

Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis and Its Management with Homoeopathy

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Abstract

Juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) unifies all forms of chronic childhood arthritis, affecting not only joints, but extra-articular structures, including eyes, skin, and internal organs, leading to disability and even associated fatality. It is defined as the presence of arthritis of unknown aetiology that begins before the age of 16 and persists for at least 6 weeks.¹

The International League of Associations for Rheumatology (ILAR) stratifies subtype of autoimmune inflammatory disorders, determined by the number of joints affected, the presence of systemic symptoms and detection of rheumatoid factor (RF). JIA is divided into the sub-forms: oligoarticular (persistent or extended), polyarticular (RF-negative or RF-positive), systemic (sJIA), psoriatic arthritis and enthesitis-related arthritis, with each differing in genetic susceptibility and severity of arthritis.¹

Keywords: Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis, Homoeopathy, Management.

1. Introduction

Juvenile Idiopathic arthritis (JIA) or Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA) is one of the most common rheumatic diseases of children and a major cause of chronic disability. It is characterized by an idiopathic synovitis of the peripheral joints, associated with soft tissue swelling and effusion.²

The etiology of the diseases classified under JRA is unknown. At least two events are considered necessary: immunogenetic susceptibility and an external, presumably environmental, trigger. Specific HLA subtypes have been identified as rendering children at risk, which may confer varying degrees of susceptibility, or indeed protection, depending on the age of the child. Possible external triggers for JRA include certain viruses (e.g., parvovirus B19, rubella, Epstein-Barr virus), host hyperreactivity to specific self-antigens (type II collagen), and enhanced T-cell reactivity to bacterial or mycobacterial heat shock proteins.²

According to Hahnemann, the miasmatic infection causes local symptoms, usually in the skin, and if these are suppressed by external medication, the hidden cause goes deeper, and manifests itself later as - Organ Pathologies.³

Chronic, inflammatory, systemic disease which may cause joint or connective tissue damage & visceral lesions throughout the body characterised by fever, rash, hepato-splenomegaly & arthritis in children.⁴ It is a **persistent inflammatory arthritis** (> 6 weeks) that begins **before age 16** for which no specific cause can be found.⁴

Aetiology:

- Exact cause is unknown
- Evidence points to autoimmune aetiology
- Associated with physical or emotional stress
- Age: Under 16 years of age
- Sex: Common in girls⁴

Role of Homeopathy:

Homeopathy shows the most promising results in juvenile rheumatoid arthritis cases. These medicines are natural and therefore, safe from any adverse side effects and can be given to young children. They help relieve symptoms of pain, swelling and joint stiffness in a most effective manner. The ideal medicine is selected based on the symptom presentation in each case. This follows an in-depth discussion, study, and analysis of symptoms. Some prominently indicated medicines for juvenile rheumatoid arthritis are described below.⁵

Abrotanum

- This a very valuable remedy should be more frequently used. It is indicated in such conditions as are cured by *Bryonia* and *Rhus tox.*, but its symptoms mark out its own individual cases.
- Rheumatic conditions with heart irritation; epistaxis; bloody urine; anxiety and trembling, when there has been a history of diarrhoea. A suddenly checked diarrhoea will be followed by violent cardiac symptoms; it is much like *Ledum*, *Aurum* and *Kalmia*.⁶
- Inability to move. Marasmus of lower extremities only. Soreness and lameness, worse mornings.⁴
- Gout in wrists and ankles. Inflammatory rheumatism before swelling begins. Marasmus of children with marked emaciation, especially of leg, the skin is flabby and hangs loose in folds⁴

Aconitum Napellus

- Arthritic and rheumatic drawing and tearing pains, especially in the limbs. Acute and violent pulling in the joints and the bones, mitigated by the heat of a bed⁴
- Shooting, or rheumatic pains, which are reproduced by wine or other stimulants.-Sufferings which, particularly at night, seem unbearable, and which generally disappear in a sitting posture. Rapid and general decay of strength. Fainting, esp. when rising, with paleness of the cheeks, which were red when lying. Attacks of fainting, chiefly on rising from a recumbent posture, and sometimes with congestion of blood in the head, buzzing in the ears, deadly paleness of countenance, and shuddering.⁷
- Contraction of the tendons, and stiffness in the flexor muscles of the limbs.⁴
- Cramp-like contraction of several limbs.⁴
- Aconite is generally indicated in acute or recent cases occurring in young persons, especially girls of a full, plethoric habit who lead a sedentary life; persons easily affected by atmospheric changes; dark hair and eyes, rigid muscular fibre.⁴

Apis Mel

- Oedematous. Synovitis. Felon in beginning. Knee swollen, shiny, sensitive, sore, with stinging pain. Feet swollen and stiff.⁴
- Feel too large. Rheumatic pain in back and limbs.⁴
- Tired, bruised feeling. Numbness of hands and tips of fingers. Hives with intolerable itching. Oedematous swellings.⁴

- Adapted to the strumous constitution; glands enlarged, indurated; scirrhus or open cancer. Women, especially widows; children and girls who, though generally careful, become awkward, and let things fall while handling them.⁴

Arsenicum album

- From the time of Hahnemann to the present day Arsenicum has been one of the most frequently indicated medicines, and one of the most extensively used. In the Old School it is most extensively abused, in the form of Fowler's solution.
- Arsenic affects every part of man; it seems to exaggerate or depress almost all his faculties, to excite or disturb all his functions. When all our medicines have been as well proved we will effect wonderful cures. It is a substance easily proved because of its active nature, and from its very abuse we have learned much of its general nature.
- While Arsenic impresses the whole economy and disturbs all the functions and tissues of man, there are certain prevailing and striking features in it.
- Striking features: *Anxiety, restlessness, prostration, burning* and *cadaveric odors* are prominent characteristics.⁶
- Acute drawing pains in the arms and in the hands. Swelling of the arms, with blackish pustules of a putrid smell. Acute drawing pains in the night, beginning from the elbow and extending to the arm-pits acute pulling and shooting in the wrists. Cramps in the fingers⁴
- At night, sensation of fullness and swelling in the palms of the hands. Excoriation between fingers. Hard swelling of the fingers, with pain in the finger-bones⁴
- Cramp in the legs. Acute drawing pains in the hips, extending to the groins, the thighs, and sometimes even to the ankle-bones, with uneasiness, which obliges one to move the limb constantly. Tearing and stinging in the hips, legs, and loins.⁴
- Tearing in the tibia. Rheumatic pain in the legs, and especially in the tibia. Paralytic weakness of the thigh. Pain, as from a bruise in the joint of the knee. Affections of the shin-bones. Fatigue in the legs and in the feet. Pains in the fleshy part of the toes, as if they were galled by walking.⁴

Belladonna

- Pains in the joints and bones. Rheumatic pains (in the joints) flying from one place to another. The pains are aggravated, chiefly at night, and in the afternoon towards three or four o'clock.⁴
- It has a marked action on the vascular system, skin and glands. Belladonna always is associated with hot, red skin, flushed face, glaring eyes, throbbing carotids, excited mental state, hyperæsthesia of all senses, delirium, restless sleep, convulsive movements, dryness of mouth and throat with aversion to water, *neuralgic pains* that come and go suddenly (*Oxytropis*). *Heat, redness, throbbing and burning. Great children's remedy.* Epileptic spasms followed by nausea and vomiting. *Scarlet fever* and also prophylactic.⁶

Bryonia

- Knees stiff and painful. Hot swelling of feet. *Joints red, swollen, hot*, with stitches and tearing; worse on least movement. Every spot is painful on pressure. Constant motion of left arm and leg (*Helleb*).⁸
- Over-sensitiveness of the senses to external impressions. Rheumatic and gouty pains in the limbs, with tension, worse from motion and contact. Tension, drawing pains, acute pullings and shootings, especially in the limbs, and chiefly during movement, with insupportable pains on being touched, sweat of the part affected, and trembling of that part when the pains diminish.⁴

Calcarea Carbonica

- Sudden weakness of arms, as if paralysed. Arthritic nodes on wrist and finger joints. Sweaty hands. Deadness of hands and fingers. Fingers tips are thick and swelled.⁹
- Heaviness of legs. Children are slow in learning to walk. Swelling of knees, with stitches. Tension in legs, especially from knees to toes. Inflammatory swelling and ulcers on lower leg. Profuse foot sweat. Coldness and insensibility of feet in evening.⁹

Medorrhinum

- Pain in back between scapulae; whole length of spine sore to touch (Chin. s.). Intense burning heat, beginning in nape of neck and extending down spine, with a contractive stiffness, < by stretching. Rheumatism of top of shoulder and arm; pains extend to fingers, < by motion (right, Sang. - left, Fer.). Lumber vertebrae painful and sensitive to touch.
- Pain in sacrum, coccyx, and back of hips running around and down limbs.¹⁰
- Pains in legs, from hips to knees; only when walking. Heaviness of legs, feel like lead; walking very difficult, legs are so heavy, legs give way. Lower limbs ache all night, preventing sleep. Intensely restless and fidgety legs and feet (Zinc.). Terrible suffering in legs and arms during an electrical storm.¹⁰
- Aching in legs, with inability to keep them still in bed, < when giving up control of himself, when relaxing, in trying to sleep. Coldness of legs and feet; of hands and forearms.¹⁰
- Drawing, contracting sensation in hamstrings and ankles; cramps in calves and soles (Cup.). Ankles easily turn when walking (Carbo an., Led.).¹⁰
- Burning of hands and feet, wants them uncovered and fanned (Lach., Sulph.). Almost entire loss of nervous force in legs and arms; exhausted by slightest effort. Painful stiffness of every joint in body. Deformity of finger joints; large, puffy, knuckles; swelling and painful stiffness of ankles; great tenderness of heels and balls of feet; swellings of all joints are puffy, like windgalls.¹⁰

Rhus tox

- Hot, painful swelling of joints. PAINS TEARING IN TENDONS, LIGAMENTS AND FASCIAE. Rheumatic pains spread over a large surface at nape of neck, loins, and extremities; better motion.⁴
- Soreness of bones. LIMBS STIFF, PARALYZED
- THE COLD FRESH AIR IS NOT TOLERATED; IT MAKES THE SKIN PAINFUL
- Tenderness about knee-joint. Loss of power in forearm and fingers; crawling sensation in the tips of fingers. Tingling in feet.⁴
- Adapted to persons of rheumatic diathesis; bad effects of getting wet, especially after being overheated.⁴

Conclusion

- Systemic onset juvenile idiopathic arthritis (also known as Systemic juvenile idiopathic arthritis (sJIA) is a type of juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) with extra-articular manifestations like fever and rash apart from arthritis. It was originally called systemic onset juvenile rheumatoid arthritis or Still's disease.⁴
- Predominantly extra-articular manifestations like high fevers, rheumatic rash, enlargement of the liver and spleen, enlargement of the lymph nodes, and anemia. Others manifestations include inflammation of the pleura, inflammation of the pericardium, inflammation of the heart's muscular tissue, and inflammation of the peritoneum are also seen⁴

- It is sometimes called "adolescent-onset Still's disease", to distinguish it from adult-onset Still's disease
- However, there is some evidence that the two conditions are closely related
- Rheumatoid factor and ANA tests are generally negative in systemic JIA
- Lab findings: anemia of chronic disease, neutrophilia, thrombocytosis, elevated acute phase reactants (ESR, CRP, ferritin)⁴

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