



Efficacy of Homoeopathy in Food Allergy

Dr. Hasti Dekivadiya

PG Scholar, Department of Practice of Medicine, Rajkot Homoeopathic Medical College, Parul University, Rajkot, Gujarat, India

ABSTRACT

Allergy, is one of four or more forms of hypersensitivity, manifesting in various forms like, Atopic eczema, Allergic urticaria, Allergic rhinitis, Allergic asthma, Food allergy, etc. The growing incidence of Food allergy requires attention as its burden is mainly on children and adolescents. Various factors has been attributed to the growing incidence of food allergy such as food habits, cooking habits, cultural differences and exchange of food products. In spite of diligent research worldwide, an effective mechanism to treat this condition has not been evolved till today. Since effectiveness of homeopathy has been proved in various allergy conditions. Even Homoeopathic literature contains details about the food aggravation but validation through Homoeopathic Medicines in this era will reciprocally benefits both homoeopathy as well as the food allergy patients.

Keywords: Allergy, urticaria, allergic rhinitis, homoeopathy, etc.

INTRODUCTION :-

According to Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID), USA the food allergy is “adverse health effect arising from a specific immune response that occurs reproducibly on exposure to a given food”.^[1] Many times food allergy and food intolerance word are used interchangeably but both are not same. A food allergy is caused by your immune system reacting to the food when it doesn't need to. And in food intolerance, your immune system isn't responsible. Most of the time it's a problem with digesting the food. Enzyme deficiency is responsible for the lack of tolerance causing certain food ingredients not to be degraded. The enzymatic defect can be either congenital or acquired in the course of life.^[2]

Though the food allergy is modern term, ancient literature describes lot about the effect of food on the human being. Hippocrates had also write about the food reactions. And ancient Ayurvedic literature specially charak samhita had mentioned VIRUDDHA AHARA. The terminology food allergy first used in 1906 by austrian pediatrician and scientist Clemens von Pirquet.

PREVELENC

Children are more prone to develop the food allergy especially in the first year of birth (5-8%) than the adults (1-2%). The World Allergy Organization(WAO) has estimated that 220 to 550 million people are suffering from food allergy. The highest prevalence of FA is reported from Australia and New Zealand. As per the CDC data, children are the highest victims of food allergy than the adult population without much variation in sex ratio. There is no concrete data available on food Allergy in India. Few clusterered data has been published on certain food items which caused allergy in indian population. And it says that rural population in India has reported a very low food allergy than the urbanized population.^[3]

RISK FACTORS

- Genetic predisposition : FA among the parents or siblings having food allergy history. Risk of allergy development in children of healthy parents ranges from 5% to 15%, when one of the parents is allergic, it increases to 40% and if both parents are sick, reaches 60-80%.
- Cooking methods
- Molecular characteristics of allergens
- Breastfeeding, which is the most natural and appropriate form of nutrition for infants, has been replaced with manufactured formulas full of proteins which can impose immunological reaction. Consumption of canned foods rich in additives and dissemination of new eating habits have contributed to the increase in the number of potential allergen.^[4]

FOOD ALLERGENS

Food Allergens may be divided into two groups:

- 1) resistant to heat and
- 2) non-resistant to heat.

- The former group of allergens is linked to the order of amino acids in the protein segment. This group includes peanut allergens, cod, milk lactoglobulin, all of which are resistant to heat and act even after cooking the product.

The latter group is associated with the spatial structure of the protein. The impact of high temperature causes changes in the three-dimensional structure of the protein, these allergens, predominantly fruits, vegetables or meat, often lose their sensitization by boiling, while they are still active in raw fruits and vegetables.

In 1995, experts of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) compiled a list consisting of eight groups of foods that cause most food allergies. A number of clinical experience from Europe and North America suggest that these eight groups of foodstuffs are responsible for about 90% of all food allergies. The main causes of protein allergies are milk, eggs, peanuts, other nuts, fish, shellfish, soy, cereals, sensitizing at different frequencies.

According to the literature, food allergies may increase as a result of the use of genetically modified products.^[5]

PATHOGENESIS

The mechanism of food allergy reaction covers all 4 types of the immune response of the classical division of Gell and Coombs. The percentage of the immune response was assessed by Chandra as follows: type I – 48%, type II – 6%, type III – 10%, and type IV – 18%. If the harmful food triggers the abnormal immune response by type I reaction, the IgE antibodies are involved, and the clinical symptoms occur soon after ingestion of food or within a short period of time.

When predisposed persons exposed to certain allergens, IgE antibodies specific for food are formed that bind to basophils, macrophages, mast cells, and dendritic cells on Fc epsilon receptors. Once food allergens enter the mucosal barriers and reach cell-bound IgE antibodies, these mediators are released and cause smooth muscle to contract, vasodilation, and mucus secretion, which result in symptoms of immediate hypersensitivity (allergy). Activated mast cells and macrophages that attract and activate eosinophils and lymphocytes release cytokines. This leads to prolonged inflammation.

- This reaction is called immediate (early), and because of the pathogenetic mechanisms – IgE-mediated

- Adverse food-induced immune response can be a sign of other pathogenic mechanisms of allergic reaction – II, III or IV type when T cells, IgG, IgM, IgA, and other immunologically competent cells are involved. Due to the pathogenic mechanism of these reactions, they are described as IgE-independent.^[6]

CLINICAL FEATURES

Food allergy can manifest a wide range of symptoms.

- oral pruritus,
- angioedema,
- abdominal pain,
- repeated vomiting,
- frequent diarrhoea
- Urticaria may be defined as the most common symptoms, which reveal an allergic reaction to food.
- Fatigue caused by allergies can be felt the most in the morning and right after getting out of bed, or late in the afternoon, when any kind of rest or its length does not bring relief.
- Pain, stiffness and muscle tearing of the shoulder, neck and back, which may occur with headache, may drag through the days and weeks.

Generally, there are two types of food allergy.

- The first type is characterized by immediate reaction, which is accompanied by symptoms occurring within a few minutes, or even seconds after consumption of the food, which is anaphylaxis (shock), urticaria, angioneurotic edema (skin swelling). Eggs, nuts, peanuts, fish and shellfish are often foods that often cause this type of allergy.

•The second type of food allergy is a late reaction, in which the symptom (fatigue, irritability, depression, hyperactivity, insomnia, headache, poor concentration, paleness, itching limbs, involuntary bedwetting, asthma, colds, indigestion, colic, diarrhoea, bloating and skin lesions) appear a few hours, and even a few days after food intake. Foods that cause this type of reaction are milk, chocolate, legumes, citrus and food additives. Because of this delay, it is difficult to determine what is the cause of food allergies.^[7]

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of FA is currently made through the conventional Skin Prick test (SPT) and serum-specific IgE testing (sIgE). But both these tests lack accuracy and do not predict the intensity of allergic reactions.

ROLE OF HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICINES

Homoeopathy is one of the modern and youngest medical sciences in the history of medicine. To develop Homoeopathy as a complete medical care facility, the nourishment of various branches of medicines through systematic research is imperative. Food allergy is one of the important therapeutic areas in homoeopathy which has very little been explored by the scientists or physicians. Prevention of tendency of food allergy is possible through the constitutional homeopathic medicine due to its ability to change the constitutional features of diseased individual. Similarly an allergy tendency (constitutional) can be removed or intensity can be reduced by inducing proper constitutional medicines.^[8]

This will effectively reduce the emergency admissions and mortality related to food allergy. As already mentioned, many skin complaints have strong association with food allergy. The similia concept of homoeopathy has an advantage when the “key note prescriptions” and prescriptions based on “uncommon peculiar characteristic symptoms” in a case of food allergy when a food item strongly induce the disease condition if no other visible causations prevail. Following are some homoeopathic medicines which can be used for specific FA’s as gathered from various homoeopathic literature.

- Beans and peas- Bryonia alba, Calcarea carbonica, Colocynthis, Lycopodium clavatum, Petroleum
- Bread - Antimonium crudum, Baryta carbonica, Bryonia alba, Hydrastis Canadensis, Lycopodium clavatum, Natrum muriaticum, Nitric acid, Nux Vomica, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Rhus toxicodendron, Sarsaparilla officinalis, Sepia succus, Sulphur, Veratrum album, Zincum metallicum
- Butter - Carbo vegetabilis, Ferrum metallicum, Phosphorus, Ptelea trifoliata, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Sepia
- Cabbage - Bryonia alba, China officinalis, Lycopodium clavatum, Magnesia carbonica, Natrum Sulphuricum, Petroleum, Pulsatilla nigricans
- Carrots - Lycopodium clavatum
- Chocolate - Borax veneta, Lithium carbonicum, Lycopodium clavatum, Pulsatilla nigricans
- Cucumber- Allium cepa, Ignatia amara, Natrum muriaticum, Rhus toxicodendron
- Eggs - Cocculus indicus, Ferrum metallicum, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Sulphur.
- Fruit - Aloe socotrina, Antimonium crudum, Antimonium tartaricum, Arsenicum album, Borax veneta, Bryonia alba, Calcarea phosphoric, Carbo vegetabilis, Causticum, China officinalis, Crinum arsenicosum, Cistus Canadensis, Croton tiglium, Ferrum Metallica, Ipecacuanha, Iris versicolor, Lycopodium clavatum, Magnesia muriaticum, Muriaticum acidum, Natrum Arsenicum, Natrum Sulphuricum, Oleander, Phosphoric acid, Psorinum, Rhododendron chrysanthum, Rumex, Selenium, Veratrum album
- Garlic – Phosphorus
- Milk- Tuberculinum, Silicea, Natrum carbonicum,^[9]
- Onions - Ignatia amara, Lycopodium clavatum, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Sulphur, Thuja occidentalis^[10]
- Oranges – Oleander
- Pastry - Antimonium crudum, Bryonia alba, Kali-carbonicum, Kali-chloricum, Lycopodium clavatum, Phosphorus, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Veratrum album
- Pears - Veratrum album
- Potatoes - Alumina, Alumen, Bryonia alba, Colocynthis, Natrum-sulphuricum, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Sepia succus, Silicea, Sulphur, Veratrum album.
- Rice - Ignatia amara
- Salads - Calcarea carbonica, Pulsatilla nigricans
- Sugar Argentum-nitricum, Calcarea carbonica, Mercurius solubilis, Selenium, Sulphur
- Sweets Antimonium crudum, Argentum-nitricum, Chamomilla, Graphites, Ignatia amara, Ipecacuanha, Mercurius solubilis, Natrum phosphoricum, Pulsatilla Nigricans, Selenium, Sulphur.^[11]

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