



Role of Obstacles to Cure in the Homoeopathic Management of Irritable Bowel Syndrome

¹ Dr. Javeeria Shazlee, ² Dr. Ravali Nalval

¹Associate Professor in dept; organon of Medicine and Homoeopathic Philosophy, Gurumishri Homoeopathic Medical College and Hospital and PG Institute, Shelgaon, Jalna

² PG Scholar, Department of Organon of Medicine and Homoeopathic Philosophy, Gurumishri Homoeopathic Medical College and Hospital and PG Institute, Shelgaon, Jalna

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.07.1026.3201>

ABSTRACT:

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common functional gastrointestinal disorder characterized by abdominal pain, bloating and altered bowel habits such as constipation, diarrhoea or both. It can adversely affect quality of life.

Homoeopathy emphasizes individualization and totality of symptoms. Identification and removal of obstacles to cure or maintaining causes, including dietary irregularities, addictions, stress, sedentary lifestyle and sleep disturbances, may be important in management.

This article discusses the role of obstacles to cure in the homoeopathic management of IBS. Assessment may include Rome III criteria, Bristol Stool Form Scale (BSFS), and ibs-sf36

Keywords: IBS, Homoeopathy, Obstacles to Cure, Maintaining Causes, Rome III, BSFS, IBS-SF-36.

Introduction

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common functional gastrointestinal disorder characterized by abdominal pain or discomfort with altered bowel habits, including constipation, diarrhoea, or both. Common symptoms include bloating, abdominal distension, flatulence, and altered stool consistency.

From a **homoeopathic perspective**, treatment is based on individualization and the totality of characteristic symptoms. **Obstacles to cure or maintaining causes**, such as dietary irregularities, unhealthy habits, lifestyle factors, and stress, may contribute to persistence of symptoms and should be identified and addressed.

Concept of Obstacles to Cure

H. A. Roberts further developed the concept of obstacles to cure by describing them as factors that interfere with the curative process. Obstacles may broadly be classified into:

1. Dietary factors

- Irregular meals
- Excessive spicy or junk food
- Excessive tea or coffee
- Overeating
- Low dietary fibre
- Excessive sweets and pastries

2. Lifestyle factors

- Lack of physical activity

- Prolonged sitting
- Irregular daily routine
- Inadequate sleep
- Occupational stress

3. Addictions

- Tobacco use
- Alcohol consumption
- Other habitual substance use

4. Psychological and emotional factors

- Anxiety
- Persistent worry
- Emotional stress
- Fear
- Grief and domestic difficulties

5. Drug-related factors

- Prolonged or inappropriate use of certain medications
- Excessive reliance on symptomatic treatment

The presence of one or more of these factors does not necessarily establish causation. Rather, they may act as maintaining or aggravating influences that should be identified during individual case assessment.

IBS and Maintaining Factors

IBS is particularly relevant to the concept of maintaining factors because symptoms may fluctuate in response to food, stress, sleep, physical activity and daily routine. Patients may report aggravation after certain foods, during periods of psychological stress, after inadequate sleep, or following changes in routine. Similarly, symptoms may improve with bowel evacuation, walking, physical activity, dietary modification or relaxation.

Therefore, assessment of the patient's daily habits and environmental influences can provide clinically useful information in addition to the characteristic symptoms required for individualization.

Homoeopathic Perspective in IBS

Homoeopathic case management emphasizes individualization. The diagnosis of IBS provides the clinical framework, while the characteristic symptoms of the individual patient are used to construct the totality.

The assessment may include:

- Location of symptoms
- Sensation and nature of abdominal discomfort
- Modalities
- Concomitant symptoms
- Stool characteristics
- Frequency of stool
- Mental and emotional symptoms
- Food and lifestyle factors
- Maintaining causes or obstacles to cure

The purpose of identifying an obstacle is not to replace individualized prescribing but to complement it. A suitable remedy may be selected according to the totality, while simultaneously addressing modifiable factors that continue to aggravate the condition.

The material reviewed also emphasizes the importance of understanding the patient's eating habits, physical activity, sleep, stress and addictive behaviours as part of a broader health assessment.

Psychosomatic and Emotional Aspects of IBS

The relationship between psychological factors and gastrointestinal symptoms is clinically important in IBS. Anxiety, worry, stress, and emotional disturbances may influence symptom perception and bowel function.

The provided literature discusses Hahnemann's observations regarding the relationship between mental and physical disorders and the importance of psychological and lifestyle factors in patient management. Consequently, the homoeopathic approach may include appropriate counselling, attention to diet and regimen, stress management, and identification of maintaining factors along with individualized prescribing.

Miasmatic Considerations.

Within the classical homoeopathic framework, miasmatic assessment may be incorporated into case analysis.

The material reviewed describes certain IBS manifestations under psoric and sycotic expressions. Abdominal distension, constipation and ineffectual urging are described as predominantly psoric features, while crampy or spasmodic abdominal discomfort, diarrhoea and exaggerated peristalsis are discussed under sycotic manifestations.

However, miasmatic assessment should remain individualized and should not be used as a substitute for clinical diagnosis or symptom-based case analysis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Type: Observational clinical study

Study Population: Adult patients diagnosed with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

Sample Size: 60 patients

Diagnostic Criteria: Rome III criteria

Assessment Tools: Bristol Stool Form Scale (BSFS) and IBS-SF-36

Diagnostic and Assessment Tools

Rome III Criteria: Rome III criteria are used for the diagnosis of IBS. The source specifies that symptoms should have an onset at least six months before diagnosis, with the diagnostic criteria fulfilled during the preceding three months.

The criteria help characterize the relationship between abdominal discomfort, defecation and altered bowel habits.

Patients should also be evaluated for warning signs or red flags.

Red-Flag Features

The source identifies:

- Iron-deficiency anaemia
- Rectal bleeding
- Fever
- Weight loss
- Family history of cancer
- Age above 50 years

The presence of such features requires appropriate medical evaluation rather than assuming uncomplicated IBS

Bristol Stool Form Scale

The **Bristol Stool Form Scale (BSFS)** is used to assess stool consistency.

The source describes IBS subtypes based on predominant stool patterns:

IBS with Constipation- Hard or lumpy stools in at least 25% of bowel movements and loose or watery stools in less than 25%.

IBS with Diarrhoea - Loose or watery stools in at least 25% of bowel movements and hard or lumpy stools in less than 25%.

Mixed IBS - Both hard/lumpy and loose/watery stools occur in at least 25% of bowel movements.

Unclassified IBS - Stool consistency does not meet the criteria for constipation-predominant, diarrhoea-predominant or mixed IBS.

The BSFS provides a standardized method of describing stool consistency. Types 1 and 2 represent harder stools and slower intestinal transit, whereas types 6 and 7 represent loose stools and faster transit.

IBS-36 as an Outcome Assessment Tool

The IBS-36 questionnaire is used as a secondary outcome assessment tool.

It evaluates multiple dimensions of life affected by IBS and includes eight domains:

1. Physical activity/function
2. Physical role
3. Pain
4. Emotional role
5. Energy/fatigue
6. Emotional well-being
7. Social activities
8. General health

The questionnaire contains 36 items. Responses are recorded on a seven-point Likert scale from 0 to 6. Question 18 is reverse-scored. The total possible score ranges from **0 to 216**.

The instrument is described in the source as having undergone evaluation for validity, reliability, reproducibility, and responsiveness.

These tools provide complementary information:

- **Rome criteria:** diagnostic assessment
- **BSFS:** stool consistency
- **IBS-36/IBS-SF-36:** quality-of-life assessment

Study Variables: Dietary factors, addictions, lifestyle, emotional stress, sleep disturbances and other maintaining causes

Intervention: Individualized homoeopathic treatment based on totality of symptoms

Follow-up: Regular clinical follow-up with pre- and post-treatment assessment

Outcome Assessment: Changes in IBS symptoms, bowel pattern and quality of life

Statistical Analysis: Paired *t*-test

HOMOEOPATHIC MANAGEMENT

Homoeopathic remedy Commonly described IBS symptom pattern

Nux vomica	Constipation, ineffectual urging, sedentary lifestyle, effects of stimulants/alcohol
Lycopodium	Bloating, abdominal distension, flatulence, constipation
Sulphur	Diarrhoea, urgency, morning aggravation, burning/anal irritation
Natrum muriaticum	Diarrhoea or constipation associated with emotional factors

Homoeopathic remedy Commonly described IBS symptom pattern

Argentum nitricum	Diarrhoea associated with anticipation/anxiety
Colocynthis	Severe cramping abdominal pain, often relieved by bending double or pressure
Pulsatilla	Digestive complaints associated with rich/fatty food; variable stool
Carbo vegetabilis	Marked bloating, flatulence and sluggish digestion
China officinalis	Abdominal distension and excessive flatulence
Mercurius solubilis	Diarrhoea with urgency, tenesmus and incomplete evacuation

Role of Lifestyle Modification

Lifestyle management is an important component of addressing maintaining factors.

- 1. Dietary Regulation**-Patients should be educated regarding appropriate dietary habits, regular meals and avoidance of individual dietary triggers.
- 2. Physical Activity**-A sedentary lifestyle may contribute to poor bowel regulation. Appropriate physical activity can therefore be encouraged according to the patient's condition.
- 3. Sleep Management**-Adequate and regular sleep should be encouraged.
- 4. Stress Management**-Stress, anxiety and emotional disturbances should be explored and appropriately addressed.
- 5. Avoidance of Addictions**-Smoking, alcohol and other harmful habits should be identified as potential maintaining factors.
- 6. Social and Occupational Factors**-The patient's occupational environment, socioeconomic circumstances and social relationships should be considered during case management.

Discussion

IBS is a multifactorial functional gastrointestinal disorder influenced by psychological and lifestyle factors. Homoeopathy emphasizes individualized assessment of the patient's complete symptom picture along with maintaining factors. Rome III criteria, BSFS and IBS-36 provide structured methods for assessing diagnosis, stool pattern and clinical outcomes.

As this is an observational approach, any association between removal of obstacles to cure and clinical improvement should be interpreted cautiously. The findings may provide useful observations and hypotheses for future controlled studies.

Conclusion-

Irritable Bowel Syndrome is a complex functional gastrointestinal disorder that affects bowel habits and quality of life. In homoeopathic management, identifying **obstacles to cure or maintaining causes** such as dietary irregularities, unhealthy habits, stress, sedentary lifestyle and other lifestyle factors may support better case management.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the management and faculty of the Department of Organon of Medicine and Homoeopathic Philosophy, and to the patients of Guru Mishri Homoeopathic Medical College and Hospital, Shelgoan, Jalna, for their valuable guidance and support in completing this article.

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