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“Hiccups” – an herbal approach

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Abstract

Hiccups are the involuntary spasms that are produced in the diaphragm. Since the usage of synthetic drugs for the treatment of this disorder is limited. We have to pay more attention for the alternative methods. There are many medicinal herbs which can be used to overcome this disorder. This review deals with some of the common medicinal plants which can be used to get relief from this disorder.

Keywords: Hiccups, Herbs

Introduction

Hiccup is also known as singultus, which is a spasmodic, involuntary contraction of the inspiratory muscles, associated with delayed, abrupt glottic closure, causing a peculiar sound¹. Hiccup represents the sound produced by sudden contraction of the inspiratory muscles terminated by the abrupt closure of the glottis. It is a common disorder due to wide variety of causes including gastric distension, alcohol ingestion, excessive smoking, and irritation of the diaphragm. Hiccup appears to serve no useful purpose. Visually it is self-limited and harmless; but sometimes it is an indicator of the serious disease and may last for many days. Inhalation of 10 to 25% of the CO₂ may be used for the treatment of the intractable hiccups. Rebreathing in to a paper bag is a household method of achieving the same effect. The other measures tried are⁴;

Non-pharmacological

Stimulation of the uvula or nasopharynx (touching the uvula with a spoon, sipping iced water, sucking hard candy, swallowing dry granulated sugar, inhalation of ammonia, sneezing, breath holding, phrenic nerve block⁴.

Pharmacological

A variety of drugs have been used to treat hiccups with variable results. Chlorpromazine, Haloperidol, Metoclopramide, Carbamazepine orally, Phenytoin I.V, Magnesium sulphate I.M⁴.

Till date it has not been reported regarding the treatment against this disorder. But chlorpromazine is approved by the US food and drug administration as the only drug to treat the hiccup until now^{2, 3}. Literatures suggest that the measures ranging from conventional remedies, alternative medicines to emerging therapies may treat hiccups successfully^{2, 3}.

Herbal remedies in hiccups

Terminalia chebula

The plant is having synonyms like Harda, Haritaki. It consists of dried ripe fruits of *Terminalia chebula* of family combretaceae. It contains mainly gallic acid, chebulic acid and chebulagic acid. It is an important source of tannins of pyrogallol type, which on hydrolysis gives chebulic acid. It is used mainly as an astringent, laxative, stimulant and tonic. The laxative property is due to anthraquinone derivatives. It is also used in the treatment of ulcers^{5, 6}.

Achyranthes aspera

It consists of the dried herb of family amaranthaceae. Leaves and stem contain similar compounds belongs to the categories of alkaloids, saponins, and flavonoids. Ecdysterone is common in all these organs. A number of sugars such as hexoses and pentoses like glucose, galactose and rhamnose are present. Seeds contain fatty oil, rich in fatty acids like palmitic, stearic etc. The plant is diaphoretic, tonic, and astringent, stimulant used in colds, heart burns, hysteria, epilepsy and flatulence. Stems are used to purify blood. Leaves are used as tonic. The flowers are stimulant and aromatic ^{7,8}.

Piper longum

The plant is having Traditional names like long pepper, pipal kalan, pipli. Long pepper is the dried unripe fruits of Piper longum of family piperaceae. The major active constituent present is the volatile oil. The drug is used in stomach ache, increasing appetite and aphrodisiac also the drug is useful for the eyes. It is widely used in ayurvedic medicines such as churna. It is also used in treating cough and asthma with honey ^{6,8}.

Ziziphus jujuba

The traditional fruits of Ziziphus jujuba are known as French jejoba and as traditional Chinese medicine. The plant belongs to the family rhamnaceae. It contains constituents like anthraquinone, anthranols and their glycosides. Alkaloidal peptide occurs in some genera along with terpenoids and terpenoid saponins. Decoction of the root is given for fever and as powder for applying in old wounds. Bark is used in treating for diarrhoea. Fruits are used as blood purifier and also used for improving the digestion^{6,8}.

Tragia involucrata

The traditional names of the plants are Barhanta and Kanchluri. The plant belongs to the family euphorbiaceae. The plant is climbing herb, evergreen, clothed with stinging bristles; foliage variable. Leaves are simple, thick not cordate at base. Flowers in long racemes and are unisexual. Capsules are round. The root is of medicinal value, reputed diaphoretic and alternative. Roots are utilised in treating fever and also used in pains of arms and legs ⁸.

Pistacia integerrima

The traditional names of the plants are kakra-singi, Kakkar and Kakra. The plant belongs to the family anacardiaceae. It is a middle sized deciduous tree with rough bark. Leaves alternate, paripinnate or imparipinnate; leaflets 4-6 pairs, subopposite, lanceolate. Inflorescence, a lateral panicle. Flowers small, dioecious, apetalous. These are tonic and expectorant. The drug is use in dysentery cough, asthma, fever and stomach irritation ⁸.

Hedychium spicatum

The traditional names of the plants are Karchura, Sheldum Tech, Kapoor-kachri. The plant belongs to the family Zingiberaceae. The plant is a robust perennial shrub. Leaves are sessile and lanceolate. The rhizomes are bitter, acrid, pungent in taste and are useful in treating inflammation, asthma, pain, bronchitis and as a brain tonic ⁸.

Loranthus longifolia

The traditional names of the plants are Band, Vanda and Pilluri. The plant belongs to the family loranthaceae. It is a woody branched parasite with glabrous leaves. The bark is astringent and used for the wound and menstrual problems in women. IT is also used in treating asthma, mania and consumption ⁸.

Citrus limon

Lemon peel is obtained from the fruit of Citrus limon of family rutaceae. Dried lemon peel contain not less than 2.5% of volatile oil, Vitamin C hesperidin and other flavone glycoside, mucilage and calcium oxalate. Lemon peel is mainly used as flavoring agent. Juice of the fruit is antiscorbutic, refrigerant and it is also used in treating scurvy, rheumatism, diarrhoea and dysentery ^{6,8}.

Inula racemosa

Pushkarmool consists of the dried root of Inula racemosa of family asteraceae. The synonym of the plant is Inula royleana. The major reported constituents are alantolactone, dihydroisoalantolactone, Isoalantolactone, B-sitosterol, D-mannitol, Dihydroinunolide, Inunolise, Alantodiene etc. The major use of the plant plant is as an expectorant. The roots are used in treating of gonorrhoea and jaundice. Leaves are used to cure bronchitis, diarrhoea and dysentery⁹.

Solanum indicum

Solanum indicum belonging to the family solanaceae is found throughout the tropical region of India. Roots are traditionally used in curing asthma, cough, toothache, fever. Leaves along with ginger is used as an anti-emetic. The fruits and roots contain wax, fatty acids, alkaloid such as solanine and solanidine. The secondary metabolites like disogenin, lanosterol, sitosterol, solasornine, solamargine and solasodine are also isolated and reported¹⁰.

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