



### Original Research Article

## A Study on Patients with Pathological Low Back Pain to Prove Clinical Benefits of Homeopathy

Author

**Subhadra K T<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Materia Medica, Dr. Padiar Memorial Homeopathic Medical College, Chottanikara, Thrippunithura, Kerala, India

\*Corresponding Author

**Dr Subhadra K T**

Associate Professor, Department of Materia Medica, Dr. Padiar Memorial Homeopathic Medical College, Chottanikara, Thrippunithura, Kerala, India

Email: [mediresearchdirect@gmail.com](mailto:mediresearchdirect@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*Homoeopathy is simple, gentle and cost effective system of therapeutics and is holistic, totalistic and individualistic in its approach. The most outstanding criticism about Homoeopathy is that it is nothing more than a placebo. The second criticism worth mentioning is that the system of homoeopathy has no scientific basis. Aim of this study is to prove or disprove the accusations that the homoeopathic medicines are nothing but placebo by studying the effect of homoeopathic remedies, placebo and homoeopathic medicines combined with placebo on pain, anxiety, depression and well being of patients with pathological low back pain. Total of 218 patients who reported at least one of the signs positive based on the physical examination checklist were randomly selected and included under the category of pathological low back pain. The patients were further classified into three groups based on the type of intervention used as – group I receiving homoeopathic medicines, group II receiving placebo and group III receiving homoeopathic medicines combined with placebo. The completed inventories were scored as per the manuals. The mean values show that the category which received homoeopathic medicines alone had a better reduction in the pain, anxiety and depression whereas improvement in well being followed by the category which received the combination. The category which received placebo alone had only a minimal decrease. The findings imply that homoeopathic medicine given alone is an effective therapy in managing pain of patients with pathological low back pain where there is a clear medical indication.*

**Keywords:** *Pathological low back pain, homoeopathic remedies, placebo, anxiety, depression, well being.*

### **Introduction**

Homoeopathy is a system of therapeutics, which is based on the nature's law of cure, similia similibus curentur - let likes be treated by likes. The concept of disease in homoeopathy is

that disease is the total affection of the mind, body and soul, ie the disturbance of the whole organism. Disease is not something which is coming from outside but it is coming from within. The disease is due to an internal derangement and

is manifested externally in the form of signs and symptoms. Homoeopathy is simple, gentle and cost effective. Homeopathic prescription is based on the law of similar, minimum dose, single remedy and drug proving on healthy human beings. A homoeopathic medicine is capable of healing those symptoms, which it was capable of producing during the process of drug proving. According to the method of preparation of the medicine from the drug substance, the end product contains only the dynamic healing and curative power of the drug devoid of any original crude substance. This is done by the method of potentiating. This method activates vital force to such a reactive level that the body becomes capable of eliminating the disease. The drug quantity is very minimal because of the fact that the body is already sensitized with the disease and the remedy used is having the property of producing similar affection to that of the disease. This also minimizes the unnecessary side effects. The most outstanding criticism is that Homoeopathy is nothing more than a placebo.<sup>[1]</sup> The second criticism worth mentioning is that the system of homoeopathy has no scientific basis. This is because; one of the fundamental principles of homoeopathy is ultra high dilution by potentiation. The investigator takes it as a challenge to scientifically study the rationality and scientific efficacy of homoeopathic medicines. The present study intends to prove or disprove the accusations that the homoeopathic medicines are nothing but placebo. For this purpose the investigator focuses her study on patients suffering from low back pain, the most common musculo skeletal disorder ever reported. Low back pain is a major public health problem all over the world. In India, occurrence of low back pain is also alarming; nearly 60 percent of the people in India have significant low back pain at some time or the other during their lifespan. Approximately 35% people suffer from chronic back pain, which significantly hampers their day-to-day routine which can be considered as a matter of high significance.<sup>[2]</sup> Homoeopaths strongly

believe that the medicines heal not only the physical symptoms but also the psychological symptoms, as the system focuses on the mind-body dualism. For having a deeper scientific exploration the investigator has selected certain physical variables as well as psychological variables to be studied. The variables are pain & functional disability, anxiety, depression, wellbeing and physical signs related to low back pain. The objective of the study is to prove or disprove the accusations that the homoeopathic medicines are nothing but placebo by studying the effect of homoeopathic remedies, placebo and homoeopathic medicines combined with placebo on anxiety, depression and well being of patients with pathological low back pain.

### Materials and Methods

The sample for the study was selected through the camps organized by Back Pain Research Clinic of Dr. Padiar Memorial Homoeopathic Medical College, Chottanikkara exclusively for patients with low back pain. Sample for the study was selected using systematic random sampling method. Out of the total number of 1142 patients, 673 patients met with the inclusion exclusion criteria. 218 patients who reported at least one of the signs positive based on the physical examination checklist were randomly selected and included under the category of pathological low back pain. The patients in the were further classified into three groups based on the type of intervention used as – group I receiving homoeopathic medicines, group II receiving placebo and group III receiving homoeopathic medicines combined with placebo.

### Tools used:

1. Hamilton anxiety rating scale<sup>[3]</sup>
2. Beck depression inventory<sup>[4]</sup>
3. PGI General well being measure<sup>[5]</sup>
4. Oswestry disability inventory<sup>[6]</sup>
5. Personal information data sheet (developed by investigator).

A fully informed written consent was obtained from each and every patient before the beginning

of intervention. The completed inventories were scored as per the manuals.

### Statistical analysis

The scored data were coded and subjected to statistical analyses. The statistical analysis of data was done using SPSS 20. ANCOVA was done to find out whether there were any significant differences in pain & functional disability, anxiety, depression and well being of the patients with pathological low back pain when treated with homoeopathic medicines, treated with placebo and with homoeopathic medicines in combination with placebo.

### Results

The results obtained are presented in table 1. The mean values show that the category which received homoeopathic medicines alone had a better reduction in the score followed by the category which received the combination. The

category which received placebo alone had only a minimal decrease in the Pain scores. There was a higher reduction in Anxiety in the Category I which received homoeopathic medicines followed by the Category III which received homoeopathic medicines in combination with placebo. The category which received placebo did not show any reduction in their Anxiety. The category which received homoeopathic medicines in combination with placebo had a better reduction in depression followed by the category which received homoeopathic medicines in combination with placebo. The category II which received placebo had the least reduction in the score. The category which received homoeopathic medicines in combination with placebo had better improvement in well being followed by the category which received homoeopathic medicines alone. The category which received placebo alone did not show any difference.

**Table 1:** Comparison of Means and standard deviations of pre-test and post- test scores in pain, anxiety, depression and well being when treated with homoeopathic medicines, treatment with placebo and with homoeopathic medicines in combination with placebo of patients suffering from pathological low back pain.

Response	Group	Pathological low back pain		F	P value
		Pre-test Mean $\pm$ SD	Post-test Mean $\pm$ SD		
Pain	Homoeopathic remedies	21.33 $\pm$ 5.87	14.30 $\pm$ 6.87	22.173	0.000**
	Placebo	22.19 $\pm$ 5.16	20.01 $\pm$ 5.42		
	combination	21.63 $\pm$ 7.03	15.28 $\pm$ 5.63		
Anxiety	Homoeopathic remedies	10.41 $\pm$ 5.86	7.25 $\pm$ 5.86	8.986	0.000**
	Placebo	11.56 $\pm$ 6.99	11.94 $\pm$ 7.81		
	combination	8.99 $\pm$ 4.88	6.87 $\pm$ 3.78		
Depression	Homoeopathic remedies	10.85 $\pm$ 7.19	6.66 $\pm$ 6.56	7.267	0.001**
	Placebo	7.30 $\pm$ 5.63	7.19 $\pm$ 4.48		
	combination	10.79 $\pm$ 7.36	5.01 $\pm$ 3.60		
Well being	Homoeopathic remedies	5.92 $\pm$ 7.31	8.07 $\pm$ 6.88	7.555	0.001**
	Placebo	6.06 $\pm$ 6.26	6.77 $\pm$ 5.72		
	combination	5.57 $\pm$ 5.85	11.21 $\pm$ 7.06		

### Discussion

Patients with pathological low back pain had shown significant difference in pain when treated with homoeopathic medicines alone. The findings had shown that homoeopathic treatment had a highly significant role in reducing the low back pain of patients with pathological low back pain. The reduction in Pain & functional disability

which was seen in patients with pathological low back pain after receiving homoeopathic medicine was not seen with the patients who received placebo. This means that the findings of the present study disagree with the report by Shang<sup>[1]</sup> that homoeopathy is nothing but placebo. Puhl et al<sup>[7]</sup> in a study had shown that placebos could give clinically meaningful change in LBP scores. The

findings of Puhl et al<sup>[7]</sup> are contradictory to the findings of the present study.

The findings also had shown that both the groups did not have much reduction in the Pain when treated with placebo alone. However patients with pathological low back pain and patients with somatoform low back pain had similar type of reduction in their pain when treated with homoeopathic medicines in combination with placebo. The medicinal part of the combination therapy might have given relief to the pain of diagnosed pathology group as it had given when it was prescribed alone.

Anxiety is a co morbidity which is associated with low back pain. The reduction in pain should result in reduction in anxiety. The reduction in anxiety in this study may be due to the fact that homoeopathy manages co morbid states also when treated according to symptom similarity. Studies related to the effectiveness of homoeopathy in anxiety disorders related to low back pain were not found reported. But there were studies related to the effectiveness of Homoeopathy in anxiety of other disorders. The literature searches did not reveal relevant findings on the action of homoeopathic treatment on depression related to low back pain disorders. There were a few relevant studies found on the action of homoeopathic medicines on depression among other disorders. Davidson et al.<sup>[8]</sup> in an article on the homoeopathic treatment in psychiatric conditions viewed that the treatment was found to be effective for functional somatic syndromes group, but not for anxiety and stress.

The present study indicates that homoeopathic medicines along with placebo can considerably improve the well being of patients with pathological pain. Witt et al<sup>[9]</sup> in a study on the individualized homoeopathic treatment on chronic low back pain disorders has found that the homoeopathic treatment improves the quality of life. The finding of the present study agrees with the finding of Witt.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Conclusion

The present study intends to either prove or disprove the accusations that the homoeopathic medicines are nothing but placebo. For this purpose the investigator focuses her study on patients suffering from low back pain, the most common musculoskeletal disorder ever reported. The study was designed in such a way as to differentiate the effects of homoeopathic medicines, placebo and homoeopathic medicines in combination with placebo on patients with pathological low back pain. Pain and associated co morbid conditions (anxiety and depression) of low back pain were found to be significantly reduced when treated with homoeopathic medicines alone. Feeling of well being also was found to be enhanced. The findings imply that homoeopathic medicine given alone is an effective therapy in managing pain of patients with pathological low back pain where there is a clear medical indication. Homoeopathy is a cost effective system which touches the core of the disease and heals gently the disease symptomatology along with improvement in the overall health. Therefore the growth of homoeopathy as a complimentary system of therapeutics is imperative. High quality researches are needed to bring homoeopathy into the main stream of therapeutics.

**Funding:** Nil

**Conflict of interest:** None initiated.

**Acknowledgement:** Author is thankful to Dr. Padiar Memorial Homeopathic Medical College and Medi research direct for their support during the entire project.

## References

1. Shang, A. Huwiler-Müntener, K. Nartey, L. Juni, P. Dorig, S. Sterne, J.A. Pewsner, D. & Egger, M. "Are the clinical effects of homoeopathy placebo effects? Comparative study of placebo controlled trials of homoeopathy and allopathy,"

- Lancet., Vol.366, issue 9487, pp. 726-32, 2005.
2. Suryapani, R. "Backache, borne of modern lifestyle," The Tribune, 16, Nov.1996.
  3. Hamilton, Max. "The assessment of anxiety states by rating," British Journal of Medical Psychology, Vol. 32, issue 1, pp.50-55, 2009.
  4. Beck, AT. Ward, CH. Mendelson, M. Mock, J. Erbaugh, J. "An inventory for measuring depression," Archives of General Psychiatry, vol. 4, pp. 561-571, 2001
  5. Verma, SK. Verma, A. "PGI General Well-being Measure," Lucknow: Ankur Psychological Agency 1989.
  6. Fairbank, JC. Couper, J. Davies, JB. O'Brien, JP. "The Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Questionnaire," Physiotherapy, vol. 66, pp.271-3, 2001.
  7. Puhl, AA. Reinhart, CJ. Rok, ER. Injeyan, HS. "An examination of the observed placebo effect associated with the treatment of low back pain - a systematic review," Pain Res Manag, vol. 16, issue 1, pp. 45-52, 2011.
  8. Davidson, J. Morrison, R. Shore, J. Davidson, RT. Bedayn, G. "Homoeopathic treatment of depression and anxiety," Altern Ther Health Med, vol. 3, issue.1, pp. 46-49, 1997.
  9. Witt, CM. Ludtke, R. Baur, T. Willich, N. "Homeopathic treatment of patients with chronic low back pain: A prospective observational study with 2 years' follow-up," Clin J Pain, vol. 25, issue 4, pp. 334-9, 2009.