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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Influenza and its complications are common at all ages, especially in children. Vaccines and anti-influenza drugs aim to prevent it. Preventative approaches with favorable risk profiles should be considered for flu, particularly since the evidence of the efficacy of anti-viral drugs is debated.

METHODS: This pragmatic clinical trial was conducted in the Brazilian Public Health System in Petrópolis (BPHSP) with children aged from 1 to 5 years old. The medications used were mainly selected based on in vitro experiments (InfluBio), and in successful qualitative clinical experiences (Homeopathic Complex). Following informed parental consent, subjects were randomly distributed, in a blind manner, to three experimental groups: Homeopathic Complex, Placebo, and InfluBio. BPHSP health agents collected flu and acute respiratory infection symptomatic episodes monthly following the established protocol. The number of these episodes was registered in one year (2009-2010).

RESULTS: Out of the 600 children recruited, 445 (74.17%) completed the study (149: Homeopathic complex; 151: Placebo; 145: InfluBio). The number of flu and acute respiratory infection symptomatic episodes detected in this clinical trial was low; however, it was different between homeopathic groups and placebo (p < 0.001). In the first year post-intervention, 46/151 (30.5%) of children in the placebo group developed 3 or more flu and acute respiratory infection episodes, while there was no episode in the group of 149 children who used Homeopathic Complex, and only 1 episode in the group of 145 (1%) children who received InfluBio.

CONCLUSION: These results suggested that the use of homeopathic medicines minimized the number of flu and acute respiratory infection symptomatic episodes in children, signaling that the homeopathic prophylactic potential should be investigated in further studies.

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KEYWORDS: Clinical trial; Flu; Homeopathic medicines; Influenza

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