

Naturopathic Medicine is a Viable Therapy in the Prevention and Treatment of H1N1

By Jacob Scheer

Vaccination and anti-virals are the current standard of care in the prevention and treatment of H1N1 influenza virus. Concerns have surfaced as to their safety, efficacy, and necessity. Evidence and ongoing studies indicate, however, that Naturopathic therapeutics, which includes Homeopathy and Herbal medicine, may offer a safe and effective adjunct or alternative to vaccination and anti-virals.

Immunization is widely thought to provide the most effective tool against a pandemic virus. The occurrence of a rare but serious adverse event, Guillain-Barre syndrome is associated with influenza immunization. It was first documented following the 1976 program against the swine influenza in the United States and is important to address in the context of the recent spread of the novel influenza A (H1N1) in humans. Minimizing the risk of severe adverse events is an important goal when developing immunization policies for interpandemic use of novel influenza vaccines and implementing mass immunization programs².

On September 28, 2009, the *Globe and Mail*, reported a “perplexing” Canadian study linking H1N1 outbreaks to seasonal flu shots which has thrown the national influenza plans into disarray and is testing public faith in the government agencies responsible for protecting the nation's health. Distributed for peer review, the study confounded infectious disease experts in suggesting that people vaccinated against seasonal flu are twice as likely to catch swine flu.

According to the World Health Organization, alternative medicine has been the standard of care for billions of people world wide. There are a host of herbs that enhance and support the function of the immune system. Herbs such as Boneset and Vervain have been used traditionally in the treatment of influenza and influenza like symptoms¹. Immune enhancing herbs such as Echinacea, Andrographis and Picrorrhiza support the body's defence against the virus. Additionally,



studies have shown that many herbs exhibit anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anthelmintic properties⁶. Finally, the Physician's Desk Reference (PDR) for Herbal Medicines lists the following herbs for the treatment and symptomatic relief of influenza: Buttercup; Cinnamon; Colt's Foot; Dog Rose; Chamomile; Eucalyptus; Elder; Horseradish; Oats; Quinine; and Wild Indigo⁷.

Homeopathy, a highly systematic method of medical therapeutics and clinical evaluation, has been effective in the treatment of influenza and influenza-like symptoms for hundreds of years. The medicines used in this form of alternative medicine are chosen according to the Law of Similars (the concept of like curing like), a fundamental Homeopathic principle. It is based upon the observed relationship between a medicine's ability to produce a specific constellation of signs and symptoms in a healthy individual and the same medicine's ability to cure a sick patient with similar signs and symptoms⁸. References to the Homeopathic treatment of influenza or *grippe* date

back to the 1880's³. Dr. James Kent in his book "Repertory of the Homeopathic Materia Medica" first published in 1881 refers to the treatment of influenza in the rubric: extremities, pain, influenza, etc. The Homeopathic remedies in this rubric that were used to successfully treat influenza include; aconite, bryonia, euphrasia, eupatorium perforliatum, and gelsemium. These medicines are still used successfully throughout the world to treat influenza and influenza-like symptoms.

In 1989, the following controlled clinical trial was conducted to assess the effectiveness of a Homeopathic preparation in the treatment of influenza-like syndromes. The Homeopathic drug was Oscilloccinum, manufactured by Boiron Laboratories, made from *Anas Barbariae Hepatis* and *Cordis Extractum* HPUS 200 C. In the trial, 237 volunteers received the test drug and 241 were assigned to placebo. The A H1N1 influenza virus was isolated in the study region 7 days after the study managers issued the instruction to start including patients in the experiment. 17.1% of the participants from the active drug group recovered within 48 hours of treatment compared to 10.3% from the placebo group (p value 0.03). Volunteers with an influenza-like syndrome who received the homeopathic preparation showed a greater early recovery rate, within 48 hours of treatment, than those who received placebo⁴. To date it is the only known clinical trial for H1N1. I would recommend further studies to substantiate the benefits of Naturopathic therapeutics in the the treatment of H1N1.

Is Naturopathic or alternative medicine a viable therapy in the prevention and treatment of H1N1? My professional expertise and anecdotal evidence would cry out, "Absolutely!" I am, however, able to constrain emotional exuberance knowing that the experiences and results of the past along with the current clinical evidence support my professional conviction.

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