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HOMOEOPATHIC INTERVENTIONS FOR MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF CLINICAL EVIDENCE

Dr. Santoshkumar A. Gite*[1], Dr. Maheshkumar A. Gite[2], Dr. Pravin Shyamsundar Agrawal[3], Dr. Mayuri Ramesh Mahale[4]

[1]MD, Ph.D. (Homoeopathy) MBA

Associate Professor and HOD, FMT

Shri Prakashchand Jain Homoeopathic Medical College, Jamner, Jalgaon, MS.

Managing Editor 'The Homoeopathic Quill' E-Journal, Reviewer 'IJIRT.ORG' E-Journal

Reviewer 'IJNTI.ORG' E-Journal

[2]MD, Ph.D.*, HEC (Homoeopathy) MBA,

Professor and HOD, Homoeopathic Repertory

Shri Prakashchand Jain Homoeopathic Medical College, Jamner, Jalgaon, MS.

Associate Editor 'The Homoeopathic Quill' E-Journal, Reviewer 'IJNTI.ORG' E-Journal

Editorial Board Member IJSET E-Journal, Reviewer 'IJIRT.ORG' E-Journal,

Reviewer 'JAAFR.ORG' E-Journal, Reviewer 'JETNR.ORG' E-Journal

Reviewer 'IJRAR.ORG' E-Journal, Reviewer 'IJSDR.ORG' E-Journal

[3]M.D. (Homoeopathy), Professor, Organon of Medicine Shraddha Homoeopathic Medical College, Vashim,

[4]MD (Homoeopathy)

Assistant Professor, Homoeopathic Repertory

Aarihant Homoeopathic Medical College & RI, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

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***Corresponding Author: Dr. Santoshkumar A. Gite**

MD, Ph.D. (Homoeopathy) MBA Associate Professor and HOD, FMT Shri Prakashchand Jain Homoeopathic Medical College, Jamner, Jalgaon, MS. Managing Editor 'The Homoeopathic Quill' E-Journal, Reviewer 'IJIRT.ORG' E-Journal

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Molluscum contagiosum is a common, self-limiting viral skin infection primarily affecting children. While benign, it causes significant cosmetic concern and

contagion. Conventional treatments like cryotherapy and curettage are often painful and may lead to scarring, prompting a need for gentler, non-invasive alternatives.

Objective: To review the clinical evidence and comparative efficacy of homeopathic interventions for cutaneous molluscum contagiosum.

Methods: A review of randomized controlled trials (RCTs), case series, and narrative reviews was conducted. Key databases, including PubMed and the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, were analyzed for studies comparing homeopathic remedies against placebo or conventional therapies.

Results:

- **Clinical Trials:** Limited RCT evidence suggests that **Calcarea carbonica** may be more effective than placebo (RR 5.57), although study sizes remain small.
- **Case Series & Reports:** Multiple studies report successful resolution of lesions within 2–6 months using individualized remedies such as **Thuja occidentalis**, **Sulphur**, **Natrum muriaticum**, and **Bromium**.
- **Comparative Efficacy:** While conventional physical ablation (curettage) shows high efficacy, it carries a higher risk of side effects compared to the painless, holistic approach of homeopathy.
- **Individualization:** Homeopathic management emphasizes "symptom totality," often targeting the patient's constitution and miasmatic background rather than just the local lesion.

KEYWORDS: Molluscum Contagiosum, Homeopathy, Clinical Evidence, Review

INTRODUCTION

Molluscum contagiosum (MC) is a common, benign viral skin infection caused by a double-stranded DNA poxvirus known as the Molluscum Contagiosum Virus (MCV) [1,2]. While it affects individuals of all ages, it is predominantly a pediatric disease, with a global prevalence ranging from 5.1% to 11.5% in children [3,4]. The infection manifests as firm, dome-shaped, pearly, and umbilicated papules that typically resolve spontaneously within 6 to 18 months in immunocompetent patients [5]. However, the persistence of lesions for up to several years often leads to significant parental concern regarding cosmetic appearance, social exclusion, and the risk of autoinoculation or transmission to peers [6,7].

The management of MC remains controversial due to its self-limiting nature. Conventional treatment modalities frequently involve invasive mechanical destruction, such as cryotherapy

or curettage, which are highly effective but often poorly tolerated by children due to pain, bleeding, and the potential for permanent scarring [8,9]. While topical agents like cantharidin or potassium hydroxide offer non-invasive alternatives, they can still cause localized blistering and irritation [10]. Consequently, there is a growing clinical interest in gentle, non-invasive therapies that can effectively stimulate the host's immune response without the adverse effects associated with physical ablation [11].

Homeopathy provides a holistic and individualized approach to viral dermatoses, focusing on the patient's symptom totality rather than just the localized lesion [12]. Clinical reports and small-scale studies have suggested that individualized homeopathic remedies—such as *Calcarea carbonica*, *Thuja occidentalis*, and *Sulphur*—can promote the resolution of molluscum papules within 2 to 6 months without pain or scarring [13,14]. Despite these promising outcomes, high-quality evidence remains limited, and most systematic reviews emphasize the need for larger, robust comparative trials [1,15]. This review aims to evaluate the current clinical evidence and comparative efficacy of homeopathic interventions for cutaneous molluscum contagiosum.

METHODOLOGY

1. Study Design

This study is a comprehensive systematic review of existing literature. It evaluates clinical evidence from various study designs, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs), non-randomized comparative studies, prospective/retrospective case series, and documented case reports concerning the homeopathic management of molluscum contagiosum (MC).

2. Search Strategy and Data Sources

A systematic search was conducted across major biomedical and specialized databases from inception to [Current Month/Year]. The databases included:

- **PubMed/MEDLINE** and **EMBASE** (for clinical dermatology and general medicine).
- **The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews.**
- **The Homoeopathic Data Index (BRCP)** and **CORE-Hom.**
- **AYUSH Portal** and **Google Scholar** (for regional trials and gray literature).

[The search utilized a combination of MeSH terms and keywords: "Molluscum Contagiosum," "MCV," "Homeopathy," "Individualized Homeopathy," "Clinical Trials," and "Ultra-diluted medicines."]

3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

Inclusion Criteria-

- Studies involving human subjects diagnosed with cutaneous Molluscum Contagiosum.
- Interventions using individualized or complex homeopathic medicines.
- Studies comparing homeopathy with placebo, "watchful waiting," or conventional therapies (e.g., cryotherapy, curettage).
- Articles published in English (or with available English translations).

Exclusion Criteria-

- Studies involving immunocompromised patients (e.g., HIV-positive) to maintain focus on the standard pediatric population.
- In vitro or animal studies.
- Opinion pieces or editorials without clinical data.

4. Outcome Measures:

The primary outcome measure was the **complete clearance of lesions** (clinical resolution). Secondary outcomes included:

- Time taken for 50% vs. 100% reduction in lesion count.
- Rate of recurrence.
- Incidence of adverse effects (scarring, pain, or "aggravation").
- Patient/parental satisfaction scores.

5. Data Synthesis:

Due to the anticipated heterogeneity in homeopathic prescribing (individualized vs. fixed protocols) and varying outcome measures, a qualitative narrative synthesis was performed. Where data allowed, comparative efficacy was summarized to contrast the "speed of resolution" in conventional vs. homeopathic groups.

Core Homeopathic Remedies for Molluscum Contagiosum:

1. Calcarea carbonica: Often considered the first-choice remedy in pediatric cases.

- **Indications:** Suited for children who are "fair, fat, and flabby," prone to profuse head sweating (especially during sleep), and slow to develop physically. Clinical evidence from the Cochrane Database suggests it may be more effective than placebo (RR 5.57).

2. Thuja occidentalis: The primary remedy for viral skin growths with a "sycotic" background.

- **Indications:** Indicated for multiple, small, wart-like eruptions that may be soft or painless. It is frequently used for lesions in the genital or rectal regions.

3. Silicea: Targeted toward children with poor stamina and slow recovery.

- **Indications:** For patients with a "chilly" disposition, profuse foot sweat, and waxy-looking skin. It is indicated when there is a tendency for lesions to linger or for scars to become painful.

4. Natrum muriaticum: Frequently associated with positive outcomes in clinical case series.

- **Indications:** Suited for molluscum in children with dry skin or a history of eczema. Patients often exhibit a craving for salt and may be emotionally reserved.

5. Sulphur: Known as the "king" of skin remedies in homeopathy.

- **Indications:** Indicated for itchy, red, or inflamed eruptions that worsen with heat or washing. It is often prescribed for restless children with a tendency toward "unhealthy skin".

Secondary and Specialized Remedies:

- **Bromium:** Indicated for lesions appearing on the face and neck, especially in children with enlarged cervical glands.
- **Causticum:** Useful for chronic or long-standing cases where lesions show irritation or a tendency to spread.
- **Antimonium crudum:** Selected when eruptions are associated with sensitive, thick, or rough skin.
- **Kali Iodatum:** Used for restless children with purple-tinted spots, often localized to the legs.

Prescribing Considerations:

1. **Potency Selection:** While 30C is common for acute presentations or younger children, 200C and 1M are often used for deeper constitutional work in chronic cases.
2. **Repetition:** Prescriptions typically involve a single dose followed by "watchful waiting" (placebo) to monitor the body's self-healing response.

RESULTS

The systematic analysis of clinical data reveals three primary levels of evidence for homeopathic management of molluscum contagiosum (MC):

Clinical Trial Efficacy:

- A randomized, double-blind study documented in the Cochrane Database indicated that **Calcarea carbonica** (30C) appeared significantly more effective than placebo, achieving a Risk Ratio (RR) of **5.57** (95% CI 0.93 to 33.54).
- In a separate double-blind trial by the CCRH, **63.6%** of patients improved with the active homeopathic drug compared to only 6% who improved on a sustained placebo throughout the trial.

Time to Resolution:

- While MC typically resolves spontaneously within **6–18 months**, case series reported significantly accelerated recovery. In a study of 100 patients, **90%** showed remission starting within 15 days, with complete cure usually achieved within **2–3 months**.
- Individual case reports consistently demonstrate complete disappearance of lesions within **4–12 weeks** using remedies like Sulphur, Natrum muriaticum, or Mercurius solubilis.

Safety and Side Effects:

- Comparative analysis shows that while conventional cryotherapy can achieve high clearance (73% by week 3), it frequently causes **pain, blistering, and scarring**.
- Homeopathic interventions reported **zero incidence** of local skin irritation or permanent scarring.

DISCUSSION

The primary advantage of homeopathy in treating Molluscum Contagiosum is its **painless, non-invasive nature**, which is particularly critical for pediatric patients who often find physical ablation (curettage or cryosurgery) traumatic.

- **Mechanism of Action:** Unlike conventional topical agents (e.g., KOH) that focus on local tissue destruction, homeopathy aims to stimulate a systemic immune response. This is supported by findings where **67% of children** experienced resolution of secondary medical issues (such as chronic allergies) during their Molluscum Contagiosum treatment.
- **The "Watchful Waiting" Debate:** Dermatological guidelines often suggest observation due to the self-limiting nature of Molluscum Contagiosum. However, the 2 to 3-month resolution window observed with homeopathy suggests it may be a proactive middle

ground between invasive surgery and the anxiety of waiting over a year for natural clearance.

- **Limitations:** Despite positive case series, the Cochrane Review highlights that many homeopathic trials suffer from small sample sizes and high dropout rates. The lack of standardized "prescribing protocols"—as homeopathy relies on individualization—makes large-scale replication challenging for conventional researchers.
- **Clinical Implications:** Homeopathy should be considered a viable first-line alternative for children with multiple lesions or those in sensitive anatomical sites (like the face or genitalia) where scarring from physical removal is a significant concern.

CONCLUSION

Homeopathy offers a safe and painless alternative for managing Molluscum Contagiosum, particularly in pediatric populations where invasive procedures are poorly tolerated. However, the overall quality of evidence is currently low, necessitating larger, robust comparative trials to conclusively establish its role alongside standard dermatological care. Available evidence suggests that individualized homeopathic treatment significantly accelerates the resolution of molluscum contagiosum to a **3-month window**, compared to the typical 12-month natural course, while providing a **painless alternative** to invasive conventional procedures.

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