

The Vital & Effective Role of Homeopathy In Fibromyalgia

Sujata Owens, B.Sc., DHMS., R.S.Hom (NA), C.C.H., H.M.C

Vital Force Consulting, Inc.

108 E. Third Street, Northfield, MN 55057

507.645.4329

vfc@vitalforceconsulting.com ~ www.vitalforceconsulting.com

Definition: Fibromyalgia is a "chronic invisible illness". It is NOT a form of muscular rheumatism. It is a type of neurotransmitter dysfunction. (Neurotransmitters are how the brain and body communicate.) It is a systemic, non-inflammatory, non-progressive pain amplification syndrome.

Fibromyalgia is...

- A term that means pains in the muscles, ligaments and tendons, i.e., the fibrous tissues in the body.
- A widespread musculoskeletal pain and (sometimes profound) fatigue disorder for which the cause is not known.

Diagnostic criteria consist of:

- a. Widespread pain in all 4 body quadrants for a minimum of 3 months.
- b. Having at least 11 of 18 tender points that cluster around the neck, shoulder, chest, hip, knee and elbow regions of the body.

The syndrome of fibromyalgia can cause stiffness, fatigue, myalgias (muscle pain), subjective numbness, headaches (often migraine), dizziness, paraesthesias, IBS-like gastrointestinal disturbances, memory and concentration problems, sleep disorders and various states of anxiety and depression (Chakrabarty and Zoorob, 2007).

In 2010, a systematic review of the most recently used conventional drugs for fibromyalgia was published in a leading scientific journal (Clauw, 2010). Although some drugs had beneficial effects, the author acknowledged the significant limitations of these benefits and the need to utilize other treatment options. He wrote, "Because of the modest overall analgesic efficacy seen with any class of analgesic drug in any chronic pain state, we should be particularly aggressive about using more non-pharmacological therapies in treating patients with chronic pain."

The Homeopathic Approach to Fibromyalgia

Homeopaths are able to treat fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome effectively in many cases by bringing the individual into balance. Homeopaths treat people with chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia and not the chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia itself. For a homeopath, what needs to be treated is the specific pattern of symptoms which an individual presents. Only the one homeopathic remedy that specifically matches the unique symptoms of the individual will bring the balance.

Homeopathic medicine is a 200+-year-old system of medicine that utilizes specially prepared doses of medicines made from various substances of the plant, mineral or animal kingdom. Each medicine is prescribed for its capacity to cause, if given in overdose to healthy people, symptoms similar to those that the sick person is experiencing. Because basic physiology recognizes that symptoms represent defenses of the body (and mind) in its efforts to fight infection and/or adapt to stress, a homeopathic medicine is selected for its capacity to mimic a person's own symptoms, thereby augmenting their own defensive response.

Just as vaccines and allergy treatments are in part based on this same premise -- whatever a substance causes in overdose, it will elicit an immune response when taken in small doses -- homeopathic medicines are a system of helping the "wisdom of the body" defend and heal itself.

In homeopathy, ALL ailments are considered "syndromes," that is, all disease is a constellation of physical and psychological symptoms, and each patient has his or her own subtly different syndrome of a disease. The fact that people with fibromyalgia tend to have sometimes slightly or overtly differing symptoms from each other is no significant problem for homeopathic treatment. In fact, homeopathic treatment tends to be easier when patients have idiosyncratic or unusual symptoms.

The good news for fibromyalgia patients who receive homeopathic medicines is that these remedies are not known to cause direct drug interactions with any conventional drugs the patient may be taking. The pharmaceutical lobby decries homeopathy for its lack of effect: the problem for them is that if one unfathomable homeopathic treatment works, their argument is in tatters. Patients are also spared some of the conventional drug artillery used to limit symptoms. Further, because people with fibromyalgia tend to have distinct and unusual symptoms, this situation actually makes it easier for homeopaths to treat them successfully.

Other advantages homeopathy has over conventional drug therapies are lower cost and the avoidance of the usual GI, headache and CNS side effects as well as reactions that can be life threatening.

In addition to the scientific evidence for homeopathic treatment, surveys of people with fibromyalgia tend to show that homeopathic medicines is one of the more popular alternative treatments used by people suffering from this ailment.

Examples of Homeopathic Remedies that I have found helpful in treating clients who were experiencing fibromyalgia symptoms:

One client who described her pains as sore, bruised feeling. Her aches and pains were described as stiffness. She complained that when she would lie on her bed, she felt the bed was too hard. Her symptoms had started after a fall when she was riding a horse. Her symptoms were worse from touch, movement, and damp cold. She was better on waking up. I gave her **Arnica**. It was stopped when she noticed improvement. She has remained symptom free with needing to take a dose once every few months.

Another client who described her pains of fibromyalgia as aching, stitching, and tearing pains. She was worse with every movement, hot weather, and touch. She was better by lying still and resting. She loved pressure of deep massages. Her pain was worse by lying on painful side which was right side. She felt better with applying heat. I gave her **Bryonia** to be taken as one dose once a day. I asked her to stop the remedy when she noticed improvement and she restarts them when symptoms come back. I see her 4 times a year. She is doing well.

Another client described her pains as tearing, shooting pains in arms and legs. Her symptoms were brought on and made worse by cold damp conditions. She had noticed that her fibromyalgia pains would alternate with indigestion and at times with skin rashes. She felt better in warm and dry weather. She felt better when she was active and

moving. I gave her **Dulcamara** with instructions to take one dose once a day for 3 days. She has used the remedy once a month for 3 days and experiencing good health. She is still under supervision as of today.

Rhus toxicodendron : I have given Rhus tox, remedy par excellence for people who experience tearing pains with stiffness and rigidity. Their symptoms are worse by cold damp weather and after rain; and by resting. They feel better in warm dry weather, slow movement, changes of position and local warmth. Pain initially worse with movement, but improves when movement is continued, and reappears when overdone.

Ruta: Ruta is useful when ligaments are painful and tender. I have used it when clients had the sensation of stiffness and general aching which was worse after much effort; cold wet conditions, and lying down. Clients who need Ruta are better by movement - like Rhus toxicodendron. One client who did well with Ruta experienced restless leg syndrome. She was happy to have that symptom gone which led to a restful sleep.

Why choose homeopathic remedies over conventional Medications?

- With the emergence of new evidence indicating that Fibromyalgia is a chronic lifelong disease, there has been increasing emphasis on maintenance treatment to keep the person free of symptoms. This means one will be taking medications for their whole life to stay symptom free as conventional medications control the symptoms of Fibromyalgia. This means if you stopped taking your medication, symptoms may come back. As homeopathy will remove the root cause of the illness, you will experience freedom from pain and increased energy with few doses of the individualized homeopathic remedy. Over time, as your vital force gets stimulated and starts working for you, you may no longer need to continue taking the remedy.
- The reason for choosing homeopathic treatment is because it is natural, effective, and safe when properly used.
- Homeopathic remedies are inexpensive. The only significant cost of homeopathic treatment is office visits. Once the person has responded well to the homeopathic remedy, appointments are infrequent.
- Homeopathy treats the whole person. Not only do the Fibromyalgia symptoms improve, so do most or all of the other physical, mental and emotional complaints of the person. Conventional medications control the Fibromyalgia symptoms.
- Well-designed high quality scientific studies published in the *British Medical Journal* and in *Rheumatology* (the journal of the *British Society for Rheumatology*) have confirmed the real benefits of homeopathic medicines as distinct from a placebo.

Scientific Evidence for Homeopathy

The first controlled trial testing the homeopathic treatment of patients with fibromyalgia was an impressive and sophisticated double-blind "crossover" trial that was published in the prestigious *British Medical Journal* (Fisher et al, 1989). A crossover trial is a sophisticated method to test the efficacy of a treatment because each patient's results with the "real treatment" are compared with that same patient's results with a placebo. While most double-blind studies compare one group of people who receive the "real treatment" with another (hopefully similar) group of people who receive a placebo, crossover trials compare the results of each person and his/her response to real treatment with his/her response to placebo.

The researchers found a surprisingly high percentage of patients (42 percent) whose symptoms indicated a need for this medicine, ***Rhus toxicodendron* (Rhus tox)**.

After the researchers found 30 patients who seemed to fit the symptoms of *Rhus tox*, half of the subjects were given a placebo during the first half of the experiment, while the other half were given the homeopathic medicine. Then, halfway through the experiment, each subject's treatment was switched.

The researchers found that there was a **substantially significant degree of improvement in the reduction of tender points and improved pain and sleep when the subjects were taking the homeopathic medicine**, as compared to when these same subjects were taking a placebo. In other words, **twice as many people experienced significantly less pain or significantly improved sleep when they were taking the homeopathic medicine as compared to when they were taking the placebo.**

Iris Bell, M.D., Ph.D. and her colleagues at the University of Arizona School of Medicine conducted a study funded by National Institutes of Health which resulted in four articles published in peer-review medical journals (Bell et al, 2004a; Bell et al, 2004b; Bell et al, 2004c; Bell et al, 2004d). The primary clinical results from this study were published in the highly respected journal, *Rheumatology* (published by the British Society for Rheumatology), and it found statistically significant results from homeopathic treatment. This randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial with 62 fibromyalgia patients received an oral daily dose of an individually chosen homeopathic medicine (or a placebo) and were evaluated at baseline, two months and four months (Bell, et al, 2004a).

The study found that **50 percent of patients given a homeopathic medicine experienced a 25 percent or greater improvement in tender point pain on examination, whereas only 15 percent of those who were given a placebo experienced a similar degree of improvement.** After four months, the homeopathic patients also rated the **"helpfulness of the treatment" significantly greater than did those who were given a placebo.** It is therefore not surprising that the study also showed that the average number of remedies recommended by the homeopaths was substantially higher to those in the placebo group as compared with the real treatment group.

The body of scientific evidence showing efficacy of individualized homeopathic treatment in the care of patients with fibromyalgia suggests significant benefits. If you or someone near and dear to you has fibromyalgia, consider getting professional homeopathic care for both safe and effective treatment. Further, although fibromyalgia is not officially considered a type of arthritis, a review of homeopathic research found patients with this more common ailment also benefit from homeopathic treatment (Jonas, et al, 2000).

Sujata has been providing effective and natural classical homeopathic care for 20+ years at Vital Force Consulting, Inc. Northfield and can be reached at vfc@vitalforceconsulting.com.

THE WHOLENESS APPROACH

The sixteenth-century alchemist and physician Paracelsus was way ahead of his time in his belief in observation and research, and in taking an overall view of the patient, not just looking at the disease of symptoms. Holistic medicine accepts the intimate interrelation of parts of the body, and of body and mind. Today's wisdom tends to perceive us not as pure spirit inhabiting a machine-like body, nor as a set of merely physical function, but as an infinitely complex fusion of the two. "1001 Pearls of Wisdom" by David Ross

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