



SCIATICA AND ITS HOMOEOPATHIC MANAGEMENT -A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT:

Sciatica is a term applied to all form of pain along the course of sciatic nerve, whether due to interstitial neuritis or neuralgia. Sciatica is a term used to describe nerve pain in the leg that is caused by irritation or compression of the root pathology. Homoeopathy has effective option to treat sciatica. Sciatica is a debilitating condition of the sciatic nerve. Homoeopathy is a holistic and safe way to overcome sciatica without any side effects. Homoeopathic medicines also correct the underlying problems such as neurological pains and as well neurological disorders. The constitutional way of treatment is safe and has remedies that are free from side effects.

KEYWORDS:

Sciatic neuritis, Primary sciatica, Secondary sciatica, Homoeopathy.

INTRODUCTION:

Sciatica is associated with the low back pain. Now a days low back pain is very common in people due to sedentary life style and which reoccur again and again. Sciatica is also called as lumbar radiculopathy, the pain originates along the sciatic nerve and its run down to heels. It is the largest nerve in entire body. ⁽¹⁾

DEFINITION:

Sciatica pain that is caused by irritation of the sciatic nerve and typically radiates from the buttock to back of the thigh. Sciatica can result from a herniated disc pressing directly on the nerve. Any cause of irritation or inflammation of this nerve can reproduce the painful symptoms of sciatica. ⁽²⁾

ANATOMY OF SCIATICA:

The sciatic nerve is the largest and longest nerve in the human body, originating at the base of the spine and running along the back of each leg into the foot. At its thickest point, it is about as wide as an adult thumb. The sciatic nerve is formed in the lower spine by the combination of motor and sensory fibers from spinal nerves L4 to S3⁽³⁾. The sciatic nerve is made up of the L4 through S2 nerve roots which coalesce at the pelvis to form the sciatic nerve. At up to 2cm in diameter, the sciatic nerve is easily the largest nerve in the body. The sciatic nerve provides direct motor function to the hamstrings, lower extremity adductors, and indirect motor function to the calf muscles, anterior lower leg muscles, and some intrinsic foot muscles. Indirectly through its terminal branches, the sciatic nerve provides sensation to the posterior and lateral lower leg as well as the plantar foot. ⁽⁴⁾

PREVALENCE AND INCIDENCE RATIO:

The lifetime incidence reported between 10% to 40 %. An annual incidence of 1 to 5 % no association with body weight has been established except in 50 to 60 age group. Commonly men are affected in their 40 ages whereas female are in 50 to 60 age groups. In Indian population, the prevalence of sciatica pain varies between 6.2% in general population and 92% in construction workers with a lifetime prevalence of 60-90% and annual

incidence of 5%.⁽⁵⁾

THE MAJOR CAUSES:

- **Herniated disc:** One of the most common causes of sciatica is a herniated intervertebral disc.
⁽²⁾ Herniation means bulging out. Intervertebral discs are the spongy discs that form a cushion between the vertebrae of the spine. If the outer layer of the disc becomes weak, due to age or injury, the soft center can bulge out through the weakness, then it lead to herniation.⁽⁶⁾
- **Bone growths:(Osteophyte):** Bone spur or osteophytes are bony outgrowths on the edge of joints.⁽⁴⁾ Bone spurs are not painful by themselves, but unfortunately, the bone spurs can rub on nearby bone or nerves. The bone spur compresses the sciatic nerve and injure the sciatic nerve.⁽⁵⁾
- **Piriformis syndrome:** Piriformis syndrome is an uncommon cause of sciatica. The piriformis is a muscle that lies deep underneath the gluteal muscle of the buttocks.⁽³⁾ Piriformis syndrome occurs when the piriformis muscle becomes tight, goes into spasm, or swells. When this happens, it compresses the sciatic nerve beneath it. This compression will hurt the sciatic nerve.
⁽⁶⁾
- **Spondylolisthesis:** In this condition, one vertebra slips forward over the vertebra below it.⁽⁴⁾ This distorts the spinal canal and can result in the nerve roots of the sciatica nerve being compressed. In adult the fourth and fifth lumbar vertebrae (L4 and L5) are the most commonly affected, with the L4 vertebrae moving forward on the L5 vertebrae. Spondylolisthesis can result from degenerative diseases of the spine, such as arthritis⁽⁶⁾

THE OTHER CAUSES OF SCIATICA:

- **Have an injury/previous injury:** An injury to lower back or spine is the greatest risk for sciatica.⁽⁷⁾
- **Ageing:** With normal aging comes a natural wearing down of bone tissue and disks in the spine.
⁽⁵⁾ Normal aging can risk to being injured or pinched by the changes and shifts in bone, disks and ligaments.⁽⁷⁾
- **Overweight:** Normally spine is like a vertical crane. Muscles are the counterweights. The weight carried should be lifted by the spine. The more weight carried, the more back muscle has to work.⁽⁸⁾
- **Lack of strong core:** Core is essential support to the muscles of back and abdomen.⁽³⁾ If the core is strong the support is more for the lower back.
- **Diabetes:** Diabetes increases the chance of nerve damage, which increases the chance of sciatica.⁽⁸⁾
- **Osteoarthritis:** Osteoarthritis can cause damage to the spine and put nerve at the risk of injury.
⁽⁷⁾
- **Smoking:** The nicotine in tobacco can damage the spinal tissues, weaken bones, and speed the wearing down of vertebral discs.⁽⁸⁾

SYMPTOMS:

- Drawing and radiating pain
- Nerve weakness.
- Numbness at the affected site⁽³⁾
- Unable to bend forward
- Lower back pain
- Burning or tingling down the legs⁽⁹⁾

The pain from sciatica is felt along the path of the sciatic nerve and can be felt deep in the buttock, with pain that travels down the back of the leg and sometimes to foot. ⁽⁷⁾

- The pain can be accompanied by tingling, pins and needles, numbness, sometimes by muscular weakness in the leg. ⁽⁹⁾
- Sciatica is usually felt in only one leg at a time. Sometimes, a sensation like an electric shock can be felt along the nerve. ⁽¹⁰⁾
- The nerve pain can range from a mild ache to incapacitating pain. ⁽³⁾ Sciatic nerve pain is often felt when you sneeze, cough, go to the toilet, or when you're sitting and may be accompanied by lower back pain. ⁽⁹⁾
- Most sciatica gets better within a few weeks and does not result in permanent damage. ⁽¹⁰⁾

INVESTIGATIONS:

If pain persists over a long period of time some imaging techniques are advised. They are,

- **Magnetic Resonance Imaging:**
This procedure uses a powerful magnet and radio waves to produce cross sectional images of the back. ⁽⁶⁾ An MRI procedure gives detailed images of the bones and soft tissues, so herniated disks and pinched nerves shown on the scan. For deeper pathology MRI is used to identify the real diagnosis. ⁽¹¹⁾
- **Computer Tomography:**
A dye is injected into the spinal canal before taking the x-ray. If there is any bone deformity CT is used to diagnose the real condition. ⁽¹¹⁾
- **X-ray:**
⁽¹²⁾ The cheaper and low cost because they are quick and able to show more abnormalities of the spine.
- **Electromyography:**
This test measures the electrical impulses produced by the nerves and the responses of the muscles. This test can confirm how severe a nerve root injury. ⁽¹²⁾

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR SCIATICA:

- **Slump test:**

The slump test includes the patient seated upright with hands behind the back. The patient bends forward at the hip. ⁽¹²⁾ The neck is bent down with chin touching the chest and one knee is extended to a degree possible. If pain occurs in this position, sciatica may be present. These test, however be positive only when the sciatic nerve is mechanically compressed at any point along its origin, such as from a herniated disc. ⁽¹³⁾

If the leg that experiences pain won't go as high as the unaffected leg or if lifting the leg aggravates the symptoms, sciatica is present. ⁽¹³⁾

- **Straight leg raise test:**

This test includes the patient lying on the back and lifting one leg at a time with the other leg flat or bent at the knee. A pain encountered while lifting the affected leg usually indicates sciatica. ⁽¹¹⁾ If the patient experience pain down the leg to the foot or are unable to lift the affected leg as much as other, this is a positive sciatica test result. If no pains occur, the test is considered negative and any pain experiencing may be due to other spinal conditions. ⁽¹⁴⁾

- **Braggard test:**

Braggard test is used to evaluate nerve root compression of the lumbar spine, differentiating of the lumbar spine, differentiating a genuine lasague sign from a pseudo-lasague sign. The patient is supine on examination table with both legs straight. The examiner began with straight leg raise test. ⁽¹⁴⁾ If the patient feels no radicular pain or symptoms despite 70-degree hip flexion is negative SLR test, the foot is then dorsiflexed firmly, if radiating pain below the knee was produced, the modified braggard test is positive. ⁽¹⁵⁾

GENERAL MANAGEMENT:

- Avoid cigarette smoking which promotes disc degeneration. ⁽¹⁶⁾
- Exercise regularly to strengthen the muscle of back and abdomen which works to support the spine. ⁽¹⁷⁾
- Long standing compresses the sciatic nerve, so avoid long standing ⁽¹⁷⁾
- Maintain good posture when sitting, standing and sleeping.
- Avoid sitting for a long period. Use hot and cold application for any pain and swelling, if the pain is not reduced switch between hot and cold fomentations. ⁽¹⁶⁾

HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICINES:

- **Aesculus Hippocastanum:** Aching pain in the region of spine feels weak, back and legs give out. Backache affecting sacrum and hips worse by walking or stooping, when walking feet turn under, morning on awaking better by cool open air. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Lumbosacral backache and great fatigue aggravated by walking which affects sacrum and hips. Sensation of heaviness and lameness in back. ⁽²¹⁾
- **Bryonia alba:** Lower limbs -cracking and dislocation of the hip joint, when walking -stitches in the hip joint, extending to the knee-drawing pains in the thigh-shootings in the thigh, from the buttock to the ankle, with insupportable pain on being touched, and during movement, paralysis of the legs. Tensive and painful stiffness of the knees. Sharp pains in the knees extending to tibia-tensive and drawing shooting from the calves of the legs to ankles. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Pain -tearing, stitching worse at night aggravated from any motion. ⁽²¹⁾
- **Buforana:** Sciatica-lower limbs more in motion than upper. Cramp awakens him from sleep. Lower limbs get weak-lower limbs straight and stiff before attack. Swelling of knees with pulsative and distending pains. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Pain in loins, numbness of limbs, cramps, staggering gait feeling as if a peg were driven in joints. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- **Causticum:** Left sided sciatica, with numbness tearing pain, dull, weak ankles, heaviness and weakness, worse by cold winds, motion of carriage; better by damp, wet weather, warmth, heat of bed. ⁽²¹⁾ Pains are ameliorated by heat, but they are aggravated in dry weather. ⁽²¹⁾ Contracted tendons weak ankles can't walk without sufferings. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- **Colocynthis:** Sciatica, Cramping pain in hip as though screws in a vise, lies upon affected side. Shooting pain like lightning shocks, down the whole limb, left hip, left thigh, left knee into popliteal fossa. Better from doubling up, hard pressure. ⁽²²⁾ Sciatic pain left side drawing, tearing, better by pressure and heat worse by gentle touch. ⁽¹⁸⁾
 - **Cuprum metallicum:** Pains in the legs, esp. in the calves of the legs during repose. Tensive pain and cramps in the calves of the legs, knee joint weakness, pain as if broken. Twitching of the muscle of the lower extremities. Pressive and drawing pain. Burning in sole of foot. Painful weariness and stiffness in the limbs. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Jerking, twitching of muscles great weariness of limbs begins in knee. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- **Gnaphalium:** Cramps in calves of legs and feet when in bed, rheumatic pain in ankle joints and legs. Intense pain along with sciatic nerve, numbness alternates with pain. Better by drawing limbs up, flexing thigh on abdomen. Chronic muscular rheumatism of back and neck. Chronic backache in lumbar region better resting on back. ⁽¹⁸⁾ pains dull or darting or cutting from right hip joint posteriorly downward to foot. Nerve intense pain along sciatic nerve. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- **Guaiacum:** Sciatica and lumbago, tearing pain, stinging pain in limbs, worse by motion, heat, pressure, touch, 6pm to 4 am: better by external pressure shortening of hamstring muscles. Aggravated by slightest motion or exertion. ⁽²⁰⁾ Pains in the bones of thigh pressing tingling pain in thighs when seated. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- **Iris versicolor:** Sciatica pains, as if hip joint was wrenched, painful drawing and lameness behind trochanter extending down to popliteal space. Shooting, burning laming pain, affecting posterior femoral muscles: shooting along sciatic nerve to foot aggravated by motion; moderate motion aggravates, violent motion. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Sciatica painful drawing and lameness. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- **Lachesis:** Sciatica, right side, pain in tibia neuralgia of coccyx worse by rising from sitting posture, better by lying down, warm applications. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Nocturnal pain in hip and thigh sharp and drawing pain in limbs. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- **Lycopodium:** Sciatica worse from right side, can't lie on painful side. Cramps in calves and toes at night in bed, twitching and jerking. The pains go from right to left right foot gets cold while left gets warm. ⁽²³⁾ Rheumatic tension in left hip pain as from a sprain in hip. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- **Magnesia phosphorica:** Cramps in calves, sciatica, feet very tender darting pain, twitching, general muscular weakness worse by cold, touch, night; better by warmth, pressure, friction. ⁽²²⁾ Paralysis of agitated cramps in calves, sciatica feet very tender. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- **Nux vomica:** Backache in lumbar region, burning in spine, sitting is painful, legs numb. Cramps in calves and soles. Sensation sudden loss of power of legs in the morning worse by 3 to 4 am, touch, cold; better by rest, damp, wet weather. ⁽²³⁾ Sensation of sudden loss of power of legs in morning legs numb

feels paralyzed. ⁽¹⁸⁾

- **Oxalic acid:** Numb, weak, tingling. Pain starts from spine and extend through extremities. Drawing and lancinating pain shooting down extremities. Backache; numb, weak. Sensation of numbness. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Numbness pain and weariness in lower limbs making it difficult to ascend stairs, restlessness in legs. ⁽¹⁹⁾
 - **Rhus Toxicodendron:** Pain and stiffness in small of back better by motion or lying on something hard worse while sitting. Rheumatic pains spread over a large surface nape of neck, loins and extremities better by motion. Tearing down thighs, sciatica, worse cold damp weather at night. ⁽²⁰⁾
 - **Ruta Graveolens:** Spine and limbs feel bruised, small of back and loins pains, lumbago worse by morning before rising, lying down, cold wet weather, aching pain in hamstring, legs give out on rising from a chair, hips and thigh so weak, sciatica- worse lying down at night; better by pressure lying on back. ⁽²²⁾ Shooting and tearing in hip joints extending to hamstrings especially when resting on foot. ⁽¹⁹⁾
 - **Sulphur:** The striking thing in Sulphur as to the back is pain in the back on rising from a seat, compelling him to walk bent, and he can only straighten up slowly after moving. The pain is principally in the lumbo-sacral region. Cramps in legs and calves. Cramps in legs and feet. ⁽²³⁾ Stiffness of knees and ankles. Cannot walk erect. ⁽¹⁸⁾
 - **Tellurium:** Pain in sacrum, right side sciatica worse by coughing straining, night, cold weather, lying on painful side, touch: better by rest, hard pressure. ⁽¹⁸⁾
 - **Valeriana officinalis:** Sciatica: Pain aggravation when standing and letting foot rest on floor, when straightening out limb, during rest from previous exertion, better when walking. ⁽²²⁾ Rheumatic pains in limbs, heaviness, sciatica, pain worse when standing and resting on floor. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- Veratrum Album:** Sciatica pains like electric flashes, cramps in calves, Neuralgia worse by night, wet, cold weather; better by walking, warmth. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Soreness and tenderness of joints, Sciatica pains like electric flashes, Cramps in calves. ⁽¹⁸⁾

CONCLUSION:

Sciatica is the rare neurological disorder which affect mostly in elder age groups. Nowadays it is common in adult age groups also. Homoeopathy treatment gives a very good result in sciatica. The pain, numbness symptoms are cured with homoeopathy treatment which gives a long-standing cure. Sciatica happens when irritation, inflammation, pinching or compression affect one or more nerves that run down the lower back to legs. Sciatica pain is palliative in other system of medicines, but in homoeopathy it has lots of scope in curing the sciatica. As a whole with proper case taking and case analysis and case processing followed by proper selection of simillimum, homoeopathy can cure the patient holistically.

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