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Down Syndrome and Role of Homeopathy



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 **World
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Contributors



Dr. Saurav Arora

BHMS (Gold Medalist), Founder: Vivid Homeopathy



Dr. Bharti Arora

MD (Hom.), BHMS (Silver Medalist), Co-Founder: Vivid Homeopathy

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Down syndrome

Also known as trisomy 21 (presence of a copy of the third chromosome), it represents an incurable, one of the most common genetic alterations, reflected through variable learning disabilities and certain physical characteristics. The term was coined by John Langon Down in 1866 and the cause (extra chromosome) was identified in 1959.

In developing countries and where prenatal screening is not carried, it is usually diagnosed after childbirth. However, prenatal screening can also help us in detecting the trisomy 21 or Down syndrome, if found suspected, further tests are advised to find the risk of developing Down syndrome. The Down syndrome child is usually born to genetically normal parents, and no clear mechanism has been found out to explain the presence of three chromosomes in genes in place of two.

Presentation

Individuals with Down syndrome have characteristic physical and intellectual variations. But the most common struggling issues with which they suffer are:

1. Poor immune function
2. Delayed milestones
3. Increased risk of a number of health problems like autoimmune diseases, heart problems, hypothyroidism, epilepsy, blood disorders and mental disorders, etc.

Characteristics

The characteristics of Down syndrome present variably in each and every case. The prominent and common characteristics may be:

- Mental impairment
- Stunted growth (short stature)
- Slanted eyes
- Abnormal teeth
- Shortened hands
- Short neck
- Protruding tongue
- Proportionally large tongue
- Flathead
- Abnormal outer ears
- Flexible ligaments
- Extra space between big toe and second toe
- Low muscle tone
- Obstructive sleep apnea
- The narrow roof of the mouth
- Bent fifth fingertip
- Single transverse palmar crease

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- Flattened nose
- Strabismus
- Separation of first and second toes
- Etc.

These characteristics are commonly associated with other anomalies like hypothyroidism, congenital heart disease, autoimmunity, epilepsy etc.

The intelligence quotient (IQ) may vary from person to person. It may be good, poor or low depending upon the presentation thus the neurological disability may be mild, moderate or poor respectively.

In Down syndrome, an individual usually has better understanding skills rather than speech skills, due to which he may do fairly well in society and improve their social skills over the time, but as there may be vocal impairment the coordination and active communication may become troublesome.

The behaviour problems are not as great as other neurological disorders, however, mental illness and autism occur in a fairly good number of individuals. Since, a neurological as well psychological disturbance depends upon genetics, environment, and learnings, Down syndrome individual may develop some symptoms when they approach adulthood because by that time they are active interaction with the society and are exposed actively to social environment.

How to Diagnose?

The diagnosis can be pre-birth and post-birth. If a pregnant female is suspected to have trisomy 21 (on ultrasound or blood tests), invasive diagnostic tests like amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling are performed. But these techniques usually have some false positive reporting and an increased risk of miscarriage, therefore, the diagnosis is not simple during pregnancy. When found positive the rate of elected abortion varies widely.

Diagnosis at birth can also be suspected on the basis of the physical appearance of the new-born. When suspected chromosome mapping is may be advised.

Aim of treatment

- ✓ The aim of treatment is improving the quality of life and intellectual capabilities of the individual, and decreasing the incurable disease burden.
- ✓ It is seen that not every child needs special school, but every child needs special attention.

Management

Management of Down syndrome is a relative term. The management has certain goals which can be enlisted as:

Educate: The education plays an important role in understanding the pathophysiology of Down syndrome and thus it can prepare an individual, parent or a guardian to accept the reality. A well-educated parent, guardian and an individual know the limits and treatability of the case. Education programs not only aim at imparting short-term knowledge but regularly sensitizing regarding various important aspects of Down syndrome.

Treat – **M**anage: In Down syndrome, along with the characteristic features, there are certain conditions which can be treated medically and with the aid of therapies. For example,

- ✓ Milestones achievement may be improved.
- ✓ Immunity may be strengthened so that the individual is less exposed to disease burden.
- ✓ Acute conditions can be treated satisfactorily.
- ✓ Chronic conditions are treated holistically.
- ✓ Behavioral and mental illnesses can be resolved with the help of right medications.

It is recommended that early screening and apt therapy helps a child to grow at a satisfactory pace. Therapies like speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, etc. must be adopted at right time.

Screen: The most important aspect always remains alertness. The more alert an individual is, easier things can go. Down syndrome individuals must be screened for all possible alterations in health at regular intervals of time. For example, starting from the birth the screening schedule may be:

- ✓ Screening for autoimmune disorders like:
 - Thyroid function tests at birth and if normal once in a year.
 - Coeliac disease at 2 – 3 years of age or earlier if the symptoms occur.
 - Diabetes at 4 – 5 years of age and then routine blood sugar levels annually.
 - Alopecia areata – parents need to closely examine any usual or abrupt hair loss.
- ✓ Screening for congenital heart diseases at birth.
- ✓ Ultrasonography at birth.
- ✓ Hearing test at 6 months and then annually.
- ✓ Routine eye examination annually.
- ✓ Sleep study if the symptoms of sleep apnea occur.
- ✓ X-ray neck between 3 – 5 years of age.
- ✓ GENERAL PHYSICAL EXAMINATION annually.

Follow: Follow the footsteps. A doctor's/physician/therapist advice is to be followed regularly to counter the Down syndrome effects on life.

Differentiate: A very important aspect of Down syndrome is the differentiation from other neurological/psychological conditions. As an individual with this condition may have other co-morbid similar conditions, the responsibility lies in the identification and right treatment of the condition. For example, if a child is suffering from autism and depression, it is advisable to treat that condition first.

“Access to a good healthcare is a fundamental right of everyone.”



Self Help – Support Groups

The concept of self-help and support group has boomed with the increasing awareness regarding Down syndrome. These groups aim at exchanging knowledge and ideas to deal with Down syndrome and to live a better life. Broadly, we can extract that groups:

- ✓ Gives access to the exchange of knowledge regarding the disease.
- ✓ Platform for discussions amongst peers.
- ✓ Common home-based therapeutic tips for minor ailments.
- ✓ Counselling related to education, work, health and social interactions.
- ✓ Job opportunities. Employee – Employer interaction.
- ✓ Schooling tips – strategies to deal with individuals especially kids.
- ✓ How to channelize burden of parents to raise their kids.
- ✓ Improving cognitive capabilities – sign language, reading skills, speech etc.
- ✓ Mutual respect and acceptance.



Organizations

Below are some of the organization for Down syndrome help groups:

Location	Organization	Website
India	Down syndrome federation of India	www.downsyndrome.in
India	Nayi Disha	www.nayi-disha.org
India	Parents of Down syndrome	www.podsindia.org
United Kingdom	Down's syndrome Association: A registered charity no. 1061474	www.downs-syndrome.org.uk
United Kingdom	Mencap: The voice of learning disability	www.mencap.org.uk
USA	Global Down syndrome Foundation	www.globaldownsyndrome.org
USA	National Down syndrome Society	www.ndss.org
USA	National Association for Down syndrome	www.nads.org

*Please check the credentials of an organization before visiting their website or office. Not related to Vivid Homeopathy in any form.



Some Important Points

- Down syndrome is a genetic anomaly and not a disability.
- An individual with Down syndrome deserve equal respect and position in the society
- It is our responsibility to teach society the right perspective to Down syndrome. Therefore, “Each one – Teach one” concept needs to be applied.

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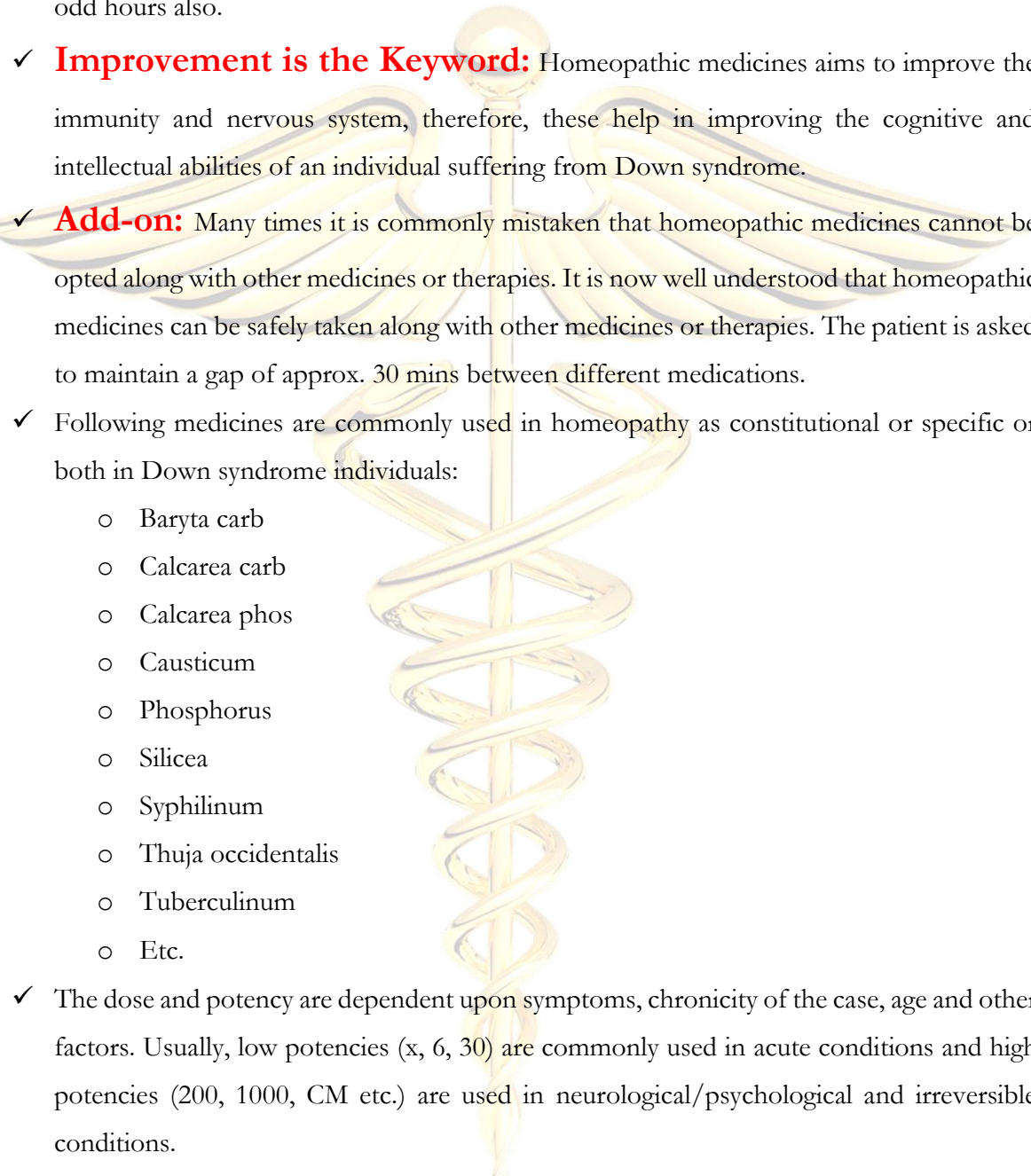
- There are many medical conditions associated with Down syndrome which can be treated successfully with medical interventions.
- If we come across any self-help group it is our responsibility to support them in our own way.



Role of Homeopathy in Down syndrome

Homeopathy heals holistically!

- ✓ **Identify the Cause:** In the homeopathic system of medicine, the prime importance is given to the underlying cause of the dis-ease, symptoms and signs. Through a holistic approach, the aim is to find out the deviations from health. As in case of Down syndrome, because of presence of extra gene, the characteristic physical and mental symptoms appear. Now, this genetic make-up can't be altered but the expressions can! The identification of dynamic cause can be of great help. Homeopathically in such cases, the prenatal and family history is very important. There are many medicines in homeopathy which are prescribed according to the pre-natal, natal, past and family history. Therefore, if your homeopath asks you in-depth questions you should provide the best information to your knowledge.
- ✓ **Constitutional – Individualized Medicine:** The term constitutional and individualized medicines are commonly used in homeopathy. The aim of constitutional treatment is to find out the best possible individualized remedy for a case. The aim of such treatment is to improve the immune system as a whole so that a person with Down syndrome doesn't catch the infection, allergies and other diseases easily and also the recurrent tendency to a particular disease can also be reduced.
- ✓ **Acute – Chronic Diseases:** In Down syndrome, there may be acute diseases, acute exacerbation of chronic disease and recurrent presentation of chronic diseases. Therefore, if we study the in-depth of a case we know the difference between an acute condition and acute presentation of a chronic disease.
- ✓ **Treat – Manage – Palliate:** This concept is very easy to understand. With a thorough knowledge of disease and homeopathy we categorize patients according to treatable, manageable and cases where palliation is the only option categories. For example, recurrent tendency to catch a cough and cold is treatable, delayed milestones can be treated to some extent, coeliac disease can only be managed and cretinism needs only replacement therapy (palliation).

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- ✓ **First – Aid Kit:** Likewise the educative material, individuals, parents and guardians can keep a homeopathic first aid kit at their home to treat the minor symptoms and ailments homeopathically. The homeopathic medicines are safe, effective, affordable and easier to administer. Therefore, these kits can be used in consultation with the physician at odd hours also.
 - ✓ **Improvement is the Keyword:** Homeopathic medicines aims to improve the immunity and nervous system, therefore, these help in improving the cognitive and intellectual abilities of an individual suffering from Down syndrome.
 - ✓ **Add-on:** Many times it is commonly mistaken that homeopathic medicines cannot be opted along with other medicines or therapies. It is now well understood that homeopathic medicines can be safely taken along with other medicines or therapies. The patient is asked to maintain a gap of approx. 30 mins between different medications.
 - ✓ Following medicines are commonly used in homeopathy as constitutional or specific or both in Down syndrome individuals:
 - Baryta carb
 - Calcarea carb
 - Calcarea phos
 - Causticum
 - Phosphorus
 - Silicea
 - Syphilinum
 - Thuja occidentalis
 - Tuberculinum
 - Etc.
 - ✓ The dose and potency are dependent upon symptoms, chronicity of the case, age and other factors. Usually, low potencies (x, 6, 30) are commonly used in acute conditions and high potencies (200, 1000, CM etc.) are used in neurological/psychological and irreversible conditions.
 - ✓ There are also few homeopathic remedies called as nosodes which are used as intercurrent remedies to improve the immunity.



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