

## The Effects of Homeopathic Medicines on Reducing the Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression: Randomized, Double Blind and Placebo Controlled

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### Abstract

**Background:** Anxiety and depression are two of the most prevalence psychological disorders in the world.

**Objective:** This study investigates the effects of homeopathic medicine on reducing the symptoms of anxiety and depression.

**Method:** According to the procedure, thirty patients (twenty female and ten male) with the mean age of 45 (range 22-67) were selected randomly and classified in two experimental and controlling groups. The patients were evaluated based on Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)-Y. The Pretest – posttest, and follow-up pattern was designed, homeopathic remedies were used and analysis of covariance with repeated measures is used for data analysis.

**Results:** Findings depict significant differences ( $P<0.01$ ) between two stages of intervention and sustaining of this effectiveness is shown in following-up procedure.

**Conclusion:** These findings suggest that homeopathic therapy can be used as an effective method to treat anxiety and depression disorders.

**Keywords:** Anxiety; Beck depression Inventory; Depression; Homeopathy; Spielberger stat-Trait anxiety inventory

### Introduction

Anxiety is the most prevalent psychological disorder around the world, which is rated in the first place of mental diseases. Women are engaged twice more than me [1]. According to DSM-5, anxiety is an unreasonable inner anguish or discomfort that can be easily diagnosed from fear which is determined from external reasons. Fear is an emotional response to real or perceived imminent threat, whereas anxiety is an anticipation of future threat. It is associated with physiological agitation and excitement in which the patient is supposed to escape from those situations or stay with imposed tremendous suffering [2].

Depression is also one of the most disabling disorders and as well as anxiety, there is a double rate outbreak among women [1]. DSM-5 classifies depression as a mood disorder that illustrates itself in sadness, aggression and guilty feelings. This derangement is often followed by joylessness; some physiological changes such as, sleep rhythm disorder and appetite decreasing or increasing; suicidal thoughts accompanied by somatic and cognitive changes that significantly affect the individual's capacity of function.

As a natural holistic therapy, homeopathy can significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. This science is founded by Samuel Hahnemann, German physician (1755-1843) who found that natural remedies by the time that they are potentized can cure natural diseases based on the similar symptoms [3].

Two stages in homeopathic treatment are considerable. One is case taking and other is choosing a simillimum, means similar remedy. The case tacking stage plays a vital role to diagnose patient's disease and find the appropriate remedy. Approaching patient healing requires taking a picture from all levels of human being, such as physical, mental and emotional. It means that the totality of symptoms should be recorded by a homeopath, even the least important ones. No items should be neglected [4]. For more insurance, a questionnaire can be beneficial.

Furthermore, the patient's relatives are a great to help complete the patient image [5]. The second stage is to find the best remedy according to the patient's report. Remedies are originated from any natural sources or materials in the nature. Each substance which can make some symptoms in healthful person is potential to destroy those very symptoms in sick one. On the other hand, each substance has some effects on human body, and patients who have those symptoms similar to them, will be cured by getting pointing substance. There are two processes to provide homeopathic remedies: dilution and shacking. Dilution is used for reclining toxic effects and omitting side effects of substances. As these dilutions proceed in several scales, Decimal, Centesimal and other potencies, they can provide a range of doses utilized for different purposes. Shacking is used to make the remedies dynamic [5].

The differentiation feature between homeopathy and other medicines is following the holistic principles. Focusing on the patient instead of the disease, considering a patient as a whole, eliminating the fundamental reasons of the diseases verses omitting symptoms, restoring health to all levels of body and preserving it by enhancing defense mechanism; and the last but not the least, using natural remedies which will not put harmful effects on body, obviously, make homeopathy more powerful than the other routine therapies.

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Therefore, while the patient's chief complaints are under treatment, other symptoms will be also cured [5].

One of the fundamental ideas about the homeopathic remedy is that a remedy is curative when it is prescribed on the basis of patient's deepest level of experience and his or her vital sensation. At that level, there is an energy that corresponds to something non-human, something which is like a plant, mineral or animal. It seems like non-sense. It is as if there are two songs playing inside the same person: the human part, which is supposed to be there, and the non-human which isn't. The song of the remedy will express itself with the language of its kingdom: plant sensitivity, mineral structure, or animal survival. It will express itself precisely as the song of the substance [6].

The philosophy of homeopathy is to find what is curable in disease. The answer will appear when the physician has knowledge about the real nature of the patient. To reach this goal, all of the patient's symptoms in all levels of human body should be taken, so, after that the crucial reasons of diseases will be revealed. Afterwards, removing the disease with restoring health, the very aim of homeopathy, will happen [7,8].

Homeopathy can be used for treatment of psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression. Moreover, some studies have shown the homeopathic effectiveness on other psychological abnormalities, such as PTSD, acute stress disorder, and Trauma [9]. Many psychiatric problems can be relieved by homeopathic therapy in clinical approaches. A study results claimed that in many clinical findings homeopathy can cure schizophrenia, autism, OCD, agoraphobia, suicidal depression, hysteria, sleep disorders as well [3]. Some studies of case analysis have shown the curative effects of homeopathic remedies for fears and phobia [10].

Although, many researches have been conducted conversely, more comprehensible investigations are necessary. A research acknowledged that homeopathic remedies have significant effects on depression. To find this result, they chose 30 patients randomly from 162 participants examined by self-report long-term questionnaire that has shown depression. They divided into two experimental and control groups and they were monitored for 6 to 12 months after intervention [11]. Another research demonstrated that homeopathic remedy can treat major depression. They worked on 228 patients randomized in 2 groups, experimental group which took homeopathic remedy and control group which took placebo [12]. One study that used homeopathic – complex remedy to treat anxiety and sleep disorders [13]. One research that has been done for Over-the-Counter- drugs (OTC) for the treatment of mood and anxiety disorders found that Herbal drugs and Homeopathic formulations which were used most frequently than the others are so beneficial for depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders. This investigation was done by 690 German pharmacists, using OTC drugs, about 12 costumers per day [8]. Another research has done based on the Characteristics, associated with use of homeopathic drugs for psychiatric symptoms in general population. They worked on 36,785 persons participating in the Mental Health Survey in general population. The result has shown the significant reducing in psychiatric symptoms [14].

The research question is: "Can Homeopathy reduce the symptoms of anxiety and depression?"

## Method

### Design

This search is a quasi- experimental survey, which is done in

pretest post-test with following-up stages. Statistical pattern is analysis of covariance with repeated measures. This present study includes three stages: first assessment of patients in the baseline. Participants were evaluated by related questionnaires at the first phase of research, so, anxiety and depression rates were determined. In the second stage appropriate remedy was prescribed for them according to homeopathic principles. The third one was monitoring and following-up the patients to show the effects of intervention on corresponding groups.

### Participants

The 30 patients were sampled from whom that referred to the Homeopathic Center in Iran, Tehran since November 2013 to April 2014. The trial using  $2 \times 2$  factorial designs with 16 weeks of study duration per patient was performed. Patients were randomized to one of the two groups: 1) Homeopathic group, 2) Placebo group. During the first visit, patients who had anxiety and depression treated by classical homeopathic remedy (constitutional therapy) 30C potencies and for control group, placebo was prescribed. This trial was performed in double blind study.

### Materials

**Homeopathy questionnaire:** According to the homeopathic laws, finding an appropriate remedy especially in classical approach needs taking a comprehensive picture of patient which involved totality of the symptoms in all levels of human beings. This questionnaire designed to reach this goal and for the patients, who are not interested in talking about some symptoms or suffers from lack of memory, so they can write those [14].

**Emotional assessment instruments:** The anxiety was measured by using State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI-Y) including 20 anxiety symptoms that patients show complementary, and 20 anxiety symptoms which participants depict frequently. Scores ranges between (20-80), with the higher score indicating great anxiety in two mentioned states. This test has good internal consistency (.74) and test-retest reliability (88) and (93) for state anxiety and (92) and (94) for trait anxiety) [6].

The depression levels of participants were measured using Depression Inventory (BDI) including 21 depression symptoms that participants rated for that moment. Scores ranges between "14-63", with the higher score indicating great depression. The internal consistency is (86) and test-retest reliability is (93) [15].

**Homeopathic intervention:** As it was mentioned before, homeopathic medicines were used in constitutional way to relief patients' anxiety and depression. All remedies are prepared in homeopathic way, well-potentized and are used only in 30- potency according to classical approach. Single dose method with monitoring is prescribed.

### Procedures

The given sample was categorized in gender and marital status; homeopathic group: 10 women, 5 men, case history, and placebo group: 10 women, 5 men, and case history. Patients took remedy in the first visit and they were followed up for 16 weeks and all the symptoms and clinical signs were controlled. The patients should have been examined by inventories each section and the numbers of their anxiety and depression were caught. Each patient had the rights to participate and they could leave it as soon as they decided. The 30C potencies of homeopathic remedies in constitutional approach were prescribed. Written informed consent was obtained from all patients. And after the end of the research, the entire control group was treated by homeopathic remedy.

## Results

### Baseline characteristics

Mean number and standard deviation of depression and anxiety (state and trait) in two groups experimental and control, during pretest, posttest and follow-up, has shown in Table 1. To find the effects of homeopathic remedies on reducing anxiety (state and trait) and depression symptoms, analysis covariance with repeated measures has been used. According to homoscedasticity for depression [ $F_{(1,28)}=0.542$ ,  $p=0.468$ ], state anxiety [ $F_{(1,28)}=0.787$ ,  $p=0.383$ ] and trait anxiety [ $F_{(1,28)}=2.403$ ,  $p=0.132$ ]; linear relationship between pretest-posttest depression [ $F_{(1,26)}=98.321$ ,  $p<0.01$ ] and state anxiety [ $F_{(1,26)}=70.371$ ,  $p<0.01$ ] and trait anxiety [ $F_{(1,26)}=68.440$ ,  $p<0.01$ ] numbers; and regression slope for depression [ $F_{(1,26)}=1.699$ ,  $p=0.204$ ], state anxiety [ $F_{(1,26)}=1.470$ ,  $p=0.236$ ] and trait anxiety [ $F_{(1,26)}=1.226$ ,  $p=0.278$ ] are equal; the results of analysis and ANOVA analysis for depression and anxiety (state and trait) numbers are shown in Table 2.

### Anxiety and depression measures

The results of ANCOVA (Table 2) show the significant differences between modified post-tests of two groups (experimental and control). In other hand:

- The average of depression post-test in experimental group after elimination of pretest effect (16.81) was lower than the average of post-test in control group after elimination of pretest effect (29.6).
- The average of state anxiety post-test in experimental group after elimination of pretest effect (52.71) was lower than the average of posttest in control group after elimination of pretest effect (60.96).
- The average of trait anxiety post-test in experimental group after elimination of pretest effect (45.38) was lower than the

average of post-test in control group after elimination of pretest effect (60.55).

These findings show the effectiveness of homeopathic therapy to decrease anxiety and depression symptoms.

To assess the stability of effectiveness of homeopathy to reduce anxiety and depression, variance analysis with repeated measurement has been used. The results were shown in Table 3, with normal multivariate data distribution, the summary of analysis and variance analysis with repeated measurement, and the comparison of 3- time measurements of variables in experimental group.

### Stability of effectiveness

According to the findings of variance analysis and two by two comparisons of mean numbers in this research results show that (Table 3) the effect of homeopathic therapy in reducing anxiety and depression symptoms has stability.

### Discussion

According to the statistical findings, homeopathic remedies can reduce anxiety and depression symptoms dramatically. Many previous researches have shown this effect and confirmed obtained results. Although more researches show the odd ratio of homeopathic therapy in treating psychological abnormalities, some others have the opposite consequences that are considerable. For discussing about the approving homeopathic effects and talking about for and against concepts, researchers preferred to review other researchers' findings. Initially, it should be mentioned that one study showed seriously that the effects of homeopathic remedies were accurate and those were not just placebo effects [16]. Some of researches have shown that homeopathic remedies can cure anxiety and sleep disorders, and their findings are aligned with this very research [17]; some studies reported that the homeopathic medicines are useful to cure social anxiety, panic disorder and manic

variable	group	n	pretest		posttest		Follow-up	
			M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
depression	E	15	33.13	6.42	18.00	4.69	13.33	5.27
	C	15	29.87	9.78	27.87	8.18	26.87	8.99
State anxiety	E	15	64.27	7.62	53.93	6.53	46.00	8.61
	C	15	61.40	8.68	59.73	9.50	59.13	9.81
Trait anxiety	E	15	65.47	7.70	48.47	7.67	43.40	8.02
	C	15	59.27	10.54	57.47	12.90	57.87	13.09

\*\* $P<0.01$

**Table 1:** Mean number for each condition during pretest, posttest and follow-up and standard deviation of depression and state-trait anxiety.

Dependent Variable: post test	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Partial Eta Squared
Depression	Covariate	1025.785	1	1025.785		
	Fixed Factor (E-C)	1081.601	1	1081.601	132.773**	0.832
	Error	219.949	27	8.146		
	Corrected Total	1975.867	29			
State anxiety	Covariate	1357.618	1	1357.618		
	Fixed Factor (E-C)	493.532	1	493.532	26.531**	0.496
	Error	502.249	27	18.602		
	Corrected Total	2112.167	29			
Trait anxiety	Covariate	2365.107	1	2365.107		
	Fixed Factor (E-C)	1540.426	1	1540.426	52.767**	0.662
	Error	788.360	27	29.199		
	Corrected Total	3760.967	29			

\*\* $P<0.01$

**Table 2:** The results of analysis and covariance analysis.

variable	Mauchly's test of sphericity			Repeated Measure		Two by two comparison results
	Mauchly's W	$\chi^2_{(df=2)}$	Greenhouse-Geisser Epsilon	df	F	
Depression	0.796	2.962	0.831	2,28	151.771 **	pre-test>post-test>follow-up
State anxiety	0.556	7.637	0.692	1.38,19.39	72.844 **	pre-test>post-test>follow-up
Trait anxiety	0.301	15.624**	0.588	1.18,16.48	172.501 **	pre-test>post-test>follow-up

\* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.01$

**Table 3:** Analysis and variance analysis with repetitive measurements for experimental group.

depression [5,18], which is similar to the result of the research; one research confirmed the capability of homeopathic treatment in medical sciences [15]. This finding shows alignment with this research; a recent study has acknowledged the effects of homeopathy in mood disorders and anxiety that is aligned with current research [10]; in one study that used constitutional homeopathic intervention to cure psychological disorders especially anxiety, depicted the effects of homeopathic remedies on curing those disorders. Researchers reported that women, youngsters and well-educated people showed higher effects [7]; a study resulted that homeopathy can cure depression [1]. This finding has alignment with this present research; findings of some researchers have the same results. The other research reported that homeopathic therapy has significant effects on insomnia [19-25]. All of these mentioned researches have shown the power of homeopathic remedies to treat psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression and others; while, some findings report that it doesn't have any significant effect on mood and psychological disturbances.

In a recent study, homeopathic remedies were used for patients who suffered from cancer. Although this intervention had many significant consequences in reducing clinical symptoms, it didn't have the same effects on fatigue, anxiety, depression and mood disturbances of those patients [8]. On the other hand, one study acknowledged that the combined odd ratio for the 89 studies entered into the main meta-analysis was 2.45 in favor of homeopathy, the odds ratio was 1.66 and the corrected for publication bias was 1.78 [16].

The question is why some findings have shown that homeopathy doesn't have significant effects on mental and emotional state. To answer, we should mention that homeopathy has some principles that must be considered during intervention [9]. If these rules are neglected, the results are changed. So, it can be resulted that, in some cases, disrespecting these rules, may lead in differences in those findings. These rules are [1] patients should know about homeopathy and remedy and their diseases prognosis as well [2] they should change their lives and remove barriers [3] patients have to know about their exiting and sustaining causes to omit obstacles and change their life style [4] homeopath should do without judgment or bias and just record patients symptoms [5] simillimum remedy should be prescribed [6] remedies must be well-made and well-potentized [7] the doses and potencies of homeopathic remedies should be taken correctly [9,23-27].

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