



International Journal of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprosy Sciences

E-ISSN: 2664-942X

P-ISSN: 2664-9411

www.dermatologypaper.com/

Derma 2020; 3(1): 04-07

Received: 04-11-2019

Accepted: 06-12-2019

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Morgellons disease: A mysterious & controversial entity with homoeopathic approach

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26649411.2020.v3.i1a.30>

Abstract

Morgellons Disease is a dermatopathy described by colorful fibers that lie under, are implanted in, or venture from skin. It is logically unverified skin condition in which people have wounds that they accept contains of stringy material. Morgellons disease isn't well understood, however it is the type of Delusional parasitosis. This article presents a concise review of the history of the mysterious disease, histopathology, symptomatology, prevalence, diagnostic approach and what Homoeopathy done for this controversial disease. Homoeopathy interconnect both mental and physical sphere, which helps the patient to recover soon. Morgellons disease treatment in modern medicine are antipsychotic medication, antidepressants and cognitive behavioural therapy. Morgellons disease is classified as a Delusion disorder in the Diagnostic and statistical Manual of Mental disorders (DSM5). So, these article stress on the different point in concise manner and how Morgellons disease is managed by Homoeopathy, special stress on Sensation of the patient which is more important symptoms of this disease.

Keywords: morgellons disease, mysterious disease, homoeopathy

Introduction

Morgellons disease is a whimsical issue that prompts the conviction that one has parasites or remote material moving in, or coming out of, the skin. Morgellons disease is a little-known turmoil that is regularly connected with vague skin, nerve, and mental indications. It is the dubious element of malady. The distinctive element of this infection is precipitously seeming ulcerative skin sore that contains irregular fibers lying under the skin. The sores are typically the result of compulsive scratching, and the fibers, when analysed, are consistently found to have originated from clothings and other textiles ^[1] It is a form of delusional parasitosis in which people have painful skin sensations that they believe contain fibers of various kinds; its presentation is very similar to other delusional infestations, but people with this self-diagnosed condition also believe that strings or fibers are present in their skin lesions. Morgellons disease is a controversial entity and it has unique feature which is represent by the sufferers. The main symptom is developed due to fibers material from the skin with or without cutaneous eruption and abnormal sensation. It has been recognized as a delusional infestation. However, recent studies are suggesting that it could be associated with an infectious organism: *Borrelia burgdorferi*. There have been a number of reports and investigations about Morgellons disease in the US or Europe, but there are none so far in Asia ^[2].

History of the Mysterious Disease

The name "Morgellons" (pronounced with either a hard or soft "g") comes from a letter written in 1674 by Sir Thomas Browne, an English physician. The letter contains a brief description of a skin disease in French children:

Hairs which have most amused me have not been in the face or head, but on the back, and not in men but children, as I long ago observed in that endemial distemper of little children in Languedock, called the Morgellons, wherein they critically break out with harsh hairs on their backs, which takes off the unquiet symptoms of the disease, and delivers them from coughs and convulsions ^[3].

Morgellons Disease is a skin disease with unknown pathology, still under investigation, it is

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so quick if we dismissed it by saying that it is purely Delusion of Parasitosis. Different study reveals that its etiology appears to be vector borne and highly associated with spirochetes, particularly Lyme Disease.

Histopathology

Histopathological studies on MD tissue show that MD filaments are not textile fibers. They are biofilaments of Human cellular origin produced by epithelial cells and stem from deeper layers of the epidermis, the upper layers of dermis, and the root sheath of hair follicles. Histological studies established that these filaments are predominantly composed of collagen and keratin, and are nucleated at base of attachment of epithelial cells thus demonstrating human cellular origin ^{[4][5]} The characteristic of filaments under the microscope resembling textile fibres and are white, black or other colour like red, blue.



Fig 1: Morgellons Disease Filaments in Skin eschar at 100x magnification

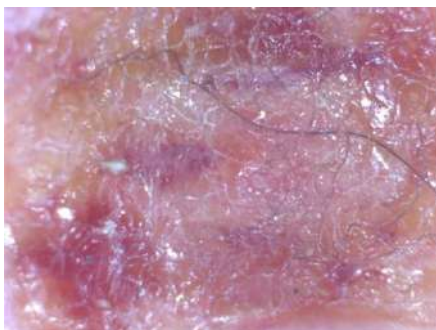


Fig 2: Embedded cutaneous blue and white filaments

Detection of pathogens

Early on in MD history, a link between MD and LD was reported. Savely and Stricker reported that 96.8% of their cohort of 122 MD patients had either positive LD serology or an LD diagnosis. A more recent study reported that 6% of LD patients in a cohort of Australian LD subjects had MD, and *Borrelia* spirochetes have repeatedly been detected in skin and bodily fluid specimens from MD subjects. Preliminary studies reported that *Bb sensu stricto* (Bbss) spirochetes were detected in dermatological tissue removed from MD lesions of four North American patients, and an ensuing study reported the detection of *Borrelia garinii* in MD samples from an Australian patient ^[3]. From this study MD considered as dermatopathy with Tick born disease.

In January 2012, the CDC released the results of the study ^[6].

Their conclusions were that 59% of subjects showed cognitive deficits and 63% had evidence of clinically significant symptoms. 50% had drugs in their systems, and 78% reported exposure to solvents (potential skin irritants).

No parasites or mycobacteria were detected in the samples collected from any patients. Most materials collected from participants' skin were composed of cellulose, likely of cotton origin.

Epidemiology

More than 14000 families are affected by Morgellons disease according to the Morgellons Research Foundation. In a 2012 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that included 3.2 million participants, the prevalence of MD was 3.65 cases per 100000 participants. ^[6] The same CDC study showed MD is most often seen in white, middle aged women.

Another study showed ^[7] that people are at a higher risk for MD if they:

1. Have Lyme disease
2. Were exposed to a tick
3. The patient of Hypothyroidism
4. The person suffers from anxiety, depression
5. Have Hypertension, asthma are more prevalence.

Classification

Clinical classification system for MD, based on duration and location of MD lesions, was previously proposed ^[8]:

1. **Early localized:** lesions/fibers present for less than three months and localized to one area of the body (head, trunk, extremities).
2. **Early disseminated:** lesions/fibers present for less than three months and involving more than one area of the body (head, trunk, extremities).
3. **Late localized:** lesions/fibers present for more than six months and localized to one area of the body (head, trunk, extremities).
4. **Late disseminated:** lesions/fibers present for more than six months and involving more than one area of the body (head, trunk, extremities).

The Patient Picture of Controversial Disease:

Symptoms of Mysterious disease mainly includes:

1. Skin Itching
2. Burning
3. Feeling like there is something like crawling
4. Disturbing crawling, stinging, and biting sensations
5. Non-healing skin lesions, which are associated with highly unusual structures.
6. The structures are described as fiber-like or filamentous, and are the most striking feature of this disease.
7. People with this disease report the presence of seed-like granules and black speck-like material associated with their skin.



Fig 3: A- Morgellons Disease on Hand; B- On Buttock

8. Other symptoms includes

- a) Chronic Fatigue Syndrome,
- b) joint pain,
- c) significant problems with concentration and memory
- d) Depression, anxiety
- e) Cardiac complains



Fig 4: Erythema with macular patch on palm & dorsum of hand, chin

Diagnostic approach:

There is no established standard for the diagnosis of Morgellons disease. As with people suffering from most medical complaints, health care professionals tend to assess individuals for this condition by gathering historical information about symptoms, as well as asking questions about medical and mental health symptoms. They perform a physical examination and may order a variety of lab tests to determine the appropriate diagnosis. To assess the specific skin complaints associated with Morgellons disease, the medical professional might request a skin biopsy.

Homoeopathic Approach

Homoeopathy is the holistic science and art. The sick individual have been treated with Law of Similia. Homoeopathy acts on both mental and physical sphere. It makes an equilibrium between both mind and body. In Homoeopathy we must stress on the mental symptoms because it play the vital role of human character. If you mentally healthy and strong physical symptom or suffering is also reduced. Homoeopathic medicine selection is based on individualization. Each and every person in the world has an unique character and on the basis of these character medicine selected. According to Dr. Kent, "The real sick man is the prior to the sick body". We also stress on miasmatic background which also play an important role for selection of medicine. In Morgellons Disease, it is the delusion of parasitosis; that means human being affected on mental sphere as well as physical symptoms are also there but mental symptom is predominant. In such cases Homoeopathy remove both mental and physical symptoms when individualized medicine is acts on.

According to Dr. Hahnemann, in Organon of Medicine ^[9]: Sec-7, ".....this outwardly reflected picture of the internal essence of the disease, that is, of the affection of the vital force....."

Sec-210, ".....in all other so called corporeal diseases the condition of the disposition and mind is always altered....."

Homoeopathic Management

Homoeopathy manage the Morgellons Disease in proper way, these type of delusive disorder Homoeopathy is the only choice of treatment. The patient subjective symptoms, the physician observation and pathological confirmation makes us clear cut idea regarding the selection of medicine. Not only medicine required some add on therapy, which ease this kind of disorder.

1. Homoeopathic medicine maintains proper balance between body and mind.
2. According to sec-228 ^[9], "In mental and emotional diseases resulting from corporeal maladies, which can only be cured by Homoeopathic antipsoric medicine conjoined with carefully regulated mode of life, an appropriate psychiacal behaviour towards the patient...."
3. For the treatment of Morgellons Disease we must stress on psychic therapy along with medicinal intervention.
4. Psychic therapy includes, According to sec-224^[9], ".....sensible friendly exhortations, consolatory arguments, serious representations and sensible advice....."
5. The patient of the mysterious disease also follow the proper diet and regimen. He must kept free from all sorts of mental exertion.
6. General Management

Repertorial analysis of Medicine

In Homoeopathy Repertory is the index of symptoms of medicine, it is the hidden treasure. It unlocks many complicated as well as difficult case. All the medicine in respect of symptoms is verified by proving, reproving as well as it is confirmed on applying upon the sick person. In case of Morgellons Disease, it is delusive disorder which needed proper medicine as well as cognitive therapy and counselling. Here, discuss some sorts of medicine which was found in different repertory.

According to S.R. Pathak Repertory ^[10]

FORMICATION, Crawling: Sec.cor (1st grade), Aconite, Agraicus, Nux.vom, Rhus.tox, Phos., Platina, Sulphur, Zinc.

- a) Affected parts: Coloc.
- b) Anxiety with: Histamin
- c) Pain after: Sec.cor, during: Hypericum
- d) Skin under: Cadm-s, Sec.cor(1st grade), Zinc
- e) Rubbing amel.: Sec.cor

According to Synthesis Repertory ^[11]

1. MIND-DELUSIONS, Worms, creeping of: Alum., Am-c., Ars., Bov., Kali-c., Mur-ac., Nux-v., Phos., Sil.
2. GENERALS- FORMICATION: Rhod (1st grade), Aco., Arn., Colch., Croc., Ph-ac., Rhus-t., Sec., Sep., Spig.
- a) Affected parts of: Arn., Coloc., Con., Rhus-t.
- b) Small spots in: Hist.
- c) Pain from: Calc-p., Hyper.

According to Dr. Kent's Repertory^[12]

GENERALITIES- WORMS, under the skin sensation: Cocaine (1st grade)

First Grade Medicine for Formication, according to different Repertory:

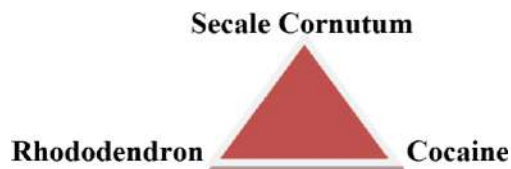


Fig 5: First Grade Medicine

Homoeopathic Medicine

Homoeopathic medicine is selected on the basis of symptom similarity. We must recognise whole symptomatology of the patient. I discuss some important medicine which we think in a case of Morgellons Disease where sensation of worm or formication, thread like feeling or Delusion of parasitosis is the prime symptoms. But final selection is done on the "Totality of Symptoms". In the MD there is presence of cutaneous eruption of skin with rashes & burning, itching. So, not only prime important should be given on formication but also other symptoms are considered for selection of similimum. In Homoeopathy we say, "Remove the symptoms, Remove the Disease". We must properly collect the symptoms of the patients and treat accordingly not going through any prejudiced thoughts.

1. **Zincum Metallicum** ^[13]: Formication of feet and legs as from bugs crawling over the skin. Itching of thighs and hollow of knees.
2. **Thallium Metallicum** ^[13]: Dermal trophic lesion. Formication beginning in fingers and extending through pelvis, perineum and inner thighs to feet.
3. **Secale Cornutum** ^[13]: Shriveled, numb, mottled dusky-blue tinged, burning sensation better by cold. Formication under the skin. Skin feels cold to touch.
4. **Cocainum Hydrochloricum** ^[13]: Sensation as if small foreign bodies or worms under the skin, moving away when touched.
5. **Alumina Silicata** ^[13]: Formication along course of nerves, veins feel full and distended. Sore to touch and pressure.
6. **Ulmus** ^[13]: Formication in feet, numb, soreness and tingling sensation. Creeping pain in legs and feet.
7. **Arsenicum album** ^[13]: Itching, burning, swelling and dry, rough, scaly skin < from cold,> heat, offensive discharge and formication.
8. **Rhus Toxicodendron** ^[13]: Red, swollen, intense itching, vesicles. Burning eczematous eruption tendency to scale formation >rubbing, from warm application
9. **Rhododendron** ^[14]: Formication; < cold, during thunder storm, > after storm
10. **Phosphorus** ^[13]: Little ulcer outside large ones, wound bleed profusely, echymosis,>washing cold water

Conclusion

Morgellons Disease is mysterious one, so we must not conclude that it happens due to delusion of parasite. The symptomatology and investigation may reveals its hidden truth. In this disease requires more scientific evidence with study to strengthen the report of controversial disease. But in Homoeopathy we treat the patient accordingly to their symptoms, but investigation also important to know the exact etiology & its prognosis. Homoeopathy may helpful for this kinds of dermopathy and successfully treat the case. But we must aware the prognosis of the disease. This article helps to know the important features of MD with what &

How Homoeopathy can helpful for the mysterious disease. Further study is necessary and requires some clinical trial to know the efficacy of Homoeopathic medicine.

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