Pneumonia: Salient Points to Remember & Role of Homeopathy in Pneumonia

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On The Occasion of World Pneumonia Day

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Global Burden
As per World Health Organization, “Pneumonia is one of the most solvable problems in global health and yet a child dies from the infection every 20 seconds.”

The global burden of Pneumonia is noteworthy:

- It is a leading cause of death for children under the age of five years around the world.
- Pneumonia is the single largest infectious cause of death in children worldwide. Pneumonia accounts for 16% of all deaths of children under 5 years old, killing 920,136 children in 2015. (WHO report)
- India, Indonesia, Chad, China and Somalia are amongst those countries with highest burden of this disease.
- It is because of pneumonia and diarrhoea that India is placed amongst the list of top 15 nations fighting with these diseases.
- One third of the pneumonia population worldwide doesn’t get sufficient treatment.
- Even if the treatment is given, it doesn’t guarantee the complete survival from pneumonia. In United States alone, 20% of all hospitalized pneumonia patients die every year.
Pneumonia

Pneumonia is one of the commonest infectious disease which may be caused due to bacteria (most commonly by Streptococcus pneumoniae), virus, fungi etc. leading to inflammation of the airspaces in lungs. The alveoli and bronchioles are infiltrated with white blood cells and fibrinous exudates.

- It can be a presented as mild form or as a life threatening disease depending upon the immunity of the patient.
- It can be transmitted via air-borne route (cough and sneeze) or via blood transmission.

Symptoms

Pneumonia is inflammation of the alveoli (air sacs) of the lungs, the following symptoms are commonly present in varying degrees:

- High fever with chills (shivering)
- Cough – may be dry or productive (green, yellow, brown or blood stained)
- Difficulty in breathing – fasting breathing with lower chest wall in-drawing in children.
- Chest pain
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea
- Loss of appetite
- Increased perspiration
- Increased heart rate
- Excessive fatigue
- Confusion or disorientation to surroundings
- Wheezing
• Headache
• Joint and muscle pains
• Unconsciousness, hypothermia and convulsions: especially in severely ill infants or old age patients.
• Etc.

**Risk Factors**

It is true for every disease including Pneumonia – the interaction of host and environment. Pneumonia only attacks when there is a weakened immune system. This condition commonly affects:

• Children under 5 years of age.
• Malnutrition or undernourished children.
• Severely ill patients.
• Patients with other chronic illnesses.
• Immuno-compromised patients such as HIV+/AIDS.
• Excessive exposure to infection such as indoor air pollution, crowded homes/schools/societies, parental smoking etc.

*Pneumonia may be Hospital Acquired or Community Acquired*
Diagnosis
The symptoms of pneumonia, if mild, are liable to be ignored and thus misdiagnosis is very common. It is only when symptoms are severe since beginning and/or prolonged, the correct diagnosis is made. The diagnosis of Pneumonia is pretty simple and can be arrived by following tests:

- **Clinical examination** may yield hyperthermia or hypothermia; Tachypnea (>18 respirations/min); use of accessory respiratory muscles; tachycardia or bradycardia; central cyanosis; altered mental status
- **Physical examination** may yield adventitious breath sounds (rales/crackles, rhonchi, or wheezes); decreased intensity of breath sounds; dullness to percussion; tracheal deviation; lymphadenopathy; pleural friction rub etc.
- **Complete blood count**
- **X ray Chest** (lung consolidation)
- **Sputum test**, if required to see bacterial presence and growth.
- There may be specialized and other investigations if the symptoms are complex and prolonged.

Conventional Treatment
The conventional treatment of Pneumonia includes antibiotics, but in cases of pneumonia with viral pathology, the treatment becomes a challenge.

Complications
There may be mild to severe complications of Pneumonia such as pleural effusion and sepsis. The complication may be life threatening and therefore, timely treatment and management is necessary.
Management

The management of Pneumonia (adopted from WHO) has three thumb rules:

- **Protect:** Every possible measure must be adopted to protect an individual (especially children) for protection against Pneumonia such as adequate nutrition, healthy lifestyle, exercise etc.

- **Prevent:** Prevention is better than cure. Every measure must be taken to prevent Pneumonia spread such as less exposure to risk factors (e.g. indoor air pollution, crowded places), hand washing, etc.

- **Treat:** Every Pneumonia case must have access to the right treatment. We must encourage early detection and timely treatment of Pneumonia.

Role of Homeopathy in Pneumonia

Homeopathy heals holistically!

- Homeopathy stimulates body’s natural immune system to tackle with infectious diseases such as Pneumonia.

- In Pneumonia the infection arises of lowered immunity, immunocompromisation or increased burden of disease. Homeopathy acts on each and every level to ensure protection from pneumonia. Therefore, Homeopathy acts to:
  - Reduce disease burden.
  - Improves immunity.
  - Have no side or residual effects.

- Since it is an acute and self-limiting infection, the treatment of pneumonia is symptomatic and conservative.

- Homeopathy is safe and effective for every age group and therefore, can be given to infants or severely ill patients with ease.

- Homeopathic medicines can be taken safely along with other/conventional medications (ADD-ON Therapy) for quick recovery and no side effects.

- All symptoms are observed and noted to form a drug picture of the patient. This includes in-depth details of presenting complaints as well as non-specific symptoms.
The homeopathic treatment of pneumonia is divided into three major parts:

- **Mild form (detected early with minimal to moderate symptoms):** Constitutional treatment and/or specific medicines are used to control the disease; the disease duration is shortened with complete recovery.

- **Severe form (moderate to severe symptoms):** Specific homeopathic medicines are used frequently to control fever and to prevent complications. In such cases aid of conventional measures and treatments are advisable. A close monitoring is required to ensure no complications.

- **Pneumonia in immuno-compromised patients:** These cases are dealt with homeopathy as Add-on therapy. Specific medicines are repeated too often along with general management and conventional treatments. The major aim is to decrease the disease burden and to improve quality of life.

In addition to constitutional or individualized medicines the following specific medicines are used frequently in homeopathy for Pneumonia:

- Aconite
- Ammonium carb.
- Ammonium iodatum
- Antimonium arsenicosum
- Antimonium sulph
- Antim tart.
- Arsenicum iodatum
- Bryonia
- Calcarea iodatum
- Carbo veg
- Digitalis
- Ferrum phos
- Iodium
- Ipecac
- Kali carb.
- Kali iod.
- Phosphorus
- Silica
- Squilla
- Sulphur
- Veratrum viride
- Etc.
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