


Antimonium Tartaricum as a Possible Homeopathic Prophylactic Remedy in the COVID-19 Epidemic

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Homeopathy

Abstract

The current COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) epidemic has proved challenging due to its high impact on physical and mental health. According to Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, in an epidemic the most severe symptoms of the clinical condition presented by the population in question should be the basis for selecting the medication that is as similar as possible to them, and which should be administered to individuals who have been exposed to the disease but have not yet developed it. This medicine is called the genus epidemicus. This study aims to demonstrate the reasoning used to propose the homeopathic medicine *Antimonium tartaricum* (*Ant-t*) as a genus epidemicus in the COVID-19 epidemic. It was decided to develop the reasoning based on the respiratory symptoms described in the epidemiological bulletins presented by the Health Surveillance Secretariat of the Ministry of Health of Brazil, as these symptoms are the most serious of the disease. After repertorization, it was confirmed in the *Materia Medica* that *Ant-t* has a high degree of similarity with these respiratory symptoms, including the most serious situations, of COVID-19. Homeopathic *Ant-t* is thus a possible prophylactic genus epidemicus in the COVID-19 epidemic; further studies are needed to test this conclusion.

Keywords

- ▶ COVID-19
- ▶ homeopathy
- ▶ prophylaxis
- ▶ *Antimonium tartaricum*

Introduction

The epidemic of COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) has proven to be enormously challenging for humanity. In the face of a worldwide public calamity scenario, with high impacts on physical and mental health as well as the global economy, there has been a great gap in medicine in terms of both prevention and resolution of the epidemic.^{1,2}

Homeopathy, recognized as a medical specialty by Brazil's national regulatory medical organisations (Federal Council of Medicine and Brazilian Medical Association) since 1980,

has its own and well-documented literature^{3–12} in the face of various epidemics in the history of mankind, including in Brazil^{8–12} where it was able to contribute to reducing incidence rates as well as impact positively on the population's health.^{3–12} The choice of the most appropriate medicine to help protect individuals in each epidemic (or outbreak) will depend on the set of symptoms presented by that population at the time of each outbreak.

Through techniques described by Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of the homeopathic medical doctrine, and

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based on the symptoms presented by the population, a medication is chosen that is as similar as possible to the total symptoms presented in the epidemic; this medicine is called a genus epidemicus. In the sixth edition of the *Organon of the Art of Healing*, in paragraphs 100 to 102, Hahnemann describes the guidelines to determine the genus epidemicus.¹³

One might not be able to get a complete picture of the disease in the first case of an epidemic, but there is the possibility to become familiar with the set of signs and symptoms by closely observing several cases of the disease and thus reaching the most suitable homeopathic remedy.

It was in this way that Hahnemann chose the drugs he administered in the epidemics he faced, as appears in his article, “Cause and Prevention of Asian Cholera”, on the cholera epidemic in Germany in 1831.³

The use of the genus epidemicus has the purpose of reducing the possibility of developing severe disease in individuals who may come into contact with the etiologic agent, minimizing health problems in the population affected by the epidemic.¹³

Homeopathy, being part of the practices validated by the Ministry of Health within the national health scenario through the National Policy of Integrative and Complementary Practices—PNPIC,¹⁴ and therefore having official validation in its use as well as its strong history in epidemics, could contribute to a legitimate and methodologically based strategy to reduce the population impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the reasoning used to propose the use of *Antimonium tartaricum* (*Ant-t*) as a prophylactic homeopathic medicine in the COVID-19 epidemic.

Methods

The repertorization technique was used to choose the genus epidemicus, which consists of looking within the list of medicines described in the homeopathic *Materia Medica* for the one that best fits the set of peculiar and detailed symptoms that is referred to by patients during the epidemic. Therefore, for the current COVID-19 epidemic, slightly different characteristics are noted in each country or location where it manifests itself. In this study, it was decided to follow the reasoning based on the symptoms presented by the Health Surveillance Secretariat of the Ministry of Health of Brazil, shared through its epidemiological bulletins.¹⁵

When seeking the genus epidemicus of COVID-19, it is intended to prevent and avoid the serious and potentially lethal forms of the disease. Thus the guiding symptoms to be emphasized are those in the pulmonary phase of the disease, and so we selected the respiratory symptoms described in the epidemiological bulletin of the Center for Public Health Emergency Operations (COE-COVID-19).¹⁵ This decision was guided by Hahnemann’s recommendations, which guide the selection of the most severe symptoms of the condition in the search of the genus epidemicus; that is, the chosen

medication must cover the symptoms of the severe phase of the disease, to have prevention potential for the population not yet infected. In his article, “Cause and Prevention of Asian Cholera”,³ Hahnemann exemplifies this conduct during the cholera epidemic in Germany, in 1831: “[...] In the first stage, *Camphor* provides quick relief. [...] If this period of the onset of the disease so favorable to recovery and rapid healing, with the above mentioned use of *Camphor*, is neglected, then things get worse, and *Camphor* is no longer useful [...] if in such cases conclusive benefit is not so soon realized, then one should no longer waste time in administering the medicine for the second stage. The patient should receive one or two globules of the purest copper preparation [...] The preparation of copper, together with a good and moderate diet, and adequate attention to hygiene, is the safest protective preventive; those in good health should take a small globule of it (*Cuprum X*) once a week in the morning fast, and not drink anything immediately afterward, but this should not be done until the cholera is in the locality, or in the neighborhood. The individual’s health will not be disturbed in the slightest with this dose [...]. *Camphor* cannot preserve those who are healthy from cholera, but only the above preparation of copper [...]”³

After repertorization, a thorough study of the *Materia Medica* of homeopathic medicines with the highest score was made. The following *Materia Medica* authors were used: Hahnemann,^{4,16} Kent,¹⁷ Hering,¹⁸ Boenninghauser,¹⁹ Boger,²⁰ Vijnovsky,²¹ Lathoud²² and Allen.²³ Next, the pulmonary and extrapulmonary symptoms found in the homeopathic *Materia Medica* with the highest repertorization scoring remedies were compared with the symptoms of COVID-19 described in the literature.^{24,25}

Results

Below (→ **Table 1**) is a list of the respiratory symptoms described in the epidemiological bulletin of the COE-COVID-19¹⁵ with the corresponding rubrics: that is, the description of these symptoms in the form in which they appear in the repertory of choice for this study.²⁶

Tabulated further below (→ **Table 2**) is the scoring of the drugs through the repertory technique. When a drug receives a high score in the repertory technique, it is understood that such a drug has a high degree of similarity with the total symptomatic picture described. Given the above, and after repertory analysis, it is observed that the drug *Ant-t* received the highest score (38 points) among the evaluated drugs, with *Arsenicum album* being in second place, with 37 points, followed by *Phosphorus* with 35 points.

After studying the *Materia Medica*^{4,16–23} of these three medicines, the drug *Ant-t* was chosen as the genus epidemicus for the current epidemic of COVID-19, as this is the drug with the highest degree of similarity with the total symptomatic picture described in the most severe cases of the disease, which is what we want to avoid with the use of the genus epidemicus in the general asymptomatic population.

Table 1 Respiratory symptoms of COVID-19¹⁵ and the corresponding rubrics²⁶

Symptoms of COVID-19	Rubric number	Repertory rubrics
Dry cough	1	Dry cough
Difficulty breathing	2	Respiration > respiration difficult
Catarrh production	3	Respiration difficult from mucous
Nasal congestion	4	Nose > catarrh in the nose
Conjunctival congestion	5	Eye > inflammation of the conjunctiva
Sore throat	6	Throat > pain > sore > on swallowing
Difficulty to swallow		
Coryza	7	Nose > coryza
Cyanosis	8	Face > discoloration, bluish
	9	Generalities > cyanosis
Nose flaring	10	Nose > motion of wings constant in pneumonia
Retractions	11	Respiration > abdominal
Lack of air	12	Respiration > difficult
	13	Respiration > difficult with cough
Lung inflammation	14	Chest > inflammation of lungs
	15	Chest > inflammation of lungs > pleura-pneumonia
Anosmia	16	Nose > smell > wanting, lost
Severe respiratory insufficiency	17	Respiration > asphyxia

Discussion

In homeopathy, the medicine always causes symptoms similar to what you want to cure or prevent, and then a reaction of the organism is observed in the opposite direction to this drug stimulus (law of similarity), then having a possibility of cure. In addition, the drug is not specific to the disease to be prevented, but to the set of symptoms that most patients experience during a given epidemic outbreak, for example. Therefore, if there are two epidemics of the same disease in the same population, at different times, the medication used may not be the same.¹³

Although it is known that the virus responsible for COVID-19 is mainly related to the development of lung disease, including pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome, there are also many extrapulmonary manifestations of the disease.^{24,25} Three stages of the disease, with different symptoms, have been described²⁷:

- First stage (1st to 4th days): beginning with a sore throat, anosmia, anorexia, diarrhea or mild vomiting, and then the development of fever, fatigue, muscle pain and dry cough.
- Second stage (5th to 7th days): the patient may develop respiratory symptoms or pneumonia.
- Third stage (8th to 10th days): some patients have a high chance of developing severe acute respiratory syndrome.

A study of the *Materia Medica* for *Ant-t* shows good coverage of this medication in relation to the symptoms described in the COVID-19 charts, especially those referring

Table 2 Score received for medications after repertorization of COVID-19 respiratory symptoms using Kent's repertory²⁶

Rubric ^a	<i>Acon</i>	<i>Ant-t</i>	<i>Ars</i>	<i>Bell</i>	<i>Bry</i>	<i>Camph</i>	<i>Carb-ac</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Lyc</i>	<i>Phos</i>	<i>Rhus-t</i>
1	3	1	3	3	3	1	2	3	2	3	2
2	2	3	3	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	2
3		3	3			1					
4	2	1	3	3	1	1	2	1	3	2	3
5	3	1	3	3	1			1	2		3
6	1	1	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	2
7	2	1	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	3	3
8	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2
9	1	2	2	2	1	3		1	1	1	2
10		2							3	2	
11		3			1					2	
12	2	3	3	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	2
13	1	3	3	2	1			1	2	3	1
14	3	3	3	2	3	1		2	3	3	3
15		3			3	2		2		3	2
16		2	2	3	2	1			2	3	2
17		3				2		1			1
Score	22	38	37	30	28	21	11	26	32	35	30

Abbreviations: *Acon*, *Aconitum napellus*; *Ant-t*, *Antimonium tartaricum*; *Ars*, *Arsenicum album*; *Bell*, *Belladonna*; *Bry*, *Bryonia alba*; *Camph*, *Camphora officinarum*; *Carb-ac*, carbolic acid; *China*, *China officinalis*; *Lyc*, *Lycopodium clavatum*; *Phos*, *Phosphorus*, *Rhus-t*, *Rhus toxicodendron*.

^aThe rubric numbers refer to the Repertory Rubrics described in ► **Table 1**.

to the respiratory system, in addition to having mental characteristics that are also noted in the context of the current epidemic, such as anxiety, with the feeling that he/she will die due to poor health¹⁷ and which increases due to the weakness that settles and intensifies,¹⁷ evolving to fatigue, exhaustion, prostration and drowsiness,¹⁸ apprehension and extreme anxiety.¹⁸

It was possible to confirm in the *Materia Medica* of *Ant-t*, besides the respiratory symptoms, the presence of the symptoms described by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the three stages of the disease,²⁷ plus others reported in the literature and observed in clinical practice in patients laboratory-diagnosed with COVID-19:

- Cold with decreased or loss of smell and taste; the food seems tasteless; bitter taste in the mouth.^{18,21,22}
- Many headaches: pain with pressure; throbbing; tearing; in stitches; pain as if the forehead was tightened by a loop.^{17,18,21,22}
- Vertigo that changes with prostration and torpor²²; vertigo when closing your eyes; when walking; with flicker before the eyes; when raising the head; forcing him to lie down.^{18,21}
- Inflammation of the conjunctiva, with major tearing.¹⁸
- Nasal obstruction²²; dry mucous membranes.¹⁷
- Feeling of pain in the back of the palate other than in the act of swallowing. Feeling of roughness in the throat. Painful swallowing.¹⁸
- Hoarseness, worse when speaking.¹⁸
- The noise of mucus in the trachea when coughing or breathing, without being able to eliminate it.¹⁸
- Catarrhal inflammation of the entire mucosa of the respiratory system, most intense in the terminal parts of the respiratory tree: bronchi, bronchioles, and pulmonary alveoli.²²
- Anxiety with oppression of the chest (unable to expand the chest) and intense heat in the cardiac region.^{18,19}
- Short cough, by any type of exercise; dry, sometimes has thick mucus expectoration, with great difficulty; the intense effort to try to expectorate can lead to nausea and vomiting. Has suffocating attacks.¹⁹
- Eating causes coughing fits, accompanied by pain in the chest and larynx; in its suddenness, the coughing provokes mucous and food vomiting.²²
- Dyspnea and cough compel the person to be out of bed, with a feeling of suffocation and oppression, and make him sit and fan himself to be able to breathe. Breathing difficult (short, fast, heavy and anxious).^{17,18}
- Pale, cold face, covered with cold sweat, sickly aspect; eyes with deep dark circles; dry, pale lips; dilated nostrils with a dark inner surface; the wings of the nose have synchronous movements with those of breathing; a face with an expression of suffering; cyanotic, difficult breathing, intense dyspnea, and asphyxiation is threatening.^{17,19,21,22}
- The condition can evolve quickly and may cause early prostration, or there may not be prostration as characteristic of the remedy and it only appears at 3, 4 or 7 days. In the first days of the disease, the characteristics of the

remedy do not stand out: as long as the patient's reaction is good and their strength is maintained, 'Hippocratic face', weakening, invincible drowsiness, cooling or cold sweat are not observed.¹⁷

- Broncho-pneumonia.^{18,21}
- According to Boger,²⁰ *Ant-t* has a more marked effect on mucous membranes, on the vagus nerve (mainly in terms of the innervation of bronchi, lungs and heart), in circulation, in breathing, in the stomach, in the intestine, in the lumbar region, and in the skin—with effects on the innervation of the bronchi, lungs and heart being most intense, which corroborates the more intense changes observed in patients with COVID-19. In the *Materia Medica* of Lathoud,²² these regions are also described as those most responsive to *Ant-t*.

Making a parallel between the extrapulmonary manifestations of COVID-19 and the symptoms described in the *Materia Medica* of *Ant-t*, similarities can be observed in each affected location.

As for the cardiac part, the following is described in the *Materia Medica* of *Ant-t*: palpitation, great precordial discomfort with vomiting of mucus and bile; full/strong and fast pulse in the elderly; rapid, weak, and irregular pulse; thin and weak pulse.^{18,21} Changes in heart rate are reported in patients with COVID-19, such as recent-onset atrial fibrillation, ventricular arrhythmias, sinus tachycardia and sinus bradycardia.²⁴

According to Lathoud's *Materia Medica*,²² *Ant-t* acts especially on the ganglionic nervous system and can cause changes in the parasympathetic innervation of tissues and organs, particularly in the lungs and abdominal viscera, which may be related to colic spasmodic conditions and diarrhea described by the action of *Ant-t*. The following symptoms are also related to this medication: sharp abdominal pain;^{17,21} enteritis associated with flatulence and colic; diarrhea with much abdominal pain¹⁹; spasmodic cramps with much flatulence²²; tympanic abdomen¹⁷; diarrhea that accompanies or follows vomiting; watery diarrhea;^{19,23} pasty and mucous stools;¹⁹ and diarrhea in pneumonia.²¹

Along with lung problems, there are digestive changes, especially gastric disorders, which are the most prominent in *Ant-t*.²¹ Symptoms include pain from overload, pain with pressure, great gastric sensitivity¹⁹; constant and intense nausea²¹; vomiting with leftover food and mucus; vomiting even by drinking a small amount of water; indigestion; aversion to food¹⁷; decreased appetite¹⁸; decreased taste¹⁹; very thirsty and desire to drink cold liquids in small quantities and frequently,^{18,19,21,22} but in most cases not thirsty^{17,18,21,22}; craving for acidic fruits and drinks, which aggravate it and lead to vomiting and diarrhea^{17,21,22}; incessant vomiting all night, with diarrhea¹⁸; violent efforts to vomit small amounts, with epigastric pain, followed by frontal lobe headache^{17,18,22}; passive liver congestion, with vomiting of bile,^{17,22} and a touch-sensitive liver region.¹⁸ Vomiting and diarrhea are followed by drowsiness and prostration.¹⁸

Some of these symptoms appear in patients with COVID-19, such as diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, and anorexia.^{24,25} Rare cases of gastrointestinal bleeding have been described,²⁴ which also appears in the *Materia Medica* of *Ant-t* (bloody diarrhea¹⁹ and hemorrhagic vomiting).^{17,22}

Regarding urinary symptoms, *Ant-t* is associated with a change in the color of the urine, becoming dark brownish-red, cloudy, albuminous, with an intense odor and sandy sediment. The person urinates in small amounts, with blood dripping at the end of urination, and may experience violent pain in the bladder and burning in the urethra during and after urination.^{18,21}

On the skin, *Ant-t* causes pustular eruptions, similar to smallpox and chickenpox lesions,¹⁹ with pruritic pustules that soon dry all over the body.¹⁸ Initially, they are reddish papules, which sometimes merge together, fill with serous pus with an inflammatory areola around each pustule, which when dried forms crusts, and when resolved do not leave a scar; at other times the pustules ulcerate and deepen, become painful and form chronic scars.²² There may also be a skin rash throughout the body, with pruritus.¹⁸ It was observed that some patients with COVID-19 had dermatological changes, including erythematous rash, urticaria, petechiae, vesicles (similar to chickenpox), maculopapular rash, and exanthema skin rashes.²⁴ Vesicular lesions, papules and skin rash are very similar to those described in the *Ant-t Materia Medica*.

This medication has many body aches and joint pains,¹⁷ associated with weakness, tiredness and a feeling of heaviness in the limbs,¹⁸ as it is also described by patients with COVID-19. Weakness and prostration are very important signs in the *Ant-t* patient,²² who can develop great drowsiness and numbness that can lead to coma.^{17,21}

The fever is violent, but not long-lasting after a prolonged chill; or the fever is long-lasting, after a short chill, with drowsiness and with sweating on the forehead. There are chills several times a day, with drowsiness and tremor and perspiration that can be profuse all over the body, including at night, with cold and sticky sweat, with the affected parts having the most abundant perspiration.¹⁸

In cases of pneumonia that start with chills, there may be a violent attack that will cause early prostration: that is, after 3 to 4 days. The violence of the crisis leads the patient to a state of prostration or else he/she was already weakened by age and therefore soon prostrated with the disease.¹⁷ The initial stage is not violent,¹⁷ which is also similar to the evolution of COVID-19.

Inflammation of the airways tends to be accompanied by dry mucous membranes or a sparse flow of mucus. Inflammation increases and quickly leads to a state of weakness and lack of responsiveness.¹⁷

It was possible to confirm in the *Materia Medica* that *Ant-t* has a high degree of similarity with the total symptomatic picture described in COVID-19 cases, mainly in relation to the respiratory symptoms, including the most serious situations.

It would be highly desirable to administer a prophylactic medicine that works as a genus epidemicus for this epidemic to help control it, reducing the likelihood of severe respiratory symptoms in individuals who come into contact with

the virus. Thus, the use of *Ant-t* may be indicated as a prophylactic possibility for the current epidemic.

Conclusion

Based on standard concepts of the homeopathic doctrine and after analyzing results obtained by applying the repertory technique and confirming a similarity between the picture of COVID-19 and the description of the symptoms related to *Ant-t* in *Materia Medica*, we come to the conclusion that this remedy is a possible homeopathic genus epidemicus in the COVID-19 epidemic. However, further studies are needed to test this prophylactic possibility.

Highlights

- Hahnemann's homeopathic reasoning has been used in the search for a genus epidemicus for COVID-19.
- Respiratory symptoms described in epidemiological bulletins were used to decide on a prophylactic remedy, as these are the most serious symptoms of the disease.
- The homeopathic remedy *Antimonium tartaricum* has a high degree of similarity with the total symptoms of COVID-19.
- *Antimonium tartaricum* may be a possible genus epidemicus in the COVID-19 epidemic.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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