



Short Report

Treatment by a homeopath during COVID-19: patient audit for Lucinda Torabi RSHom

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Abstract

This is the first audit of treatment by a homeopath during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. One experienced homeopath (LT) invited a selection of long-standing patients to join an online data collection platform (the National Health Study) and complete a new health and wellbeing questionnaire. The Virus-Health And Wellbeing checker (V-HAWK) is a simple questionnaire that collects information about: influenza virus related symptoms, COVID-19 status, health related quality of life, long standing health conditions, and treatments being used. Almost three quarters (73%) of those patients invited completed one or more V-HAWK questionnaires. Just under half (9/21) reported one or more long-standing health condition. During the three month audit period two patients, aged 57 and 70, received diagnoses of COVID, and both recovered.

Introduction

Lucinda Torabi (LT) is registered with the Society of Homeopaths who has been practising homeopathy since 1990. LT offers face to face consultations at her [clinic near Oxford](#) and consultations by phone and zoom. LT is a member of [Health Hawk](#), a new collaboration of health researchers and health practitioners who want to build healthier health systems. As part of this collaboration, the [National Health Study](#) 'Patient Voice' programme collects information directly from patients about their health and health care choices using surveys, and questionnaires. The goal of the 'Patient Voice' programme is to bring the patient perspective to discussions and decisions about how healthcare is provided.

On 16th of March 2020 in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Matt Hancock, the UK secretary of state for Health and Social Care recommended a national 'lockdown' and on March 23rd, the prime minister confirmed that everyone 'must' stay at home and certain businesses must close. Although there was national reporting of the daily number of COVID-19-related cases, hospital admissions and deaths, there was no information on the health of the UK population. In March 2020, researchers at Queen Mary University of London developed a questionnaire to collect information on the health and wellbeing of the public and patients during the pandemic – [Virus-Health And Wellbeing checker \(V-HAWK\)](#).

Methods

At the start of April LT joined the National Health Study and asked some of her long-standing patients to join the [National Health Study online patient data collection platform](#). LT emailed each patient and invited them to register with the platform, and then complete the weekly V-HAWK questionnaire. This questionnaire collects self-reported information on: influenza virus related symptoms, COVID-19 status, health related quality of life, long standing health conditions, and health treatments being used. If the patient agrees, then invitations to complete the questionnaire are automatically sent by text or email. LT agreed to share the anonymised data with the research team (CR, PF). Using this routinely collected data, an audit was undertaken of all patients registered with LT who submitted data over a three month period between the 10th April 2020 and the 9th July 2020.

Results

During this time the majority of patients were receiving homeopathic treatment from LT including homeopathic medicines for either acute and/or chronic health problems. LT invited 26 of her patients to register with the data collection platform of whom 21/26 completed the initial V-HAWK questionnaire. (73%).

Of those who completed the initial V-Hawk questionnaire, 17/21 were female. Ages ranged between 20 to 73 years. Patients took an average of 6 minutes to complete the initial questionnaire and ~2 minutes to complete the weekly follow-up questionnaires.

Less than half (9/21) reported having one or more **long-standing health condition**: 1 patient reported 4 conditions; 3 reported 3 conditions; 1 reported 2 conditions. Conditions reported included: long-standing depression, high blood pressure, insomnia, osteoarthritis, long-standing fatigue, low BP, glaucoma, macular degeneration, hypothyroidism, Hashimoto's disease, bipolar, fibromyalgia, kidney stones and coeliac disease.

No patients reported a diagnosis of **COVID-19** in the initial questionnaire, but 11 reported symptoms associated with **viruses**: fever, persistent cough, blocked noses, runny noses, sneezing, sore throat, headaches, muscle pain, wheezing and fatigue.

At the end of the survey patients were asked to *“Please list every medicine that you are taking, e.g. anti-depressants, vitamins and mineral supplements, herbal or homeopathic remedies. (Where possible describe what each is for).”*

Five patients reported taking **prescribed medication** including four who were taking thyroid medication. Other medicines reported included blood pressure tablets amlodipine/ indapamide, Cerrazette mini pill; Sodium Valporate for Bi-Polar Disorder, Hyabak Eye Drops for Dry Eyes, and Macushield Gold for Macular Degeneration. Sixteen patients reported taking one or more of a broad range of health **supplements**: multi-vitamins (5), vitamin C (5), vitamin D (10), vitamin B (5), fish oils (4), magnesium (4), selenium (3), milk thistle (2), turmeric (2), and zinc, copper, grapefruit extract, red clover, agnus castus, probiotics, propolis, and macha green tea (1 each). A total of 12 patients reported taking **homeopathic medicines**: Histamine 30, Homeopathic remedy for hay fever, Homeopathic tissue salts (Ferr P/ Sil 9x and Mang S / Zinc m 6x), Silica, Thuja, Gelsenium 30, Ambra grisea, Carcinosis 200, Plumbum 12, Sulphur, Mixed pollen, Hyper/Calen, Cuprum 200, Phosphorus 30, Sepia, and ‘Various Homeopathic remedies as needed for immune support, plus to assist with mood imbalances especially during the winter months and for pain relief in hip and knee caused by osteoarthritis’. LT noted that six patients who told her that they were taking homeopathic medicines had not reported this when completing the V-HAWK questionnaire. One possibility is that

patients might have thought that they only needed to report treatments relating to the COVID-19 virus.

Completion rates of the weekly V-Hawk questionnaires over the three month period ranged between 3 and 13. During this period, two patients, aged 57 and 70, received diagnoses of COVID and then later indicated that they had recovered.

Discussion

This is the first audit of treatment by a homeopath during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LT invited a selection of her long-standing patients to join the platform and complete questionnaires, of whom 73% completed one or more online V-HAWK questionnaires. The range of questionnaires on the National Health Study platform has now expanded to include MYMOP (Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile), the Perceived Stress Scale, Food Frequency Questionnaire and ATEC (Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist), and LT is now inviting more of her patients to join the platform and provide their 'patient voice' using one or more of these questionnaires.