

## **DEDICATIONS**

**MR A. KALICHARAN**

My dad who is no longer with us. This thesis represents the end of a long road which we began together, where you supported, encouraged and guided me. I will carry your wisdom and strength with me always.

**MRS K. KALICHARAN**

My loving mum who is my pillar of strength and who never gave up on me. A mother's love is truly like an ocean – infinite. Your excellence as a mother and an individual is an example that I will try to follow.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Atopic eczema is a common condition that can interfere with social function, sleep and employment. Its persistence and accompanying pruritis may be stressful and frustrating for patients (Zug and McKay 1996 : 1243).

The purpose of this randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled study was to evaluate the efficacy of a homoeopathic complex (Arsenicum album 12CH, Graphites 12CH, Petroleum 12CH, Rhus toxicodendron 12CH, Sulphur 12CH and Urtica urens 12CH), in the treatment of atopic eczema in terms of its clinical manifestations and the impact on the quality of life of the patient.

Thirty patients between the ages of eighteen and sixty years who met the Diagnostic criteria (Appendix A), were selected to participate in this study. Simple random sampling was used to divide them into two equal groups of fifteen i.e. the treatment group (Group 1) and the placebo group (Group 2). The trial lasted three months; at the initial consultation patients filled in the Clinical Evaluation Index (Appendix C), the Patients' Perception questionnaire (Appendix D) and the General Well Being Schedule (Appendix E). Patients then received their three months supply of medication or placebo. Patients returned after three weeks and filled in the questionnaires and repeated this procedure every two weeks until the end of the trial. This amounted to six consultations per patient.

Statistical evaluation of the data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed using the SPSS ver. 9 package. The Friedman test and Wilcoxon signed rank test were used to analyse the intra group comparisons. These are non parametric tests. The Mann-Whitney U-test was used for the inter group comparison. Both groups showed improvements with regards to all three questionnaires. The placebo group showed consistent improvement throughout the study. Therefore, statistically there was no difference between the two groups. The results of this study demonstrated that the use of a homoeopathic complex (Arsenicum album 12CH, Graphites 12CH, Petroleum 12CH, Rhus toxicodendron 12CH, Sulphur 12CH and Urtica urens 12CH) was no more effective than the placebo in the treatment of atopic eczema.

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## **DEFINITION OF TERMS.**

**Allergen** : an antigenic substance capable of producing immediate-type hypersensitivity (allergy) (Dorland and Newman, 1988 : 47).

**Antecubital fossae:** situated in front of cubitus or elbow (Dorland and Newman, 1988 : 36).

**Anaphylaxis** : an unusual or exaggerated allergic reaction (Solomon, *et al.* 1990 : 1133).

**Antibodies:** an immunoglobulin molecule that reacts with a specific antigen, that induced its synthesis, and with similar molecules; classified according to mode of action (Dorland and Newman, 1988 : 44).

**Atopy** : a genetic predisposition to form excessive IgE antibodies to inhaled, injected or ingested antigens and to develop one or more of a group of diseases which include asthma, hay fever, urticaria, food and other allergies and atopic eczema (Edwards, *et al.* 1995 : 945-946).

**Crusts:** these are made of dried pus and blood and commonly called scabs (Memmler, *et al.* 1992 : 72).

**Cushing's Syndrome** : a condition caused by abnormally large amounts of glucocorticosteroids resulting in oedma and fat deposition to the face and trunk (Solomon, *et al.* 1990 : 1138).

**Eosinophils** : a type of white blood cell with a granular cytoplasm (Solomon, *et al.* 1990 : 1140).

**Heparin** : a mucopolysaccharide acid that inhibits the clotting process (Solomon, *et al.* 1990 : 1146).

**Iatrogenic** : any adverse condition in a patient occurring as the result of treatment by a physician / surgeon (Dorland and Newman, 1988 : 815).

**Immunoglobulins** : a protein of animal origin with known antibody activity, synthesized by lymphocytes and plasma cells and found in serum and in other body fluids and tissues (Dorland and Newman, 1988 : 301).

**Immunoglobulin E** : IgE is usually present in tiny amounts in serum. When atopic individuals are exposed to the appropriate antigens, a specific IgE antibody-antigen reaction occurs and mediators are released (Fellner, 1980 : 92).

**Lichenification** : a dry leathery thickening with increased skin markings, secondary to rubbing and scratching (Edwards *et al.* 1995 : 945).

**Macules** : these spots are neither raised nor depressed (Memmler, *et al.* 1992 : 72).

**Neutrophils** : a type of granular leukocyte (Solomon, *et al.* 1990 : 1152).

**Nummular eczema** : red and inflamed uniform distribution, no active border (White, 1998 : 101).

**Papules** : Firm, raised areas. Pimples are papules (Memmler, *et al.* 1992 : 72).

**Platelets** : a cell fragment in the plasma that functions in blood clotting (Solomon, *et al.* 1990 : 1155).

**Proteases** : a general term for a proteolytic enzyme (Dorland and Newman, 1988 : 1081).

**Pompholyx vesicles** : tiny 'tapioca' vesicles on sides of fingers, fingertips, palms and soles. Area may become red, scaly, weepy and itchy (White, 1998 : 204).

**Pustules** : lesions filled with pus (Memmler, *et al.* 1992 : 72).

**Scales** : dead cells from the stratum corneum that become visible as flaking / peeling skin, often on an erythematous papule (Solomon, *et al.* 1990 : 146).

**Simillimum** : the drug picture most like the clinical picture in the patient. It is arrived at through close analysis of information found in the homoeopathic case record (Swayne, 2000 : 194).

**T-lymphocyte** : a small mononuclear white blood cell which is part of the body's defense mechanism (Meredith, 1995 : 8).

**Type IV hypersensitivity reaction** : a state of altered reaction in which the body reacts with an exaggerated immune response to a foreign substance; Type IV is a delayed reaction which takes 12-14 hours to develop (Dorland and Newman, 1988 : 800).

**Urticaria** : an allergic reaction to foods such as milk, eggs or shellfish where the person develops inflammation with itchy and raised, white or yellow wheals (Westcott, 2000 : 23).

**Vesicles** : these are blisters or small sacs that are filled with fluid (Memmler, 1992 : 72).