

HOMEOPATHY IN THE TREATMENT OF *VERRUCA VULGARIS* – AN EXPERIENCE OF TWO CASES

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Verruca vulgaris are frequently encountered in medical practice. They are considered the result of viral infections. Various treatment modalities exist including chemical cautery, electrocautery, local and systemic immune stimulation. Spontaneous regression is common. Two cases of insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus with multiple, previously treated verruca vulgaris, treated with homeopathy are presented.

Case 1 was that of a 42 year old female with a 5 year history of *Verruca vulgaris* in the periungual area of the left thumb and the right first toe that recurred in spite of repeated treatment. She was treated with the homeopathic remedy *Sepia*, to which she responded. She also had improved glycemic control as evidenced by HbA1c levels at 3 months.

Case 2 was that of a 19 year old female with painful plantar *Verruca vulgaris* of 3 months duration, that recurred after topical treatment. She received the homeopathic remedy *Aurum metallicum*. At presentation 5 months later, she was lesion-free and she claimed to have been so since the first month after treatment. She also had improvement of her HbA1c levels.

No adverse effects of therapy were recorded in these cases.

In conclusion, homeopathy may be a useful form of therapy for recalcitrant viral warts in patients with diabetes mellitus and may also help to improve diabetes control. Controlled studies will be required to establish this and also to help elucidate the underlying mechanism of action of homeopathy.

Key words: Verruca vulgaris; Homeopathy; Aurum metallicum.

INTRODUCTION

Verruca vulgaris, also known as viral warts are common cutaneous lesions considered to be the results of infections with the human papilloma virus. The human papilloma virus is part of the papovavirus group, which are double-stranded, slow-growing DNA viruses, that are naked. Their lack of an envelope is considered to be a factor contributing to their resistance to drying, freezing and to solvents. There are more than 100 HPV strains and verruca vulgaris is caused by the HPV-1, -2, -4, -27, -57, and -63¹. Common warts are thought to affect up to 33% of schoolchildren².

They are typically difficult to treat successfully and may cause pain and discomfort, as well as affect social activities. Any method that may improve treatment success will always be welcome.

CASE PRESENTATIONS

Case 1: A 42 year-old female businesswoman presented with a 5-year history of common warts affecting the periungual area of the left thumb and the right big toe. These lesions continued to recur after various treatments. Her past medical history revealed insulin-independent diabetes mellitus for

4 years, complicated by peripheral neuropathy for which she was receiving alpha-lipoic acid. Physical examination revealed a hyperkeratotic lesion on the lateral side of her left thumbnail and the medial side of her right large toenail. The toenail lesion was associated with partial onycholysis. General examination revealed nothing unusual and her HbA1c was 10%.

She received a weekly dose of the homeopathic remedy *Sepia* at the potency of M and the lesions were completely healed at 6 weeks after treatment. At 3 months after treatment her HbA1c had dropped to 9%, without any change in diabetes treatment. She also had a small change in her C-peptide levels (0.733ng/ml to 0.799 ng/ml).

Case 2: A 19 year old highschool girl presented with a 4 month history of *Verruca vulgaris* on her left sole prior to presentation. The lesion had failed to respond to topical therapy. Her past medical history was significant for insulindependent diabetes mellitus for 10 years, complicated by peripheral neuropathy for which she was receiving benfothiamine. Physical examination revealed a single hyperkeratotic papule on her left sole, in the area of the 1st metatarsophalangeal joint, that was sensitive to palpation. General examination was normal. Her HbA1c was 9.1%.

She received a weekly dose of the homeopathic remedy *Aurum metallicum*, at a potency of M. At the follow-up visit 2 months later, her lesion was much improved, while at 6 months, completely healed. Her HbA1C level at 6 months after treatment had dropped to 6.8%, with no change in her insulin therapy.



Fig. 1. *Verruca vulgaris* case 1 before-toe.



Fig. 2. *Verruca vulgaris* case 2 after.



Fig. 3. *Verruca vulgaris* case 2 before.



Fig. 4. *Verruca vulgaris* case 1 before-toe.

DISCUSSION

Verruca vulgaris is a common cutaneous disorder affecting a significant proportion of the

population and is more frequent in some groups such as schoolchildren, butchers and people with immune depression¹. All parts of the skin may be affected. Some subtypes of human papilloma virus are considered responsible for these infections. Spontaneous remission is common. Treatment can result often result in frequent recurrence. Therapeutic modalities include 40% topical salicylic acid, 0.7% cantharidin, intralesional bleomycin, imiquimod cream, laser therapy, electrocautery and curettage³⁻⁶.

The response of the verruca lesions to homeopathy, coupled with the improved glycemic control suggests that homeopathy may be an efficient treatment for viral warts and may be useful in aiding glycemic control, especially in patients with poor glucose control, as evidenced in these cases. Homeopathic treatment is also cheap. In this case, cost of medication was approximately 1 Euro/case.

Homeopathy was founded by the German physician Samuel Hahnemann. It involves the use of highly diluted substances in a process on the basis of individualization⁶. The Homeopathic remedies *Sepia* and *Aurum metallicum* are derived from the animal *Sepia* and from gold⁷. There are generally no side-effects known from homeopathic therapy.

Homeopathy forms part of what is known today as complementary and alternative medicine CAM, which is enjoying increasing popularity amongst the general populace. A number of naturopathic remedies, including *Camelia sinensis*, *Allium sativa*, *Chelidonium majus* and *Maleleuca alternifolia* are also cited for the treatment of warts, though the evidence for this is not complete.

It is therefore pertinent for clinical trials to be conducted in order to determine the efficiency of homeopathy in the treatment of common warts and, perhaps also in glycemic control in poorly controlled insulindependent diabetic patients.

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