



# Usefulness of Bach flower Remedy *Star of Bethlehem* for treatment of major depressive disorders: A case series

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## ABSTRACT

Major depression is a commonly occurring serious, recurrent disorder linked to diminished role functioning and quality of life, medical morbidity, and mortality. The past few years have witnessed an increased focus on psychological well-being in India and world. Bach flower remedies (BFRs) are a widely-available, popular form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). The flower essences can help us to improve our emotional and mental state, thus balancing the body and the mind. The individualisation approach of selecting BFR is based on causation and reaction of the individual to the presenting stressor and differs from patient to patient. BFR *Star of Bethlehem* is recommended for those who blame themselves and have feelings of Self-reproach, guilt, despondency. Four cases of depressive disorders treated by *Star of Bethlehem* 30 are presented. All the cases were improved, analysis done by Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS).

## INTRODUCTION

Depressive disorders are characterised by persistent low mood; loss of interest and enjoyment and

**Keyword** – Bach Flower Remedy, Depressive Disorders, HDRS, *Star of Bethlehem*

## INTRODUCTION

Depressive disorders are characterised by persistent low mood; loss of interest and enjoyment and reduced energy. They often impair day to day functioning of the patient.<sup>1</sup>

Major depression is a commonly occurring serious, recurrent disorder linked to diminished role functioning and quality of life, medical morbidity, and mortality.<sup>2,3</sup>

The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V)* classifies **Depressive Disorders** as Disruptive mood dysregulation disorder; Major depressive disorder, Single and recurrent episodes; Persistent depressive disorder (Dysthymia); Premenstrual dysphoric disorder; Substance/medication-induced depressive disorder; Depressive disorder due to another medical condition; Other specified depressive disorder; Unspecified depressive disorder.<sup>4</sup> The common feature of all of these disorders is the presence of persistent sad, empty, or irritable mood, accompanied by somatic and cognitive changes that significantly affect the individual's capacity to function. However, they differ according to duration, timing, or presumed aetiology.<sup>1</sup>

## Material and Methodology

These cases were treated at the O.P.D of Dr. Madan Pratap Khunteta Homoeopathic Medical College & Hospital, Sindhi Camp, Jaipur between June 2016 and December 2017. These cases were screened following DSM V criteria of depressive disorder in a structured proforma. The cases were studied as part

of Post graduate dissertation on “Effectiveness of Homoeopathic medicines vis-à-vis Bach flower remedies in cases of depressive disorders- a comparative clinical study.”<sup>3</sup> Patients presenting with Major Depressive disorder as per DSM V classification and *mild or moderate depression* according to Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS)<sup>4</sup> were included after obtaining voluntary informed consent.

The signs and symptoms of each patient were recorded in detail in a standardised case record format, including his/her clinical history, current symptoms, mental/emotional states and medication, past/family history; performing analysis and evaluation of symptoms; constructing totality of symptoms. Similimum for each case was selected in consultation with Edward Bach guidelines and single medicine was prescribed. During follow-up, changes in the signs and symptoms of each case were noted. Subsequent prescriptions were done according to Bach principles.<sup>5</sup>

Patients presented with Major Depressive disorder as per DSM V and mild, moderate depression according to Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS). Patients were advised to report at 15 days interval or early, if needed. Each time their symptoms were recorded in detail. Bach flower remedy *Star of Bethlehem* 30 was given in pills. Assessment and reassessment was done by Hamilton Depression Rating Scale<sup>5</sup>- pre and post test scores.

### **Keynote Symptoms of Star of Bethlehem <sup>6</sup>**

For those in great distress under conditions which for a time produce great unhappiness. The shock of serious news, the loss of some one dear, the fright following an accident, and such like. For those who for a time refuse to be consoled this remedy brings comfort.

### **CASE PROFILE**

#### **Case 1**

A 26- year old married Hindu female patient, houseworker, came to our OPD (OPD Reg. No. 2054/44212, dated 16/5/2016) with complaints of pain abdomen, burning on stomach, pain in head since one year. Patient was apparently well one year back then gradually developed pain abdomen, burning in epigastrium, pain in head. After marriage she left study and all complaints started after death of her father, consolation worse her condition

**Mental symptoms:** Irritability, Quarrelsome, Guilt feeling

**Physical generals:** Hot patient; thin built. Perspiration profuse on face

**Past history-** Malaria

**Family history:**

Father: died, H/O Myocardial Infarction

Mother: H/O Depression

**On General examination:** NAD

**Provisional diagnosis:** Persistent depressive disorder based on DSM V

**Assesment-** Mild depression; based on Hamilton depression rating scale (HDRS)

**Score- 12.**

#### **Evaluation & Totality of symptoms:**

- Ailments from loss of father, sadness
- Consolation worse her condition
- Perspiration profuse on face
- Pain in abdomen
- Burning sensation on stomach
- Pain in head

**Keynote Symptoms:** Ailments from loss of her father, Sadness

**First prescription:** Keynote symptoms and consulting Bach guidelines, *Star of Bethlehem* 30, thrice daily, was given to the patient on 16/5/2016.

Table 01: Follow-up of patient

Date	Symptoms & Score of Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS)	Prescription
31/5/2016	Sadness decreased. Pain in abdomen; burning sensation on stomach status quo; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 12</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
15/6/2016	Pain in abdomen; burning sensation on stomach status quo; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 12</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
30/6/2016	No physical complaints. Sadness decreased. <b>HDRS- 12</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
14/7/2016	Pain in abdomen off and on but with decreased intensity; burning sensation on stomach better; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 9</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
30/7/2016	Pain in abdomen; burning sensation on stomach; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 9</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
15/8/2016	Pain in abdomen; burning sensation on stomach ; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 8</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
30/8/2016	Pain in abdomen; burning sensation on stomach ; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 8</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
16/9/2016	Pain in abdomen; burning sensation on stomach; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 7</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
30/9/2016	Pain in abdomen; burning sensation on stomach; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 6</b>	Placebo 30/ TDS
15/10/2016	Pain in abdomen; burning sensation on stomach; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 5</b>	Placebo 30/ TDS
30/10/2016	Pain in abdomen; burning sensation on stomach; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 5</b>	Placebo 30/ TDS

**Abbreviations:**

TDS- Thrice daily; H/O -History of

**Case 2**

A 20- year old unmarried Hindu male patient, student, came to our OPD (OPD Reg. No. 26991/53300, dated 4/7/2016) with complaints of hairfall, pain in head since eight months. Patient was apparently well eight months back then gradually develops hairfall, pain in head after failure in competition, he feels sadness

**Mental symptoms:** Sadness feels after failure in examination

**Physical generals:** Chilly patient; thin built, decreased appetite.

**Past history-** NA

**Family history:**

Father: died, Cardiac arrest

Mother: H/O Depression

**On General examination:** NAD

**Provisional diagnosis:** Major depressive disorder based on DSM V

**Assesment-** Mild depression; based on Hamilton depression rating scale (HDRS) ;

**Score = 14**

**Evaluation & Totality of symptoms:**

- Sadness feels after failure in examination
- Hairfall
- Pain in head

**Keynote Symptoms:** Sadness feels after failure in examination

**First prescription:** Keynote symptoms and consulting Bach guidelines, *Star of Bethlehem* 30, thrice daily, was given to the patient on 4/7/2016.

Table 02: Follow-up of patient

Date	Symptoms & Score of Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS)	Prescription
19/7/2016	Hairfall status quo; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 14</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
3/8/2016	Hairfall status quo; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 14</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
18/8/2016	Hairfall reduced; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 12</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
2/9/2016	Hairfall reduced; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 10</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
17/9/2016	Hairfall reduced; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 9</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
2/10/2016	Hairfall reduced; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 7</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
18/10/2016	Hairfall reduced; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 6</b>	Placebo 30/ TDS
3/11/2016	Hairfall reduced; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 5</b>	Placebo 30/ TDS
19/11/2016	Hairfall reduced; pain in head better <b>HDRS- 5</b>	Placebo 30/ TDS

**Abbreviations:**

TDS- Thrice daily; H/O -History of

**Case 3**

A 29- year old married Hindu male patient, private job in cement factory, came to our OPD (OPD Reg. No. 3079/69127, dated 8/8/2016) with complaints of sadness, unknown fear for seven months. Patient was apparently well seven months back then gradually develops sadness, unknown fear after accident.

**Mental symptoms:** sadness, feeling of guilt, unknown fear

**Physical generals:** Neither hot nor chilly patient; thin built.

**Past history-** Typhoid

**Family history:**

Father: died, H/O Paralysis

Mother: H/O Diabetes

**On General examination:** NAD

**Provisional diagnosis:** Major depressive disorder based on DSM V

**Assessment-** Moderate depression; based on Hamilton depression rating scale (HDRS)

**Score = 12.**

**Evaluation & Totality of symptoms:**

- Sadness
- unknown fear after accident

**Keynote Symptoms:** feeling of guilt and self-blaming

**First prescription:** Keynote symptoms and consulting Bach guidelines, *Star of Bethlehem* 30, thrice daily, was given to the patient on 8/8/2016.

Table 03: Follow-up of patient

Date	Symptoms & Score of Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS)	Prescription
23/8/2016	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident Status quo <b>HDRS- 12</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
7/9/2016	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident Status quo <b>HDRS- 12</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
22/9/2016	Sadness reduced; unknown fear after accident Status quo <b>HDRS- 12</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
2/9/2016	Sadness reduced ; unknown fear after accident Status quo <b>HDRS- 11</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
17/9/2016	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident reduced <b>HDRS- 10</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
2/10/2016	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident reduced <b>HDRS- 10</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
18/10/2016	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident reduced <b>HDRS- 10</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
3/11/2016	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident reduced <b>HDRS- 8</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
18/11/2016	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident reduced <b>HDRS- 6</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
4/12/2016	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident reduced <b>HDRS- 6</b>	Placebo30/ TDS
18/12/2016	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident reduced <b>HDRS- 4</b>	Placebo30/ TDS
6/1/2017	Sadness ; unknown fear after accident reduced <b>HDRS- 4</b>	Placebo30/ TDS

**Abbreviations:**

TDS- Thrice daily; H/O -History of

**Case 4**

A 26- year old married Hindu male patient, student, came to our OPD (OPD Reg. No. 4005, dated 30/1/2017) with complaints of pain in head and sleeplessness for eight months. Patient was apparently well eight months back then gradually develops pain in head and sleeplessness after death of his wife, feels sadness and loneliness.

**Mental symptoms:** Sadness, Ailments from death of his wife, loneliness

**Physical generals:** chilly patient; thin built.

**Past history-** Nothing specific

**Family history:**

Father: died, H/O Depression

Mother: H/O Diabetes

**On General examination:** NAD

**Provisional diagnosis:** Major depressive disorder based on DSM V

**Assesment-** Mild depression; based on Hamilton depression rating scale (HDRS)

**Score = 12.**

**Evaluation & Totality of symptoms:**

- Sadness, Ailments from death of his wife
- Loneliness
- Pain in head
- Sleeplessness



**Keynote Symptoms:** Sadness, Ailments from death of his wife

**First prescription:** Keynote symptoms and consulting Bach guidelines, *Star of Bethlehem* 30, thrice daily, was given to the patient on 30/1/2017.

Table 04: Follow-up of patient

Date	Symptoms & Score of Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS)	Prescription
15/2/2017	Pain in head status quo; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 12</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
2/3/2017	Pain in head status quo; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 10</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
18/3/2017	Pain in head status quo; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 10</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
2/4/2017	Pain in head; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 9</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
17/4/2017	Pain in head; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 8</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
2/5/2017	Pain in head; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 7</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
18/5/2017	Pain in head; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 7</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
3/6/2017	Pain in head; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 6</b>	<i>Star of Bethlehem</i> 30/ TDS
19/6/2017	Pain in head; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 5</b>	Placebo30/ TDS
4/7/2017	Pain in head; sleeplessness better <b>HDRS- 5</b>	Placebo 30/ TDS

**Abbreviations:**

TDS- Thrice daily; H/O -History of

**Discussion:**

In this case series, 4 case studies of depression treated with *Star of Bethlehem* are presented. All the patients continued follow-ups for the next 3 months to 1year with no recurrence. No patient complained of any side effects or any negative consequences. Among the presented cases all were in the age group of 20-30 years. Indian studies have consistently reported a higher prevalence of depression in working age adults (aged 20–69 years).<sup>5</sup>

These age groups present with stressors in life like career, love, family, finance and etc. Individual reaction to stressors varies. These four cases presented with a loss of near one, shock. Although the physical presentation varied in each case. The mental symptoms revolved around the sense of self reproach and guilt. Among the Bach Flower remedies *Star of Bethlehem* presents For those in great distress under conditions which for a time produce great unhappiness. The shock of serious news, the loss of some one dear, the fright following an accident, and such like. For those who for a time refuse to be consoled this remedy brings comfort.. Taking these emotions as the cause *Star of Bethlehem*<sup>7,8,9,10</sup> was selected and helped to treat these cases. A substantial decrease in HDRS scores was evident in all cases accompanied by relief of physical symptoms. Previous five independent clinical outcome studies on understanding the clinical effects of flower essences on the treatment of depression using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Hamilton Depression Scale (HAM-D) strongly support that flower essences may be used adjunctively to facilitate the resolution of mild to moderate depression.<sup>12</sup> However a systematic review on Bach Flower Remedies for psychological problems and pain concluded that, most of the available evidence regarding the efficacy and safety of BFRs has a high risk of bias and stated BFRs are probably safe.<sup>13</sup>

**Conclusion:** This case series demonstrates the beneficial effect of *Star of Bethlehem* in treating cases of Depressive disorders where the emotional symptoms revolve around feeling of sadness after loss of someone, shock.

**Conflict of interest:** Authors have no conflict of interest.

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