

# Effectiveness of Homoeopathic Treatment in the Management of Headache- A Retrospective Observational Study

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## ABSTRACT:

**Background:** Headache is one of the most common complaint that most people experience in their lives. It is a pain or discomfort in head. Headache is mainly categorized into two types: primary and secondary headache. The cause of headache is mostly stress, anxiety, depression, injury or trauma, infections, climate changes etc. It creates a burden on people's quality of life and more suffering due to regular use of pain-killers. As an alternative mode of treatment, Homoeopathy is the safest way to relieve headaches without any side-effects. The aim of the study was to know the effectiveness of homoeopathic treatment in management of headache.

**Objectives:** To find out a group of homoeopathic medicines effective in managing the cases of headache and to know about the most prevalent type of headache.

**Methodology:** It was a retrospective study conducted at Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru State Homoeopathic Medical College & Hospital, Kanpur. Samples were selected and reviewed from the records of patients of headache from January 2020 to November 2023.

**Results:** The study revealed that out of 166 patients, mostly females were affected by headache and mostly young and middle aged adults are affected by headache. Total 152 cases were improved and showed a positive response to homoeopathic treatment.

**Conclusion:** The most prevalent type of headache is tension type headache. Homoeopathic treatment is effective in the management of headache and remedies like Natrum mur, Bryonia, Belladonna, Glonoinum, Gelsemium, Rhus tox are found effective in headache.

**Keywords:** Headache, Homoeopathic treatment, Retrospective study

## INTRODUCTION

Headache is one of a common world health problem that most people experience in their lifetime. According to WHO, globally, it has been estimated that prevalence among adults of current headache disorder is about 50% and headache on 15 or more days every month affects 1.7-4% of the world's adult population.<sup>[1]</sup> The Global Burden of Disease study, estimated the global prevalence of active headache disorder was 52%, of migraine 14%, of TTH 26% and of H15+ 4.6%.<sup>[2]</sup>

A headache is a condition characterized by pain or discomfort in the head, scalp or neck. It is also termed as cephalalgia. It can affect any part of the head and may be present in one or several locations.

The most common causes of headache include stress, depression, fatigue, lack of sleep, dehydration, medical factors such as dental or sinus issues, high blood pressure, viral infections, physical factors such as head injury, environmental factors such as weather changes, loud noises, overuse of medications and recreational drugs including their withdrawal. The International Classification of Headache Disorders (ICHD-3) divides headache into three categories: Primary, Secondary and Neuropathies & Facial Pains.<sup>[3]</sup> Primary headaches are not symptoms of an underlying illness but they result from problems involving the structures of the head and neck. They may be due to over-activity or problems in pain-sensitive structures in the head, such as specific areas of the brain, blood vessels, muscles or nerves. Primary headache disorders include migraine (with or without aura), tension-type (TTH), trigeminal autonomic neuralgias (TACs) including cluster headache and other primary headache disorders which include cough, exertional, cold-stimulus, sexual activity associated, external pressure, stabbing, hypnic and new daily persistent headaches. Secondary headaches, on the other hand, are symptoms of an underlying medical condition. They include headache due to injury, infection, homeostasis disorder, meningitis, seizures, haemorrhage, aneurysm, giant-cell arteritis, stroke or brain tumors and substance and its withdrawal. Neuropathies and Facial pains includes headache due to painful lesions of the cranial nerves and other facial pains and other headache disorders which are unspecified or not elsewhere classified.

Headaches can also be categorized as acute or chronic. Acute headaches are with sudden onset and due to trauma or injury, intra-cranial haemorrhage, hydrocephalous, acute-meningeal irritation, etc. whereas chronic headaches are long-standing and recurrent like migraine, tension-type headache or the daily persistent headache.

The diagnosis depends on the clinical history and on the type of pain and its duration. The investigations include blood tests, x-rays, computerized tomography (CT scan) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). The management of headache is lifestyle changes and modern medications like acetaminophen, NSAIDs like ibuprofen, beta-blockers, anti-convulsants, anti-depressants etc.

Headache and its recurrence place a substantial burden on the individual including considerable personal suffering, reduced quality of life and financial costs. Long-term dealing with a persistent headache issue may predispose the individual to more illnesses. Homoeopathy as a complementary and alternative system of treatment, could be an effective and natural approach for relieving headaches without any side-effects rather than using pain-killers in long-term. Homoeopathy works on the principle of Similia Similibus Curentur and individualization, which focuses on treating both the physical and the mental state of the individual, in order to provide permanent relief in the most reliable and harmless way. However, homoeopathic literature review suggests that there are various remedies like Belladonna, Glonoinum, Ruta, Lachesis, Natrum muriaticum, Sulphur, Spigelia, Sanguinaria canadensis, Pulsatilla, etc. which are helpful in the management of headache based upon the totality of the symptoms and individualization.

The aim of the present study was to know the effectiveness of homoeopathic medicines in the managing the cases of headache from the retrospective data of patients. The objectives of the study were to find out a group of homoeopathic medicines effective in managing the cases of headache and to know about the most prevalent type of headache.

## **MATERIALS & METHODS:**

The study was a retrospective study conducted at Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru State Homoeopathic Medical

College & Hospital, Kanpur. The data of the patient’s who visited the OPD/IPD was selected from the OPD register and case records. Approval of the institutional head was taken for the study. The study sample was retrospectively selected from the patients of age 6- 70 years from the case records of January 2020 to November 2023. Treatment related data such as selection of medicines, symptomatic response to medicines, changes of medicines and follow-up pattern of patients were collected from the OPD prescription cards and from the available clinical notes of the treating physician. Descriptive analysis was done for all the obtained data of the patients.

**Inclusion Criteria:-**

- Patients of age group 6-70 years were included.
- Both male and female patients were included.
- Only clinically diagnosed patients of primary headache were included.

**Exclusion criteria:-**

- Patients of age more than 70 years were excluded.
- Patients having a history of head surgery were excluded.
- Patients having any other co-morbidities like Diabetes, Hypertension, Cardiac diseases, Cancer were excluded.

**OBSERVATION & RESULTS:**

In the present study, total 193 patients of headache were selected from the previous records, out of which 27 patients were dropped out based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. So, a total number of 166 patients were taken for the study and further data analysis. Data related to socio-demographic features such as gender, age and occupation is listed below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of Socio-Demographic Features**

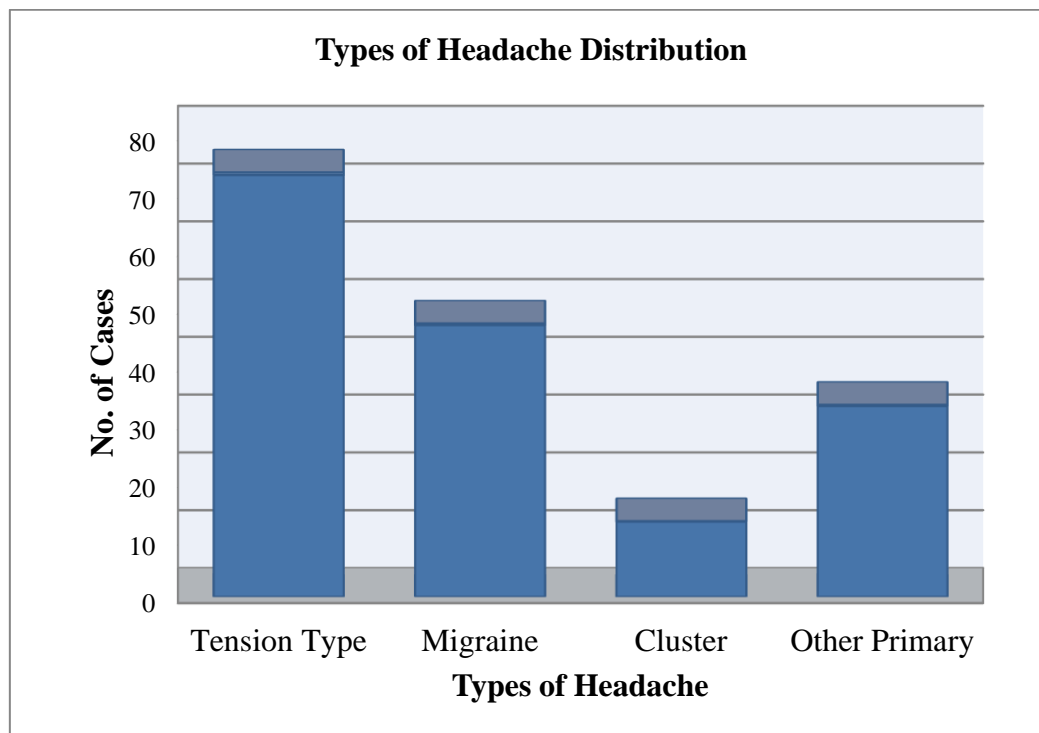
Socio-Demographic Features	No. of Patients (%) (n=166)
Sex:	
Male	18(10.84)
Female	148(89.15)
Age –group(years):	
6-18	18(10.84)
19-39	98(59.03)
40-59	38(22.89)
60-70	12(7.22)
Occupation:	
Home-maker	70(42.16)
Student	44(26.50)
Unemployed	18(10.84)
Office worker	10(6.02)
Business	10(6.02)

Teacher	5(3.01)
Housemaid,	3(1.80)
Factory worker	3(1.80)
Labourer	3(1.80)

From the above data [Table 1] it was found that out of 166 patients, 89.15% (n=148) females are affected by headache than males which were only 10.84% (n=18). The age-group in which headache was most prevalent was the young adults of age 19-39 years with 98 cases (59.03%), secondly in middle-aged adults from 40-59 years with 38 cases (22.89%), thirdly in children of age 6-18 years with 18 cases (10.84%) and the least in old-age adults with 12 cases (7.22%). The occupation of most of the patients were home-makers with 70(42.16%) cases, others were students with 44(26.50%) cases, unemployed with 18(10.84%) cases, business and office workers with 10(6.02%) cases in each, teachers with 5(3.01%) cases and the least were of housemaid, factory workers and labourers with 3(1.80%) cases in each.

**Type of Headache:**

Out of 166 patients, the most prevalent type of headache was tension-type headache (TTH) with 43.97% (n=73) cases [Figure 1]. The second most prevalent type was migraine with 28.31% (n=38) cases and 19.87% (n=33) cases in other primary headaches. The minimum cases were of cluster headache with 7.83% (n=13) cases.



**Figure 1: Bar chart showing most prevalent type of Headache**

**Remedies Prescribed:**

A total number of 33 homoeopathic remedies were prescribed among 166 patients. These remedies were prescribed by the physician on the basis of totality of symptoms, individualization, particular symptoms

and keynote symptoms. Natrum muriaticum was the most prescribed remedy in 31 cases (18.67%). The other remedies prescribed were Bryonia in 16(9.63%), Belladonna in 13(7.83%), Spigelia in 12(7.22%), Glonoinum in 11(6.62%), Gelsemium in 10(6.02%), Rhus tox in 9(5.42%), Sanguinaria canadensis in 7(4.02%), Arsenic album, Lachesis, Carbo veg, China in 5(3.01%) cases each, Calcarea phos, Nux vomica in 4(2.40%) cases each and Lycopodium, Ruta, Calcarea carb in 3(1.80%) cases each. The least prescribed remedies were Conium, Pulsatilla, Sepia in 2(1.20%) cases each and Antimonium crud, Eupatorium perfoliatum, Aconite, Causticum, Cocculus, Cuprum met, Iris versicolor, Iodum, Natrum sulph, Phosphorus, Silicea, Sulphur, Thuja, Veratrum album in 1(0.60%) case each.

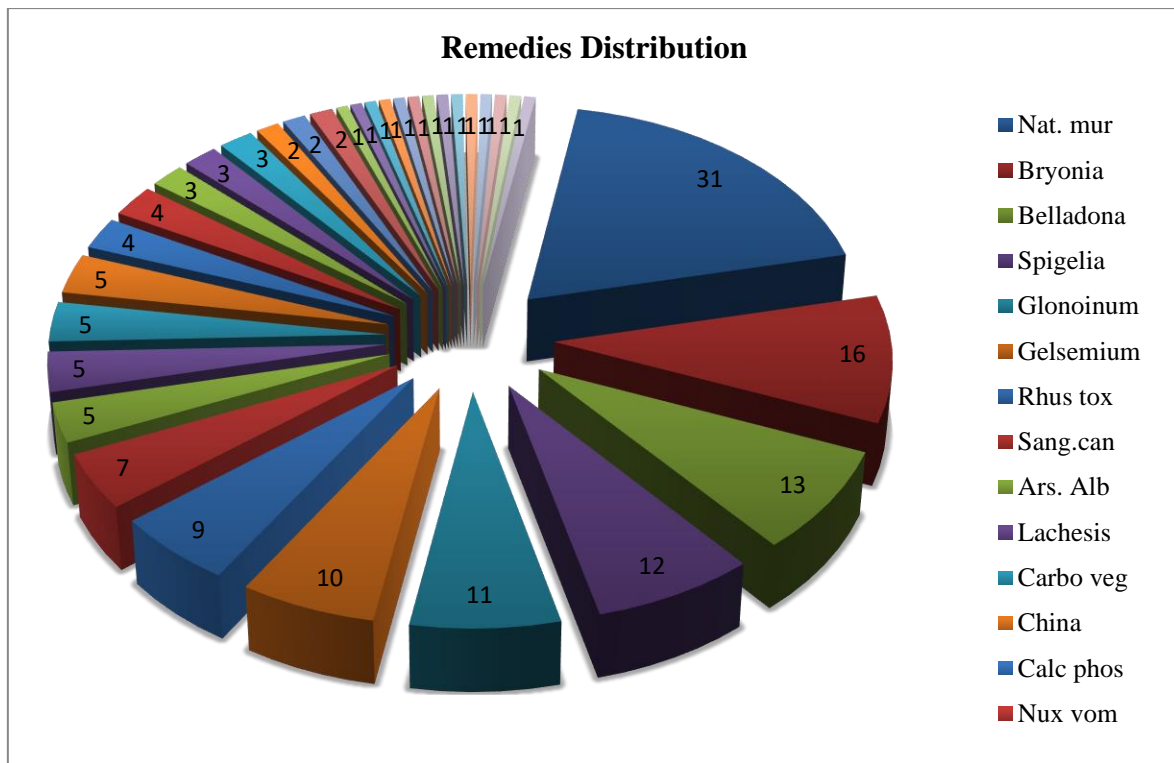


Figure 2: Pie-chart showing most prescribed remedies in Headache

**Potency:**

The selection of potency is based upon the susceptibility of the patient, duration of the symptoms, nature and action of the remedies whereas their change and repetition depends upon the Second Prescription and Kent’s 12 Observations as described in Homoeopathic philosophy. The most common potency that was prescribed was 200C potency with 96(57.83%) cases [Table 2]. Other potencies that were prescribed were 30C with 55(33.13%) cases, 30C & 200C with 12(7.22%) cases and the least were 200C & 1M with 3(1.80%) cases.

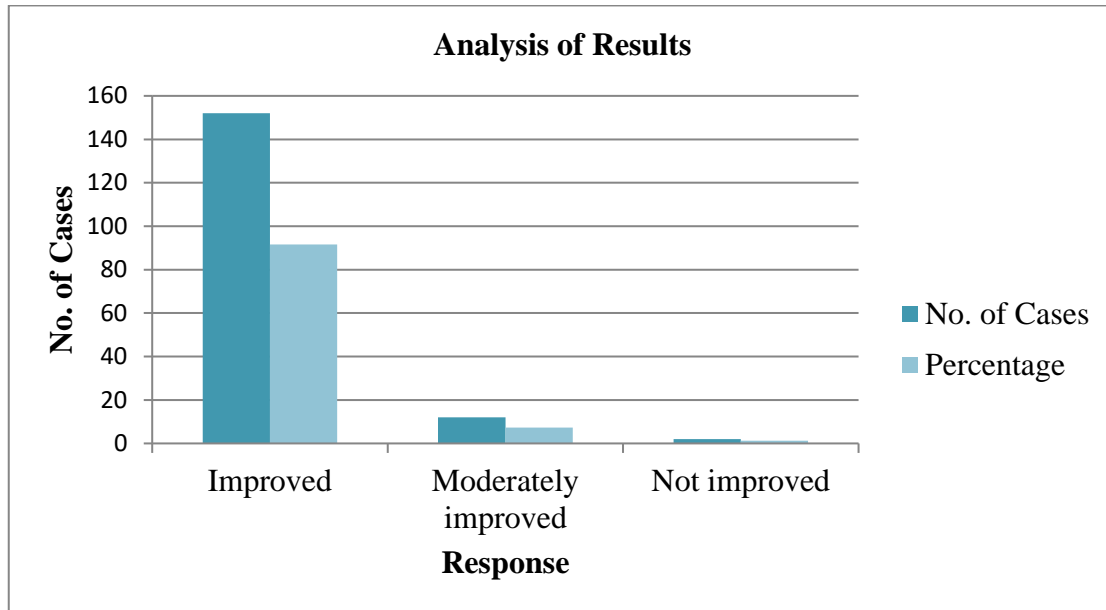
Table 2: Potency Distribution

Potency	No. of Cases	Percentage(%)
30C	55	33.13%
200C	96	57.83%
30C & 200C	12	7.22%

200C & 1M	3	1.80%
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**Response of Patients:**

The response to homoeopathic treatment was noteworthy. Among 166 cases, 91.56% (n=152) cases were improved, 7.26% (n=12) cases were moderately improved and 1.2% (n=2) cases were not improved.



**Figure 3: Bar chart showing Response of patients to Homoeopathic treatment**

**DISCUSSION:**

This retrospective study reveals that homoeopathic treatment is effective in managing the cases of headache as 91.56% patients were improved, which add boost to the study published in *Materia Novum-The Journal of Homoeopathy* in the year 2023<sup>[4]</sup> that showed that 82% patients were improved by homoeopathic treatment in migraine. In this study, *Natrum muriaticum* was the most frequently prescribed remedy in 18.67% cases and other prescribed remedies were *Bryonia*, *Belladonna*, *Spigelia*, *Glonoinum*, *Gelsemium*, *Rhus tox*, *Sanguinaria canadensis*, *Arsenic album*, *Lachesis*, *Pulsatilla*, *Lycopodium*, *Sulphur*, *Silicea*, *Iris versicolor*, etc. which were almost similar to a study published in *International Journal of Homoeopathic Sciences* in the year 2020<sup>[5]</sup> that showed homoeopathic treatment is effective in treatment of migraine and the most frequently prescribed remedy was *Natrum muriaticum* (46.67% cases) and the other prescribed remedies were *Onosmodium*, *Silicea*, *Pulsatilla*, *Lachesis*, *Sulphur*, *Sanguinaria Canadensis*, *Spigelia*, *Iris versicolor*, etc. It is also observed in the present study that the most prevalent type of headache is tension-type headache (TTH) in 43.97% cases and second most prevalent type is migraine in 28.31% cases which is identical to a study published in *The American Journal of Medicine* in the year 2018<sup>[6]</sup> which reported the active prevalence of tension-type headache is approximately 40% and of migraine is 10%.

The study also shows that females (89.15%) are more affected by headache in comparison to males (10.84%) which is alike a study published in *Journal of Headache Pain* in the year 2015<sup>[7]</sup> in which female preponderance was 73% in comparison to males that was 57.3%. The age group most affected by headache is between 19- 39 years (59.03%) and 40-59 years (22.89%) in the study as compared to the

study published in International Journal of Homoeopathic Sciences in the year 2020<sup>[5]</sup> which showed most affected age group by headache was 18-29 years and 40-49 years with 38.33% and 26.67% cases respectively.

### CONCLUSION:

The present study concluded that homoeopathic treatment is effective in management of headache and the most prevalent type of headache is tension type headache. Homoeopathic medicines like Natrum muriaticum, Bryonia, Belladonna, Spigelia, Glonoinum, Gelsemium, Rhus tox, Sanguinaria canadensis, Arsenic album, Lachesis, Carbo veg, China, Calcarea phos, Nux vomica, Lycopodium, Ruta, Calcarea carb, etc. are found effective in cases of headache in the study.

In future, more systematic clinical trials and research should be conducted to enhance homoeopathic treatment in managing the cases of headache. In long-term, simple headache could turn into migraine due to the lifestyle modifications and more stress among people in today's time. Henceforth, more research studies should be organized to know about the increasing prevalence of migraine and long-term effects of tension type headache in people.

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP:

Nil.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

None declared.

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