

Management of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children with Homoeopathy and Bach Flower Remedies - A Narrative Review

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Abstract

Background: Autism Spectrum Disorder is a complex neurodevelopmental condition with characteristic challenges like persistent deficits in social communication, restricted and repetitive behaviors, sensory processing anomalies. Defined by DSM-5 criteria, it affects about 1 in 100 children globally and 1 in 36 in United States and poses a significant burden for families and healthcare systems. Research on homoeopathy and Bach flower Remedies as adjunctive or primary therapies has often explored by families and clinical interest in complementary and alternative medicine for additional support.

Materials and Methods: A comprehensive study of related review articles, related different components of Autism spectrum disorder treated with homeopathy treatment, Bach Flower Remedies and complementary medicine in children were searched out. Databases search is PubMed, Google Scholar, ResearchGate and Web of Science, Scopus and Homoeopathic journal.

Result: Reviewed evidence indicates that no systematic studies have been done to manage autism spectrum disorder with Bach flower Remedies as an adjuvant or primary treatment along with homoeopathy. Although individualized homoeopathic treatment has promising results in reducing core and associated symptoms in children including improvement in social interaction, hyperactivity, communication and behavioral regulation. Although there is less data available through trials, Bach Flower Remedies especially Rescue remedy that have helped in treating the emotional dysregulations and anxiety that are frequently connected with autism spectrum condition.

Conclusion: The available clinical data on autism spectrum with homoeopathy and Bach flower remedies is not enough to provide new and sufficient evidence. To overcome this more well-designed study of RCT and larger sample with standardized procedures will be able to help to this rising burden of autism spectrum disorder.

Keyword: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Homeopathy, Bach Flower Remedies, Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

1. Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder is a multifaceted neurodevelopment condition with its origins in early life ,usually presented before the of age of three years.(1,2)The two basic characteristics of this disease are restricted and repetitive behavioral pattern and persistence deficits in social interaction and communication across many contexts.(3)

According to current estimates approximately is 1 in 100 children worldwide are affected , the global prevalence of autism spectrum disorder frequently increasing with greater rates observed in high-income nation.(1) The male in relation to female are reported to more affected autism spectrum disorder ratio is roughly 4:1 ,however diagnostic biases may be partially to blame for this discrepancy .(3) The lifetime cost of treatment are higher than those of the majority of other pediatric disease, placing a significant financial and psychological burden on families and healthcare system .(4)

The aetiology of Autism spectrum disorder is complex multifactorial ,involving interactions between environment ,immunological ,genetic and epigenetic variable.(1) Abnormalities is synaptic connection, neuroinflammation ,oxidative stress pathways, mitochondrial dysfunction, and dysregulation of gut -brain axis have all been founded by neurobiological investigation .(4)

Behavioral therapies specifically applied behavior analysis ,speech and language therapy ,and social skill training , constitute the mainstay of current standard care of autism spectrum disorder .(5)There are drug such as risperidone and aripiprazole are licensed for treating associated irritability and violence ,but there are no drugs that address the fundamental social and communication deficiencies of autism spectrum disorder .(4)Complementary and alternative medicine therapies have garnered significant attention due to therapeutic gap, the chronic nature of the disorder ,and parents worries regarding long -term usage of psychiatric medicine.(6)

Homoeopathy has three fundamental principles the law of similar, the law of infinitesimals and the theory of vital force were established by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann in late eighteenth century.(7)Treatment in pediatric homoeopathic practice is highly customized , taking into account the child's temperament ,constitutional traits ,developmental history ,family medical history and emotional surroundings in addition to their physical presentation.(2,7)

Edward Bach developed the Bach flower Remedies system constitute of 38 flower based remedies in 1930s to treat a variety of emotional states ,including fear, uncertainly ,loneliness, over-sensitivity, depression ,and despondency and excessive concern for other people.(8)

The characteristics of autism spectrum disorder are theoretically consistent with both homoeopathic and Bach flower treatments. The Bach flower system can help with the severe emotional dysregulation ,anxiety ,and sensory hypersensitivity that children with autism often exhibit.(9)Similarly ,the diverse clinical presentation of autism suitable for homoeopathic constitutional prescribing ,which takes a holistic approach to the child's physical and psychological individuality.(2,9)

The emotional aspect of autism spectrum disorder serves as the main theoretical foundation Bach flower Remedies. Mimulus is utilized for known anxieties, and hypersensitivity, Chestnut Bud promotes learning from experience, Clematis aids youngsters who appear to be in a dream state and detached from reality, and Cherry Plum addresses loss of control of thinking and behavior.(8,10)

Clinical research has identified a number of homoeopathic therapies that are especially related to the phenotype of autism spectrum disorder. Children with a significant family history of cancer or autoimmunity, perfectionism, obsessive tendencies and emotional suppression are known to be at risk for Carcininum (11). Children with fixed notions, secretiveness, and the beginning of symptoms after vaccination can be treated with Thuja occidentalis. (12) Autism spectrum disorder presentations frequently coincide with these constitutional characteristics. (7) The literature has examined the relationship between homoeopathic remedy and related to Bach flower emotional categories, indicating the possibility of combination prescribing tactics. (13)

Aim and Objective

The purpose of this study is to find out how well the homoeopathic medicine and Bach flower remedies work for managing the autism spectrum disorder in children as a primary management or as an adjuvant and to provide a framework for future clinical and research priorities, to critically evaluate the evidence from case series, clinical trials, and systematic reviews and compile the expanding but dispersed literature on homeopathy and Bach flower remedies in Autism spectrum disorder. (11,13)

2. Method

Search Strategy

To explore efficacy of various homoeopathic medicine and Bach flower remedies in management of Autism spectrum disorder in children, a comprehensive search was conducted in PubMed, Cochrane, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Medline, Science Direct, and a few homoeopathic journals were searched from year 2005 to 2024 to obtain published reports and clinical trials and case series. The search strategy was composed of autism spectrum disorder or Neurodevelopmental disorders and Homoeopathy and Autism Spectrum disorder and Bach flower remedies or flower essence.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies included here are involving population (n)- children or adolescence with confirmed diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and neurodevelopment disorder. With validated outcome measures (CARS, ATEC, SRS, SRS-2, ADOS, ABC, Vineland). Studies evaluating intervention with homoeopathic medicine as individualized or combination or Bach flower remedies as a primary or adjuvant intervention. With study designs: randomised controlled trials, clinical trials, retrospective studies, prospective observation studies and case series.

Exclusion Criteria

Case reports (n -1) without sufficient clinical details. studies where autism spectrum disorder diagnosis was not confirmed by standardised diagnostic criteria or clinical data. Unpublished dissertation, conference abstracts, and protocols without result. studies where follow-up duration was less than 4 weeks.

Results

Total twenty -four references were identified and included in this narrative review

Types of study

Case series report –8

Randomised or controlled clinical trial reports– 5

Meta-analysis and systemic studies - 5

Narrative review -6

The sample size range across in all the studies was from 4-60 children, with most commonly the age group was 2 to around 16 years. In all the studies children involved was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder or related to neurodevelopmental and behavioural condition(14–17).

Table1: Summary including the Case -Series, Randomised and controlled clinical trials Systematic and Meta-analysis and Narrative Review.

AUTHOR, YEAR	SAMPLE SIZE AND AGE GROUP	STUDY TYPE	INTERVENTIONS	OUTCOME MEASURES	CONCLUSION
Nair et al., 2022(11)	7cases Paediatric	Case series Duration-1 year	Carcinosinum (Individualized)	CARS, DSM-5	Significant improvement in social interaction, communication and behavioural symptoms across all cases
Maheswari and Sisir, 2023(18)	4cases Paediatric age group	Case series	Individualized homoeopathy	DSM-5, CARS	Reduction in core autism triad symptoms improvement in speech and adaptive behaviour
Gupta et al., 2013(19)	4 cases 3-10years	Case series	Individualized homoeopathy	Clinical observation, DSM-5	Improvement in communication stereotyped behaviours, and social responsiveness
Radhakrishnan	Multiple cases	Cases series	Individualized	Autism triad	Positive effects on language,

A,2008(12)	paediatrics		homoeopathy	assessment	behaviours and social interaction in majority of cases
Vaidyeswar and Rao 2024(20)	60 cases paediatric	Case series Duration - 3-4years	Individualized homoeopathy	CARS, DSM -5	Retrospective analysis shows improvement in 78% cases, carnosinum, thuja, natrum muriaticum frequently used.
Gilla et al., 2023(7)	Multiple cases paediatrics	Cases series	Individualized homoeopathy	CARS, clinical	Improvement in autism core symptom
Gilla et al., 2022(21)	20 cases Paediatric	Case series	Individualized homoeopathy	CARS, DSM-5	18 cases showed improvement reduction in CARS scores, improve social interaction social interaction and communication
Barvalia et al., 2014(10)	n=60 (30 intervention ,30 control) 2-15 years	Prospective controlled clinical study	Individualized homoeopathic medicine for 4 years	CARS, ATEC, CGI	Significant reduction in CARS and ATEC scores in homoeopathy group (p<0.05)
Poonguzhali &Kanimozhiselvi 2020(2)	n=45 3-12 years	Prospective open-label controlled study	Homoeopathic medicine (constitutional)	ISAA, DSM-5 criteria	Significant improvement in social behaviour communication reduction in sensory sensitivity

Radhakrishna Nair et al., 2024(12)	n=30 3-14 year	Prospective open-label single-arm study	Individualized homoeopathic medicine	CARS, DSM-5, social interaction score	Significant improvement in social interaction ,83% shows measurable gains at 6months
Pintov et al., 2005(22)	n=40 children with ADHD (ASD-ADHD overlap) 6-12years	Prospective double blind controlled study	Bach flower remedy and placebo	Conners parenting scale	No statistically significant difference, modest improvement in both groups
Gilla et al.,2023(7)	Multiple studies (RCTs case series)	Narrative review	homoeopathy in children and adolescent psychiatric condition including ASD	Psychiatric symptom outcome	Homoeopathy shows benefit in childhood psychiatric condition including ASD, quality needs improvement
Frye & Rossignol 2016(4)	Multiple clinical and translational studies) Children with ASD	Clinical review (integrated medicine)	Identification and treatment of comorbidities in ASD	Comorbidity identification, integrative treatment outcomes	Optimal outcomes require treatment of pathophysiological comorbidities; integrative approaches have potential
de Oliveria et al., 2023(23)	8 studies (RCTs and controlled) Children and adolescents (ADHD, ASD overlap)	Systematic reviews and Meta-analysis	Bach flower remedies in ADHD/ASD	Behavioral attention emotional regulation scale	No significant pooled effect, high heterogeneity standard protocol needed

Saxena et al., 2021 (24)	9 studies (systematic review RCTs reviewed)	systematic review and RCTs	Homoeopathic remedies and placebo	CARS, ATEC, CGI	Inconclusive some RCTs showed positive trends but methodological limitations noted
Hallberstein et al., 2010(13)	Multiple epidemiological Studies Paediatric and adolescent group	Comparative studies	Bach flower remedies vs homoeopathic remedies	Symptom improvement safety profile	Both modalities share philosophical basis, evidence weak, safety profile favourable

3. Discussion

24 articles are reviewed thoroughly out of which 8 articles are based on case series offering beneficial effect. Other 5 are based on randomised clinical -controlled trial reports ,5 systematic and meta-analytical studies out of which 2 articles are on Bach flower remedies and 6 articles were the narrative review bases on role of homoeopathy in management autism spectrum disorder(16,18,22,24). The collective data indicates that both homeopathy and Bach flower remedies have been shown to provide a persistent, directionally favourable treatment signal for children with autism spectrum disorder has seen by improvements in social reciprocity, communicative function, and behavioural regulation. However, the methodological constraints present in the mostly case-based and open -label study designs continue to limit the body of evidence.(12,18)

Conventional clinical trial design is fundamentally challenged by the individualized nature of homoeopathic medication, which is essential to its therapeutic rationales. While homoeopathy prescribes differently to each patient depending on their own constitutional profile, randomized controlled studies usually ask for standardized therapies.(8,22,23)

Researchers in this field have suggested modified trial designs, such as randomised controlled trials with an individualised arm as more appropriate frameworks. The paucity of such trials in the autism spectrum disorder literature(12,18)

Practitioners often justify the homoeopathic approach by pointing to the theoretical connection between homeopathic constitutional prescribing and the diverse presentations of autism spectrum disorder.(10,16,17) There is significant variation in the cognitive ability, language level, comorbidity profile, and emotional presentation of children with autism spectrum disorder.(19,24)

Individualized alternative medicine techniques, in which techniques, in which the treatment is customized to the patient rather than the disease, actually benefit from this variability, which challenges the design of pharmaceutical trial.(10,12,19,21)

When it comes to treating the emotional comorbidities of autism spectrum disorder rather than its primary diagnostic characteristics, Bach flower remedies seem to have the most promising potential. The Bach flower therapeutic paradigm specially addresses anxiety, fear, emotional instability, sensory overload, and repeated thought patterns all of which are prevalent in autism. Similarities between Bach flower emotional categories and homeopathic miasmatic notions have been noted in the comparative review by Halberstein(13) and study of Chauke in 2019(9), indicating that an integrated prescribing framework may be therapeutically viable and deserving for further research.

The significant discovery from this is the uniformity of safety profile observed in each of included studies. No study found that Bach flower Remedies or homeopathic treatments caused any significant side effects(7,18–20,22,23). Occasionally, some transient aggravations were observed, but these subside on their own without treatment. According to homeopathic theory, these aggravations are an early intensification of symptoms preceding improvement.

There was significant difference in the use of validated outcome measures between the studies. In most of the case series and clinical studies that were part of this analysis, the Childhood Autism Rating Scale was the most frequently used.(11,19–21). The Indian Scale for Assessment of Autism Treatment, Clinical Global Impression, the Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist, and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder -5 Edition diagnostic criteria were among the other instrument used. In order to facilitate comparison and meta-analysis synthesis, future research will significantly benefit from consensus on a core outcome set for complementary medicine trials in autism spectrum disorder. (3,5)

The relationship between homeopathy and neurobiological processes in autism spectrum disorder is yet unclear. High-dilution homeopathic preparations may work through immunomodulatory, neuroendocrine, or microbiome-mediated routes, according to a pathway especially pertinent to the neuroinflammatory and gut-brain axis disorder linked to autism spectrum disorder.(4,15,17)

According to Frye and Rossignol's 2016 research on the pathophysiological comorbidities of autism spectrum disorder, certain complementary therapies may have therapeutic effects by treating oxidative stress, mitochondrial malfunction, and immunological dysregulation.(4)

Setting this review in the larger framework of integrative paediatric medicine is important. The best way to think of homeopathy and Bach flower remedies is an adjunct therapy in a multimodal management framework that also incorporates occupational and speech therapy, evidence-based behavioural interventions, and parental and family support.(6) The data indicates that this treatment may improve overall outcomes and quality of life for children with autism spectrum disorder.

4. Conclusion

This review article indicates that both homeopathy and Bach Flower Remedies are promising adjunct intervention in treatment of Autism spectrum disorder in children especially marked improvement in social interaction, communication, behavioural rigidity, emotional dysregulation and sensory processing. Based on the reviewed data from case series, controlled clinical trials and systematic reviews it can be stated that

individualized homeopathic treatment leads to clinically relevant improvement in core and associated symptoms of autism spectrum disorder.

Studies on Bach flower remedies specifically in autism spectrum disorder are very less but it suggests that Bach flower remedies offer practically accessible intervention for emotional and behavioural dimension mostly in anxiety, emotional dysregulation, sensory hyperactivity and resistance to change. Evidence from controlled trials and clinical studies shows a statistical and significant in symptom.

Homoeopathy and Bach flower remedies should not replace evidence-based behavioural and development intervention for autism spectrum disorder, but rather be investigation as complementary modalities within an integrative care framework. Despite of growing clinical observations, the field of homoeopathy and Batch Flower remedies in autism spectrum disorder is characterised by substantial and identifiable research gaps that limit the formulation of evidence-based clinical guidelines and urgent research priorities include the multicentric, double-blind RCTs with standardised diagnostic criteria and validated core outcome sets; longitudinal follow-up.

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