

The Efficacy of *Phytolacca decandra* in the Treatment of Fibroadenoma of the Breast

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Abstract: This article is based on a clinical research conducted at the Technikon Witwatersrand, department of Homoeopathy in collaboration with Chris Hani, Baragwanath Hospital. A total of 29 patients completed the study, which was to test the efficacy of *Phytolacca decandra* on fibroadenoma of the breast in pre-menopausal women. There was a statistically significant reduction in the sizes of the fibroadenoma in the experimental group and an increasing trend in those of the placebo group.

Keywords: *Phytolacca decandra*, effect on fibroadenoma of the breast

Introduction

Fibroadenoma is the most common benign tumor found in the breast.⁽¹⁾ It presents as a small, round, discrete, mobile, non-tender, palpable, solid mass in the breast.⁽²⁾ A fibroadenoma may double in size every six to eight months during its growth phase⁽³⁾ Surgery is the only allopathic option available for treatment.⁽⁴⁾

This study was undertaken at the Technikon Witwatersrand TWR (Now University of Johannesburg), department of Homoeopathy. The study design was a double blind, randomized, placebo controlled pilot study, testing the efficacy of the homoeopathic remedy, *Phytolacca decandra* in the 15 CH potency, on the treatment of fibroadenoma of the breast in pre-menopausal women aged fifteen to thirty five years. Twenty nine subjects completed the study from the original number of thirty six. Diagnosis of the fibroadenoma was made by:

- i. Clinical evaluation
- ii. Ultrasonography
- iii. Fine needle aspiration cytology of the breast

Patients underwent a breast examination, filled a questionnaire and had their case history taken. The questionnaire and the ultrasound were repeated at the end of the study to determine any changes in the presenting symptoms and of the size of the fibroadenoma. Patients started treatment the day after the first consultation. Medication was taken in the form of one tablet sublingually twice a day. The

treatment period was for sixty consecutive days.

The results of this study demonstrate that the homoeopathic remedy *Phytolacca decandra* has a statistically significant effect on women who have fibroadenoma of the breast. In the experimental group, 69% of subjects showed a decrease in the size of the fibroadenoma, compared to 36% in the placebo group. There was also a statistically significant decrease in the breast pain experienced while the placebo group showed no changes. The experimental group showed a 0% development of new fibroadenomas and a decreasing trend to the fibroadenoma surface areas. The placebo group showed a 20% development of new fibroadenomas and an increasing trend to the surface area.

There were interesting, unexpected, statistically significant findings as the remedy also corrected hormonal imbalances in the female reproductive system by regulating both the menstrual flow and the menstrual cycle and improved dry, cracked nipples. Reduction in joint and arthritic symptoms, especially lower back pain and stiffness was also experienced.

Patients, Materials and Methods

Thirty six patients were enrolled into this study of which 29 completed it. The study design was a double blind, randomized placebo, controlled pilot study, testing the efficacy of *Phytolacca decandra* 15 CH on fibroadenoma of the breast.

Patients had to undergo a clinical evaluation, ul-

trasonography and fine needle aspiration cytology of the breast to make the fibroadenoma diagnosis. A case history was taken and the patients had to fill out a questionnaire. The purpose of the history taking and questionnaire was to determine the drug picture so as to exclude subjects if they did not match the symptoms of *Phytolacca decandra*. Pregnancy and lactation, malignancy of the breast and any chronic medication other than contraception also served as exclusion factors. Inclusion criteria, on the other hand, were: pre-menopausal females, aged fifteen to thirty five years with pre-diagnosed fibroadenoma of the breast, whose symptoms matched the symptoms of *Phytolacca* listed below.

Phytolacca symptoms used as criteria for inclusion into the study:

- Breast pains relieved by pressure
- Breast was hard, swollen, painful and sensitive to the touch
- The breast felt hard, lumpy, nodular like a brick
- Breast pain felt like electric shocks
- Pain in nipple radiating to all over the body
- Rheumatic pain and stiffness in muscles
- Joint pains, with tenderness and swelling

Patients whose symptoms did not match the above picture of *Phytolacca decandra* were excluded from the study. Patients who did not comply with taking of medication were excluded from the study as well.

Patients were then divided into two equal groups - the experimental group and the placebo group. Fifteen subjects in the experimental group were given *Phytolacca decandra* 15 CH in the form of tablets, to be taken sublingually twice a day for sixty days. The placebo group received unmedicated tablets, twice a day, also for sixty days. Randomization of the medication was carried out at the TWR Health Clinic.

In the clinical evaluation, and via ultrasound, measurements of the fibroadenoma were also taken before and after treatment.

All data was analyzed statistically, using the T-test, the All Pairwise Multiple Comparison Procedures (student-Newman-Keuls Method) and the One Way Analysis of Variance Test.

Results

The overall results were based on the Total Questionnaire Results which was obtained by adding the individual scores for each question answered by the

patients. The questions pertained to the severity of symptoms associated with the presence of the fibroadenomas and the symptoms linked to them. The Experimental Group showed a statistically measurable reduction in both the total severity and total presence of symptoms after treatment. No such change was found in the Placebo Group. The Placebo Group remained statistically unchanged in both the total severity and total presence of symptoms.

Figure 1 is an example of the total score from question 13: "When you get pains in the breast, does the pain feel like electric shocks?"

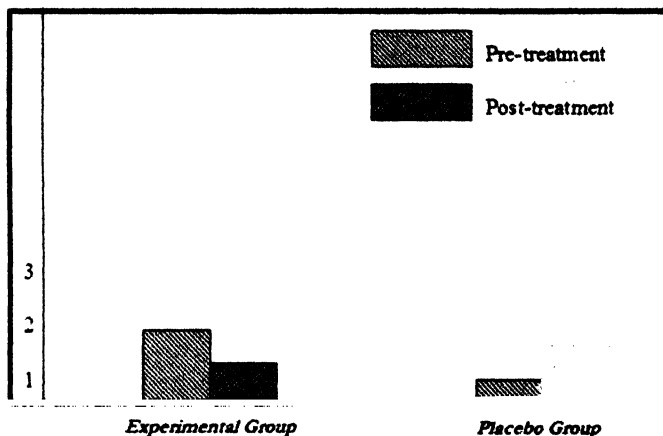


Figure 1: Total Score from Question 13

The sizes of fibroadenomas were placed into one of three categories according to the surface area before treatment. The categories were 0-5 cm, 5-10 cm and 20-25 cm respectively. All the fibroadenomas studied fell into one of the three categories.

Figure 2 shows the size categories of tumors before and after treatment.

The experimental group showed a definite decreasing trend in all three surface area categories when comparing pre and post-treatment values. The placebo group showed an increasing trend in all three surface area categories when comparing pre and post-treatment values.

In the experimental group, 69% of patients' fibroadenomas showed a decrease in size and 31% showed an increase in size. In the placebo group, 36% of the patients' fibroadenomas showed a decrease in size and 64% showed an increase. Furthermore, the experimental group had a 0% development of new, additional fibroadenomas after treatment. The placebo group had a 20% development of new, additional fibroadenomas after treatment.

There were four questions in the questionnaire that were hormonally related. There was a definite

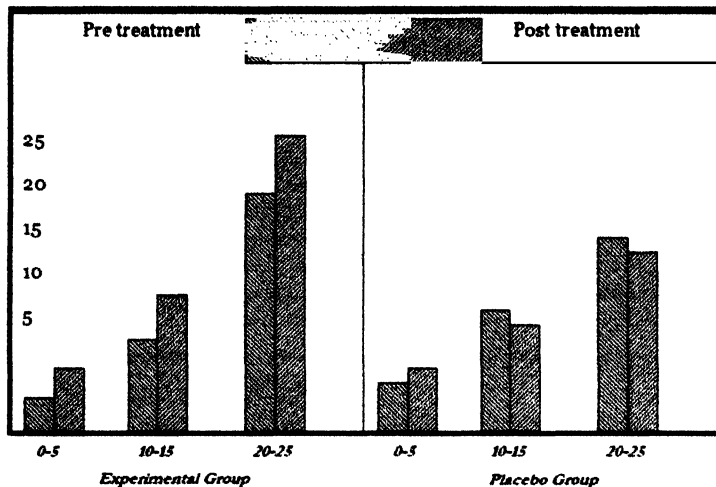


Figure 2: Size categories of tumors

positive effect on the experimental group, while there was no corresponding change in the placebo group. On the individual joint and arthritic-related questions, it was found that there was a significant improvement in the lower back pains, stiffness and soreness of the back on waking and general joint pains in the experimental group and no change in the placebo group.

On the question of "lower back pain" (17) using the one Way Analysis of Variance Test, the Experimental treatment group mean value showed a statistically significant decrease from 1.57 to 0.29. The Placebo

Pre-treatment Group mean value was from 1.21 to 1.07. This slight decrease mean value is not statistically significant.

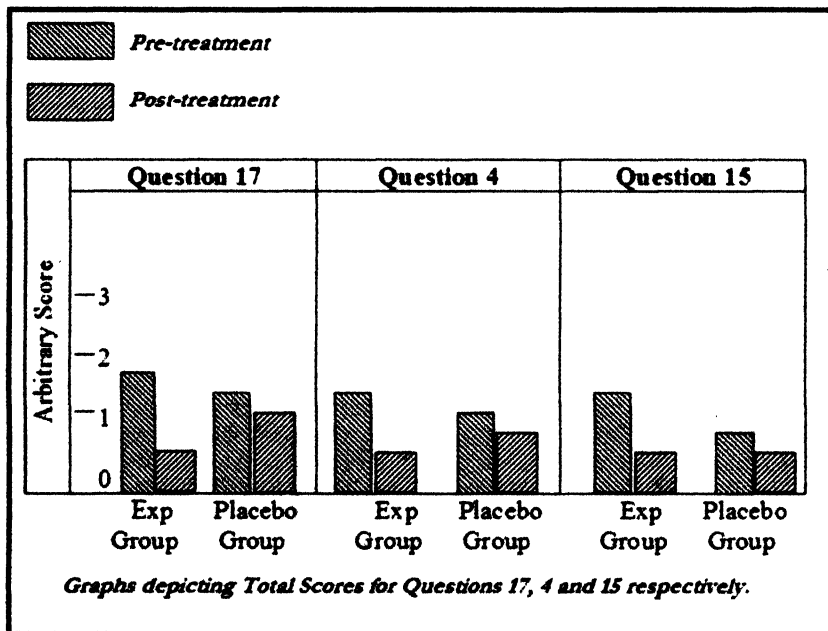
Likewise the mean value on the question of "back stiffness when you wake in the morning" (4) had a statistically significant decrease from 1.14 to 0.29 in the Experimental Treatment Group compared to the mean value of 0.93 to 0.64 in the Placebo Treatment Group. The question "Do you ever get pain in your joints in the morning?" (15), the Experimental Treatment Group had a mean value of 1.21, which was decreased, post-treatment to 0.43, whereas the Placebo Treatment Group had a mean value of 0.64, pre-treatment and 0.43 post-treatment.

This slight decrease in (the placebo group) in mean value is not statistically significant. There was, however, a statistically significant decrease in the mean value of the Experimental Treatment Group.

Discussion

The patients' case histories, the questionnaire and the triple assessment - clinical evaluation, ultrasonography and the fine needle aspiration cytology of the breast - insured that the patients were properly diagnosed, that there was no doubt about the final diagnosis of the fibroadenoma.

What was very significant about this study was the case history taking where, in the final analysis, patients who did not match the profile of *Phytolacca decandra* were excluded from the study. Some of our previous studies (5,6) did not use this factor and failed to demonstrate significant therapeutic effects. This study also demonstrated that the indicated remedy did not only reduce the fibroadenomas, the focus in this study, but also reduced the concomitant symptoms, symptoms similar to some of the principal symptoms of



Graphs depicting Total Scores for Questions 17, 4 and 15 respectively.

Phytolacca decandra. (6)

Unexpected significant results also occurred in those symptoms relating to hormonal imbalance as depicted in the questionnaire. As indicated, the focus was in the reduction of the fibroadenomas, and their associated symptoms. Not much was expected in terms of the hormonally-related symptoms.

Conclusions

Phytolacca decandra has a statistically significant effect on women who have fibroadenoma of the breast. The remedy also corrects hormonal imbalance in the female reproductive system, and reduces breast pain, joint and arthritic symptoms. It stops new additional fibroadenomas from developing.

The findings in this study imply that *Phytolacca decandra* will have a positive effect only when the remedy is indicated in terms of its similitude to the patient's symptoms. It will not have these positive effects if the patient's totality of symptoms does not match the profile of *Phytolacca decandra*.

Although many observers suggest that the benefits of homoeopathic treatment are due to the placebo effect, the findings in this study clearly refute this theory.

It is recommended that in any future studies of any homoeopathic remedy for any disease condition, researchers should ensure that selection criteria of participants is in consistent with Hahnemann's theory of the totality of symptoms, that the totality of symptoms represents the disease in its full extent.

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