UNDERSTANDING DROPSY

Dr. AADIL CHIMTHANAWALA
MBBS, DNB (Med), BHMS, MD (Hom), PGNAHI, FNAHI

Professor & Head,
Department of Homoeopathic Cardiology,
The National Academy of Homoeopathy, India
Shaad Homoeopathic Hospital Complex & Research Centre,
Opposite Itwari Railway Station,
NAGPUR, Maharashtra, INDIA. Pin: 440002.
Ph: +91 7122766286, +91 7122532008; +91 7122522563
Cell: 09822240648
www.homeoacad.org
WHAT?

• Dropsy or Oedema or Edema or hydropsy, is an abnormal accumulation of fluid beneath the skin or in one or more cavities of the body that produces swelling.

• The Middle English dropesie came through the Old French hydropsie from the Greek hydrops which in turn came from the Greek hydor meaning water.
CLASSIFICATION

Cutaneous oedema is referred to as

1. **Pitting** = after pressure is applied to a small area, the indentation persists for sometime after the release of the pressure. Peripheral pitting dropsy is the more common type, resulting from water retention. It can be caused by systemic diseases, pregnancy in some women, either directly or as a result of heart failure, or local conditions such as varicose veins, thrombophlebitis, insect bites & dermatitis.

2. **Non-pitting** = is observed when the indentation does not persist. It is associated with such conditions as lymphedema, lipoedema and myxedema. Dropsy due to malnutrition defines kwashiorkor.
GENERALIZED DROPSY

- Rise in hydrostatic pressure occurs in cardiac failure.
- Fall in osmotic pressure occurs in nephrotic syndrome & liver failure.
- Causes of generalized dropsy can cause edema in multiple organs. Eg. CCF can cause pulmonary edema, pleural effusions, ascites & peripheral edema.
- Nephrotic syndrome is due to biochemical + structural changes in the basement membrane of capillaries in the glomeruli resulting in increased permeability that leads to protein in the urine.
**GENERALIZED DROPSY**

- Dropsy can occur during late stages of pregnancy in females with h/o pulmonary problems or poor circulation also being intensified if arthritis is already present in that particular woman.
- Women with concomitant arthritis have pain from over-reactive swelling.
- Dropsy during pregnancy is found in the lower part of the leg, usually from the calf down.
A clinical state resulting from use of edible oils adulterated with *Argemone mexicana* oil. Sanguinarine and dehydrosanguinarine are two major toxic alkaloids of *Argemone* oil, which cause widespread capillary dilatation, proliferation & increased capillary permeability. Leakage of the protein-rich plasma component into the extracellular compartment leads to the formation of oedema. This leads to hypovolemia with a constant stimulus for fluid and salt conservation by the kidneys. S/S = GIT symptoms, skin rash + pigmentation, cough, shortness of breath and orthopnoea progressing to frank right-sided congestive cardiac failure. Anaemia, hypoproteinaemia, renal failure, retinal haemorrhages & glaucoma are common manifestations. There is no specific therapy. Removal of the adulterated oil and symptomatic treatment of congestive cardiac failure and respiratory symptoms. Selective cultivation of yellow mustard, strict enforcement of the Indian Food Adulteration Act, and exemplary punishment to unscrupulous traders are the main preventive measures.
ORGAN SPECIFIC DROPSY

• Cerebral oedema is extracellular fluid accumulation in the brain. It can occur in toxic or abnormal metabolic states, systemic lupus or reduced oxygen at high altitudes. It causes drowsiness or loss of consciousness.

• Pulmonary oedema occurs when the pressure in blood vessels in the lung is raised because of obstruction to remove blood via the pulmonary veins. This is usually due to Left Ventricular failure, altitude sickness or on inhalation of toxic chemicals. Pulmonary edema produces shortness of breath. Pleural effusions may occur when fluid also accumulates in the pleural cavity.

• Dropsy may also be found in the cornea of the eye with glaucoma, severe conjunctivitis or keratitis or after surgery. It may produce coloured haloes around bright lights.

• Dropsy around the eyes is called *periorbital oedema* or eye puffiness. The periorbital tissues are most noticeably swollen immediately after waking.
Edema (swelling) of the ankles and feet
ORGAN SPECIFIC DROPSY

- Myxedema is caused by increased deposition of connective tissue & an increased tendency of the tissue to hold water within its extracellular space due to an increase in hydrophilic carbohydrate-rich molecules deposited in the tissue matrix. Dropsy forms more easily in dependent areas in the elderly.

- Lymphedema - abnormal removal of interstitial fluid is caused by failure of the lymphatic system. Eg, pressure from a cancer or enlarged lymph nodes, destruction of lymph vessels by radiotherapy, or infiltration of the lymphatics by infection (elephantiasis), multiple sclerosis or paraplegia. Lymphatic return of fluid is also dependent on a pumping action of structures known as lymph hearts. It has been suggested that the oedema that occurs following use of ibuprofen or indomethacin may be due to inhibition of lymph heart action.
ORGAN SPECIFIC DROPSY

• Cutaneous dropsy is seen with mosquito/spider bites, bee stings (wheal and flare) and skin contact with plants such as Poison Ivy or Western Poison Oak - contact dermatitis.

• Hydrops fetalis is a condition of the fetus characterized by an accumulation of fluid, or dropsy in at least 2 fetal compartments.
MECHANISM

6 factors can contribute to the formation of edema:
• increased hydrostatic pressure;
• reduced oncotic pressure within blood vessels;
• increased tissue oncotic pressure;
• increased blood vessel wall permeability e.g. inflammation;
• obstruction of fluid clearance via the lymphatic system;
• changes in the water retaining properties of the tissues themselves. Raised hydrostatic pressure often reflects retention of water and sodium by the kidney.
MANAGEMENT

GENERALISED DROPSY -

Arsenicum album - Suitable in all forms of dropsy especially from dis of heart, lungs & kidneys. There is puffiness of the face + waxy transparent skin, thirst, vomiting, etc. Ulcers with serum oozing from the legs.

Acetic acid - Waxen, emaciated skin. Dropsy in lower limbs + abd. Thirst++, Sweating++, sour belching, water brash and diarrhea

Thyroidinum – dropsy of limbs and face due to hypothyroidism

Apocynum Cannabinum – S/o gone feeling at the pit of stomach, cannot tolerate food, thirst++++, but drinking causes distress, irregular heart + slow pulse.
DROPSY DUE TO ORGAN DYSFUNCTION

Kidney Diseases

- **Apis mellifica** - Post scarlatinal dropsy. Thirstless + Skin is pale and waxy, transparent + Urine scanty. Nettle-rash +/-.

- **Terebinth**: Congestion of the kidney, dull aching in renal region and dark, smoky urine.

- **Squilla maritima** – acute dropsy due to suppression of urine.

- Cochlearia, Fumaric Acid, Galega, Lupulus, Stigmata Maydis, Kali Nit
DROPSY DUE TO ORGAN DYSFUNCTION

Heart Failure –

- **Digitalis** - Cardiac dropsies; feeble irregular pulse, S/o desire to take a deep breath; scanty, dark, albuminous urine, scrotum and penis swollen. Hydropericardium, hydrothorax. Cold sweat. Dropsies of brain. Post scarlatinal dropsy, anasarca with a bluish cyanotic color.

- **Lachesis** - Dropsy, urine dark and albuminous, dark skin or bluish white. Hydrothorax with suffocative fits after scarlet fever may indicate the remedy.

- **Spigelia** – hydrothorax; danger of suffocation when making the least motion or rising the arms.

- **Strophanthus**
DROPSY DUE TO ORGAN DYSFUNCTION

Liver Failure -

- **Lycopodium**: Lower half of body + abd distended. Ulcers form on lower extremities.
- **Aurum Mur** – dropsy with albuminuria; with intermittent hectic fever; from dis of liver or spleen
- **Muriatic acid** – dropsy from cirrhosis. Drowsiness, emaciation; dry mouth; apthae; stool watery, involuntary, stomach weak and irritable, vomit++
- **China** – anasarca/ ascites in liver & spleen dis; after loss of blood, dropsy in drunkards; skin pale and waxy, disinclination to mental or physical exertion; face hollow, pale and livid.
DROPSY DUE TO ORGAN DYSFUNCTION

Cerebral Dropsy

**Helleborus** - Jelly-like diarrhea, urine dark + scanty. Anasarea, ascites, post scarlatinal dropsy & Hydrocephalus

**Asterias Rubens**

Pulmonary Dropsy

**Sulphur** – hydrothorax; Sudden arrest of breathing <night. Dropsy < suppressed eruptions, quick pulse, cold feet.

**Antim Ars, Carbo Veg, Jaborandi**
DROPSY DUE TO ORGAN DYSFUNCTION

Rheumatism –

• **Colchicum.** Dropsy with dark urine, especially as a complication of rheumatism may indicate this remedy.

• **Bryonia Alba** – anasarca and oedema of the feet; hydrothorax; ascites; congestion of the head; lower eyelids edematous; great thirst and scanty urine; obstinate constipation; dropsy after scarlet fever; the swelling increasing in daytime and lessening in night.

• **Colchicum** – dropsy after scarlatina, dropsy of cavities and internal organs, especially hydro pericardium; lower limbs edematous and cold; skin dry and pale.
DROPSY DUE TO ORGAN DYSFUNCTION

Rheumatism –

- **Dulcamara** – sudden anasarca from previous overheating and subsequent exposure to damp cold while in a state of perspiration; general oedema from intermittent fever, with bloated face, swelling of abdomen and limbs; anasarca after previous rheumatic fever.

- **Rhus Tox** – dropsy of lower extremities with constant profuse oozing of water from the ulcerated spots which do not form pus.
DROPSY DUE TO ORGAN DYSFUNCTION

ASITES – Adonis ver, Merc Sulph, Quercus, Oxydendron, Cardus Mar

PERITONITIS – Bryonia, plumbum

TUB PERITONITIS - Abrotanum

MALIGNANT ASCITES – Rauwolfia

DROPSY EYE – Natrum pyruvium, Paris quadrifolia
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