

18th International Conference on **Pediatrics Health**
&
2nd Edition of International Conference on **Adolescent Health & Medicine**

August 06-07, 2018 Madrid, Spain

Homeopathy treatment for functional abdominal pain in children: Randomised placebo-controlled trial

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Background: Functional Abdominal Pain (FAP) is one of the most common complaints of children and can result in distress and discomfort in both the child and the parents. Children with FAP have diminished quality of life, miss their school days with parents miss their day works. Accordingly, childhood FAP affects the economy and health of the society. No study has evaluated the effectiveness of homeopathy in the treatment of childhood FAP. This randomized placebo-controlled trial tested the efficacy of homeopathy intervention to improve outcomes in idiopathic childhood abdominal pain.

Methods: Two hundred children with persistent functional abdominal pain were randomly assigned to one of two groups- individualised homeopathy intervention or placebo intervention. Children were assessed at pre-treatment, 3 months, and 6 months post-treatment. The primary outcome measure was treatment response defined as at least 2-point reduction in the Wong-Baker FACES Pain Rating Scale or “no pain” after medication. Secondary outcomes included the physician-rated global severity and improvement using the Clinical Global Impression Severity and Improvement Scales (CGI-S, CGI-I).

Results: Children in homeopathy group showed greater baseline to follow-up decreases in pain and gastrointestinal symptom severity than children in the placebo at 3 months ($P < 0.01$) and at 6 months ($p < 0.001$). Both treatment conditions resulted in improvements on measures of pain intensity and pain behavior. However, the children receiving homeopathy had a higher rate of complete elimination of pain, lower levels of relapse at 6 months, and lower levels of interference with their activities because of pain and parents reported a higher level of satisfaction with the treatment than children receiving placebo.

Conclusion: Homeopathy intervention aimed at reducing children's abdominal pain and symptom appears to be helpful.

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