

Homeopathy applied to Dentistry

Homeopatia aplicada à Odontologia

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Abstract

Objective: To research, through literature review, the use of homeopathy as an alternative treatment for many pathologies involved in dentistry field. **Methodology:** online searches using databases available at PUBMED Central and VHL/BIREME. Other platforms such as Web of Science, Science Direct and Google Academy. **Results:** Our search resulted in 25 articles. **Conclusion:** Despite the mysticism that surrounds it, the use of homeopathic medicines in dental treatments is, in fact, a scientifically proven alternative treatment, which helps in various pre and post surgical procedures, which has a low financial cost and great effectiveness, enabling a contribution to dental care. Scientific study in this area requires more research and clinical evidence, so that this practice is more widespread and used by dental surgeons, in addition to the application of homeopathy as a discipline in dentistry.

Keywords: Homeopathy; Homeopathic clinics; Homeopathic pharmacy techniques.

Resumo

Objetivo: Pesquisar através de revisão de literatura o uso da homeopatia como um alternativo para tratamentos para várias patologias envolvidas na área da odontologia. **Metodologia:** buscas online utilizando bases de dados disponíveis na PUBMED Central e BVS/BIREME. Outras plataformas como Web of Science, Science Direct e Google Academy. **Resultados:** Nossa busca resultou em 25 artigos. **Conclusão:** Apesar do misticismo que a acerca, o uso de medicamentos homeopáticos em tratamentos odontológicos é, na verdade, um tratamento alternativo comprovado cientificamente, que auxilia em diversos procedimentos pré e pós cirúrgicos, do qual possui um baixo custo financeiro e grande eficácia, possibilitando uma contribuição nos atendimentos da odontologia. O estudo científico nesta área necessita de mais pesquisas e evidências clínicas, para que essa prática seja mais disseminada e utilizada pelos cirurgiões dentistas, além da aplicação da homeopatia como disciplina na odontologia.

Palavras-chave: Homeopatia; Clínica homeopática; Farmacotécnica homeopática.

Resumen

Objetivo: Investigar a través de una revisión de la literatura sobre el uso de la homeopatía como medicina alternativa para tratamientos de diversas patologías involucradas en el área de la odontología. **Metodología:** búsqueda en línea utilizando bases de datos disponibles en PUBMED Central y BVS/BIREME. Otras plataformas como Web of Science, Science Direct y Google Academy. **Resultados:** Buscamos resultados en 25 ítems. **Conclusión:** A pesar del misticismo que lo rodea, el uso de medicamentos homeopáticos en los tratamientos odontológicos es, en verdad, un tratamiento alternativo científicamente probado, que ayuda en diversos procedimientos pre y posquirúrgicos, que ofrece un bajo costo y gran efectividad, lo que lo convierte en posible Un aporte a nuestro cuidado dental. El estudio científico en esta área requiere de mayor investigación y evidencia clínica, para que esta práctica sea más difundida y utilizada por los cirujanos dentistas, además de la aplicación de la homeopatía como disciplina en odontología.

Palabras clave: Homeopatía; Clínica homeopática; Farmacotécnica homeopática.

1. Introduction

The treatment of diseases has accompanied humanity throughout its existence. At some point during their development, the first hominids discovered that some plants had therapeutic effects, alleviating symptoms of diseases or injuries caused by the daily struggle for survival. This fact can still be observed today in indigenous and other secluded communities (Loaces et al., 2002).

In this context, the strength and corporate interests of pharmaceutical industries in the scientific world have, in the vast majority of cases, subjugated the use of “alternative” medicines for specific treatments or prevention of different pathologies, regardless of how they arise. This often implies a lack of scientific evidence for the large-scale use of such medical approaches.

However, the scientific use of plants and other natural substances, in appropriate dilutions for each case, forms the basis of homeopathic therapy. This therapy includes phytotherapeutic multidimensionality as one of its facets in the quest for homeostasis in patients treated with its medicines (Futuro, 2010). The use of homeopathic therapy is not recent, with the first reports appearing centuries before Christ. Therefore, the aim of this work is to conduct a narrative literature review to address the different applications and indications of homeopathic therapy in dentistry, in comparison with traditional allopathy.

2. Methodology

For the construction of this article, readings and contextualization were accomplished using the work of Mattos (2015) as a guideline to clarify the main differences between different literature reviews. This was associated with online research using databases available at PUBMED Central and VHL/BIREME. Other platforms such as Science Direct, CAPES Portal Journal, and Web of Science were also used, as well as Google Scholar, the latter being the last platform used to collect articles. Books and periodicals were necessary for overall methodological comprehension. Duplicate articles were reduced to one, and the data obtained from them were divided into topics organized from the state of the art as follows: history, indications, conflicts and differences with allopathy, as well as the philosophy and principles that differentiate them.

3. Results

3.1 History

The origin of the word “Homeopathy” is derived from ancient Greek (Diniz, 2006). In its semantic field, and using Greek radicals, ‘homeo’ refers to similar, while “pathos” is linked to the idea of suffering (Casali, 2006). It is considered a branch of Hippocratic medicine, as the principles of both consider health and illness as states of balance and imbalance, respectively (Shang et al., 2005).

The therapy itself is described by practitioners as an alternative, or even complementary, treatment approach. The earliest reports date back to 460 BC, stating that its pharmacological principle is based on the idea that a substance capable of

causing symptoms in a healthy individual may also be used to treat similar symptoms in a sick person. This concept, known as *Similia Similibus Curentur* or the *Law of Similars*, claims that substances available in nature have the potential to treat the same symptoms they can produce. Thus, “similar people may be healed by similar people” (Spezzia, 2021). From this perspective, homeopathic medication considers the particular characteristics of the sick organism that are revealed in the diagnosed condition (Hahnemann, 2007).

3.2 Indications

In homeopathy, there is a holistic analysis of the human being, considering the individual as a whole, not merely composed of flesh and bones. From this perspective, there is a general concern not only with the disease itself but also with the person in their entirety and plenitude (Teixeira, 2010). Human beings develop pathological processes not only due to physical reasons but also because of their interactions with the environment, including their emotional experiences and how they manage these emotions. This approach permeates homeopathy, offering a more integral treatment method compared to allopathy.

In 1810, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann outlined the contents and explained the basis of homeopathic theory. He stated that “the disappearance of every morbid phenomenon, which means, of every considerable alteration that departs from the healthy vital process through healing, certainly also implies and presupposes, necessarily, the reestablishment of the integrity of the vital principle and, consequently, the return of health to the entire organism” (Hahnemann, 2007). In short, as a result of this holistic approach to human illness, where organic-vital imbalance is interpreted through the combination of signs and manifest symptoms, homeopathic semiology values the multiple aspects of the patient. Homeopathic therapy thus encompasses the treatment of different spheres, integrating physical, psychic, and mental aspects, aiming for a healthy mind in a healthy body (Vannier, 1998; Dudgeon, 1994; Peres et al., 2022).

3.3 Conflicts with allopathy

Controversially, there is a traditional treatment method practiced by those who follow the conventional principles of industrialized medical science and technology. This method, known as allopathy, often conflicts with homeopathic therapy. Some researchers interpret the clinical effects of homeopathy as placebo effects, positing that the positive responses in patients arise from psychological expectations rather than direct pharmacological effects. In conventional or allopathic medicine, it is believed that the effectiveness of homeopathy is due to the patient's belief in the treatment's efficacy, even if the treatment itself lacks direct therapeutic effects.

Additionally, there are conflicts concerning the financial aspects of both therapeutic approaches. Homeopathy, due to its low market value and consequently lower profit margins, is not fully accepted in conventional medicine. Large pharmaceutical companies prefer to invest in traditional allopathic medicines, which offer more attractive profit margins. This economic dynamic further entrenches the preference for allopathy over homeopathy within the medical industry (Vannier, 1998).

3.4 Differences between homeopathy and allopathy

As described in the previous paragraphs, there are fundamental and philosophical differences between the two main therapies used in the world. In this context, homeopathy and allopathy are regarded as two distinct systems of medicine, differing in their approaches and fundamental principles. Allopathy, a system of conventional medicine employed by many doctors and health professionals globally, is based on using medicines that trigger effects opposite or different from the symptoms caused by a disease (Batello, 2016).

Allopathic medicines are typically manufactured using chemical and/or synthetic substances, with dosages prescribed

according to the symptoms and their severity. Treatments in allopathy aim to alleviate the symptoms of the disease and address its underlying causes, considering the patient's overall condition.

In contrast, homeopathy aims for a deeper and more complex treatment. It treats the individual in their physical, psychic, and mental fields. While it may not provide a cure in all aspects, it has an interesting function in therapeutic application (Teixeira, 1998). Based on the principle of "similar cures similars," homeopathic medicines are highly diluted and made from substances of mineral, vegetable, and animal origins. The prescription of homeopathic medicines is individualized, taking into account not only the physical symptoms but also the emotional and mental aspects of the patient. Homeopathy emphasizes promoting the body's natural healing capacity and its search for overall homeostasis (Teixeira, 1998).

3.5 Production of homeopathic and allopathic medicines and their differences

The understanding of homeopathy as a medical specialty that treats the patient as a whole individual inevitably comes into conflict with traditional allopathic treatments. Allopathic medicine is mostly produced by large transnational pharmaceutical industries and is subjected to rigid standardized technical specifications and industrialized quality control methods. In contrast, medicine derived from homeopathy is produced in homeopathic compounding pharmacies, which may or may not have generalized standardization of final preparation.

The processing of homeopathic medicine is almost exclusively carried out by the many homonymous pharmacies available in the market. Its main characteristic is a different approach compared to the traditional medicine industry: in homeopathy, the medicine is adapted to the patient rather than the patient being adapted to the medicine. This lack of standardization in homeopathic medicines has led to the creation of new resolutions by the National Health Surveillance Agency, which seek to establish standards and inspection guidance for such establishments (Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária, 1999). The starting substances used in the production of homeopathic medicines are often of vegetable, animal, or mineral origin, including mother tinctures—ethanolic extracts obtained from plants—along with inert substances used as vehicles or diluents.

The final product is often exposed to many dilution processes and may only benefit from specifications and quality control methods that are considered to be based on exclusions. For example, an alcoholic solution of Chamomilla 30CH may have its alcohol content, color, and transparency measured, its flavor and odor evaluated, and must be colorless and translucent. However, none of these parameters guarantee that there are 30 dilutions made at a ratio of 1:100 from a mother tincture from the correctly indicated part of the plant, which had already been cultivated and collected appropriately. This factor makes trust in the homeopathic pharmacist a crucial aspect, highlighting the responsibility involved and breaking the mass industrialization of medicines.

The inevitable conclusion is that the main characteristic differentiating allopathy from homeopathy is that the former uses medicines that act directly on the symptoms caused by the disease, while the latter uses very diluted substances, based on the belief that they stimulate the human body's immune system. Each system has its respective philosophy, approach, and evidence of effectiveness. The choice between them is often relative, depending on preferences, familiarity with medications, and mainly on the clinical experience of each professional, applied directly to the individual needs and objectives of each patient (Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária, 1999).

3.6 Principle of similars and contraries

The understanding of a large part of homeopathic practice is based on four basic principles: The Law of Similars, experimentation on healthy patients, minimum doses, and the single medicine.

a) The Law of Similars and experimentation on healthy patients

The principle known as the "Law of Similars" or "Similia Similibus Curentur" in homeopathy has roots in the teachings of Hippocrates, who suggested that substances causing symptoms similar to a disease in healthy individuals could potentially alleviate those symptoms in sick individuals. This concept was further explored by Paracelsus, a Renaissance physician and alchemist, who experimented with substances and their effects on health, expanding the understanding that "like cures like."

In the 17th century, Crollius, an alchemist and physician, contributed to this idea through his medical writings. However, it was Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, who systematized and applied the Law of Similars in modern medical practice. Through rigorous experiments known as "provings," Hahnemann tested substances on himself and healthy volunteers to determine their specific effects.

Hahnemann formulated the principle that substances which induce symptoms in healthy individuals can be used to treat similar symptoms in sick individuals, provided they are administered in highly diluted and potentized forms. This foundational principle guides homeopathic practice today, where remedies are selected based on their ability to match the totality of symptoms experienced by the patient, aiming to stimulate the body's innate healing capacity.

Thus, the Law of Similars remains a fundamental concept in homeopathy, shaping its approach to individualized and holistic treatment based on the unique symptoms and constitution of each patient.

b) Minimum doses

Hahnemann's clinical experiences formed the basis of his development of the Law of Similars in homeopathy, which began with his observations of the adverse effects caused by high doses of conventional medications used during his time. Many patients suffered severe and distressing symptoms from these treatments, often leading them to discontinue therapy altogether.

To address these challenges, Hahnemann pioneered a dilution technique using water and alcohol, applied on a progressive centesimal scale. Each dilution was rigorously homogenized through a process he termed succussion. This technique aimed to reduce the intensity of symptoms caused by high doses while preserving and enhancing the medicinal properties of the substances.

Hahnemann was initially surprised by the results achieved through this pharmacotechnical process, known as dynamization or potentization. He found that medicines prepared using this method not only minimized the aggravation of symptoms associated with high doses but also exhibited greater therapeutic efficacy. This discovery marked a significant advancement in the practice of homeopathy, offering a means to achieve rapid and gentle healing responses in patients (Messias, 2017).

Today, dynamization remains a core aspect of homeopathic preparation, emphasizing the meticulous dilution and succussion of substances to harness their healing potential while minimizing adverse effects.

c) Single Medicine

When Hahnemann developed his methodology for experimenting on healthy individuals, he emphasized the importance of studying each medicine in isolation to accurately determine its effects and pathogenesis. This approach involved administering medications one at a time to avoid any potential interactions between different substances.

Hahnemann believed this method to be more rational and systematic, ensuring that the observed symptoms could be clearly attributed to the specific medicine being tested. By meticulously documenting the symptoms induced by each substance, he aimed to establish a comprehensive understanding of their therapeutic potential and applicability in treating similar symptoms

in sick individuals.

From a homeopathic perspective, this rigorous individualization of medicine aligns with the goal of tailoring treatment to the unique symptomatic presentation of each patient. Homeopaths seek to identify the *simillimum*—the most similar remedy—based on the totality of symptoms experienced by the individual. This personalized approach is foundational to homeopathic practice, emphasizing the precise matching of remedy to patient in order to stimulate the body's innate healing abilities effectively (Abrahão, 2019; Corrêa, 2006).

d) Clinical indications for the use of homeopathy in Dentistry

In dentistry, homeopathic remedies have been proposed for a variety of conditions including oral ulcers, sialorrhea (excessive salivation), neuralgia, temporomandibular joint disorders (TMJ), xerostomia (dry mouth), lichen planus, bruxism (teeth grinding), minor acute illnesses, chronic pathologies, atypical facial pain, burning mouth syndrome, postoperative osteitis, and anxiety related to dental treatment (Steinchler, 2015; Fischer, 2005). They are often used as adjuncts to conventional treatments, especially in cases where traditional approaches have failed or are contraindicated (Amaral, 2021).

Homeopathic medicines for these conditions come in various forms such as tablets, pills, drops, liquids, granules, and creams (Darby, 2011). Some are designed to dissolve on or under the tongue for quick absorption. The instructions typically advise placing the medicine directly in the mouth, where it can be sucked or chewed to facilitate absorption (Darby, 2011).

The use of homeopathic remedies in dentistry offers several potential benefits, including cost-effectiveness, versatility across different dental specialties (such as orthodontics, stomatology, endodontics, pediatric dentistry, periodontics, and surgery), relative efficacy, safety, and ease of use (Eleutério, 2011; Mendonça, 2022; Almeida et al., 2023). This makes them a valuable option in integrative dental care, where they can complement conventional treatments and provide additional therapeutic options for patients.

4. Discussion

Allopathic traditional industries have played a millennia-old role in treating various traditional and transitional diseases throughout human development. More specifically, during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, billions of dollars were invested to halt the transmission speed worldwide. It is only natural that in moments when lives are at risk, scientists turn to allopathic drugs, which have been studied over longer periods and have a robust historical foundation.

On the other hand, homeopathy offers a different approach. If more research were conducted under rigid scientific oversight, homeopathy might be used more frequently to stimulate the immune system to develop stronger and more efficiently, transforming weak patients into functional ones. However, the industrial pharmaceutical power makes such homeopathic progress more difficult due to marketing strategies, including bonuses for pharmaceutical representatives, prizes for reaching targets, and laboratory incentives.

The lack of homeopathic disciplines in medical and dental education at universities constitutes a significant gap that students must overcome if they wish to study this alternative approach. The lack of belief and the expected resistance from professors and institutions, although understandable, may jeopardize the accomplishment of valuable research studies, impeding students' access to the homeopathic world. This is especially important as more dentists and doctors seem to be interested in the subject.

Another point of interest is the fewer reports of side effects and allergies associated with the use of homeopathy. Regardless of the clinical or research path chosen, homeopathy will gradually increase its importance as an interesting tool in the arsenal developed to combat pathologies in almost all medical and dental fields.

5. Conclusion

Homeopathic medicines seem to have the potential to be used as main therapy for various pathologies involved in the field of dentistry. However, for them to be used more commonly, more research and clinical evidence will be needed, published in elite journals, so that educational institutions accept homeopathy as a way of treating their patients through the adoption of the discipline in dentistry schools.

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