was conducted, which showed no signs of inflammation or lesion of osseous or cartilageous tissues, ligaments or muscles. No evidence for arthrosis.

Recent therapy: All three doctors agreed in the diagnosis and prescribed analgesics (Ibuprofen), which brought temporary relief. But due to some side effects (indigestion) the medication was stopped.

Disease picture: The patient describes the pain as diffuse, sometimes sharp, when walking long distances (but especially when going downstairs. He has to take a relieving posture, starts limping or has to grab the handle when descending the stairs. On examination he can describe the exact localisation of the pain, which is lateral, right beside the patella. However he sometimes has a sensation of a ball rolling around the knee joint, then the seat of the pain changes.

Remedy selection: First an extensive anamnesis was made according to homeopathic principles to draw the disease picture, including possible concomitant symptoms, constitutional peculiarities or other characteristics. The Steinmann-Test was conducted and confirmed the previous diagnosis. Then the homeopathic remedy was selected according to symptom similarity. *Sepia succus*, a remedy made from the inky juice of the cuttlefish, was chosen in the potency Q6.

Consent: Homeopathic remedies are usually approved for oral application. Some preparations are available as injectable or ointments for embrocation, yet these are mostly compound remedies with several ingredients. So in this case a solution was made by diluting two globules in 100 mL of water. As this application is an off-label-use, the patient had to be informed that the treatment was not approved and he was asked to give written consent.

Treatment: After sterilisation of the skin, the dermal needle was used on the painful spot on the left knee, which was given by the patient. The point was tapped until the skin reddened. Then the homeopathic remedy was administered via cotton stick. No further intake of *Sepia* or any other remedy.

Course of the treatment: Right after the treatment the patient described a feeling, as if something was "working" at the treated area. Within the first 24 hours a decided amelioration was felt. Especially the sensation of the ball rolling about diminished almost instantly. After 5 or 6 days the pains had entirely abated [7].

Discussion and Conclusion

Homeopathic remedies are used in the treatment of acute as well as chronic diseases. However the effectiveness in musculoskeletal diseases is controversial. The use of the dermal needle together with the external application of homeopathic remedies furnishes a new way of homeopathic treatment, even in musculoskeletal affections. Even though external application is recommended as additional approach to the oral intake, there is evidence that homeopathic microneedling might be effective as solitary treatment. However further research is necessary to confirm these findings.

Conflict of Interest

The Author declares that he has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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