

SCIATICA: DIFFERENTIAL THERAPY ACCORDING TO THE HOMŒOPATHIC POINT OF VIEW

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Translated from the German by Waldo C. Peebles.

Just as we must reckon with a great number of symptoms in sciatica (painful conditions along the sciatic nerve—radiations being possible from the buttock to the heel), the homœopathic remedies for sciatica are equally numerous, although with more careful examination they shrink to a relatively small number.

In order to simplify the choice of remedies for the beginner in Homœopathy, I have characterized the forms of sciatica in question briefly with one name, which either includes the leading symptom or contains the cause of the pain, as the case may be.

According to *Dahlke*, the chief remedy for sciatica is *Colocynthis*, whose bright yellow tincture tastes very bitter and produces severe diarrhea. The homœopathic physician makes use of the potency of about 2x to 3x, possibly 4x with especially sensitive patients. The remedy has an affinity for the following organs: 1. the small intestine, 2. the colon, 3. the trifacial nerve; and above all, however, for the sciatic nerve. By way of simple outline I cite *Rall's* scheme of guiding symptoms: like an attack, sudden, like a flash starting as a cramp, tearing, cutting. The patient has a feeling as though his leg were in a vise. Time of occurrence: at night.

Modalities: Aggravation through 1. a light touch, reason: oversensitive area of the skin, 2. through the slightest motion, 3. through cold, 4. through anger, reason: *Colocynthis* is a gall remedy. Amelioration: 1. through heavy pressure, 2. through rest, 3. through heat, 4. through drawing the leg up or bending the upper part of the body forward. Reason: It is a regulatory measure, in order to relieve the cramp.

With respect to the constitution it is a question of choleric, gouty-rheumatic patients, whose disposition is for the most part irritable and nervous.

For the treatment of sciatica with *Colocynthis* we are dealing above all with the sciatica which accompanies enteritis. To illustrate the curative action in this form of sciatica I should like to mention a case reported by *Dr. Schier*:

A strong 31-year old woman suffered for two years from ischialgia (pain in the sciatic nerve without any reason for being present, for instance inflammation) with severe cramp-like pains in the left leg, as if the hip-joint and upper thigh were enclosed in clamps. At the same time she suffered from periodic diarrhea with colic and facial neuralgia besides. *Colocynthis*

3x improved the suffering of years' duration and after 14 days the patient could be dismissed as cured. Beyond any doubt there was here a real *similimum* in *Colocynthis*. The patient presented, to a certain extent, a complete proving of the medicinal picture of *Colocynthis*. The pinching pains in the lower thigh and hip-joint, the trifacial neuralgia with the characteristic intestinal catarrh and colic, relieved by pressure, could not leave any doubt as to whether some other remedy might be considered. It was, as *Schier* writes, a direct hit.

A very popular remedy is *Gnaphalium polycephalum*, from the yellow tincture, formerly used for dysentery, a 2x or 3x is prepared.

The guiding symptom for this remedy is the feeling of numbness and as of ants crawling in the branches of the sciatic nerve, especially in the area of the calf muscles, alternating with pains.

Modalities: Aggravation through motion. The disturbing sensations are actually more unpleasant than the pain in the course of the sciatica nerve itself. The patient feels better when sitting and worse when standing or walking.

The remedy is indicated especially in the old cases in which inflammation of the nerves exists with loss of reflexes and shrinkage of the muscles.

Rhus toxicodendron, the poisonous sumach. From the red, peculiar smelling, somewhat astrigent tincture a 3x or 4x is prepared. According to Prof. *Hoff*, *Rhus tox.* 3x is indicated when a root sciatica (inflammation of the sciatic nerve in the vicinity of its root, greater hence as its exist from the spine) occurs with simultaneous lumbago-like pains.

Modalities: 1. Aggravation: At rest and on beginning movement (as often in cases of inflammation or degeneration of the joints); at night, especially in a change to cold, wet weather,

Amelioration: 1. Through continued movement, 2. through heat and by warm weather.

Schmidt, a student of *Stiegele*, writes that sciatica patients on reception into a hospital the first night after taking *Rhus tox.* declared they had not slept so well for a long time.

Obviously it is a question here of a rheumatic sciatica. Suggestion plays no part, since the patients had been treated with other remedies without success.

Pulsatilla pratensis (ranunculus plant). In this remedy the constitutional aspect is important, hence the *Pulsatilla* type with its gentle, tearful character, effeminate type with a psychotic touch and subject to sensitivity of the venous system.

From the somewhat sharp tasting yellow tincture a 4x to 6x is prepared. The remedy is especially indicated in venous swellings (bluish transparent veins) as well as subnormal functioning of the ovaries.

Modalities: Aggravation: 1. through rest, especially in a warm closed

room, reason: further relaxation of the veins, 2. At night in the warmth of the bed.

Amelioration: 1. on motion, 2. in fresh air, hence in the open. The period is mostly scanty and very late. The pains change their location often, reason: cramp of the various sections of the veins.

Cimicifuga racemosa—bugbane; is especially indicated in simultaneous disease of the feminine abdominal organs; for example, shifting from place to place. It is the remedy for nervous women with increased depression and moodiness arising from the uterus. The character of the pain is varied and very capricious, as well as the disposition of the patient. Quite frequently there exists a set of symptoms of the cervical spinal column consisting in pains in the joints and muscles. The peculiar golden tincture is obtained from the rootstock.

Modalities: Aggravation: 1. through cold and dampness, corresponding to the rheumatic symptoms, 2. before and after the period. The type is generally thin.

Ammonium carbonicum—Hartshorn salt: otherwise used for *conditions of collapse* and nasal catarrh as well as bronchitis. The potency is 4x. It is indicated in varicose sciatica, that is, sciatica in which the network of veins around the sciatic nerve is swollen.

Modalities: Aggravation with coughing and sneezing as well as in wet weather. It is especially indicated in the occurrence of varicose veins and hemorrhoids.

Ammonium muriaticum—sal-ammoniac: is recommended for the sciatica which accompanies muscle strain. The following complaints are characteristic of the remedy: 1. sitting unbearable, 2. in getting up from lying down a feeling of stiffening and contraction occurs in the back. The patient can only sit forward on the edge of the bed. In his book *Body Structure and Disease* the well-known orthopedic physician A. Muller gives as a cause for these symptoms severe strain of the back and thigh muscles which consists in a swelling of the connecting tissue and network of nerves surrounding the muscles. The effectiveness of the remedy is supported by a massage of the connecting tissue.

Arnica montana 4x. Arnica belongs to the family of the composites. The bright yellow tincture comes from the carefully dried and pulverized root-stock. It is indicated with the sciatica that is associated with extreme strain.

Characteristics are: 1. Feeling of general weakness, 2. continued desire for change of position despite the pain.

Modalities: Aggravation through shock. The action of the remedy upon the veins is also important.

Arsenicum album 4x in case of sciatica induced by the effect of poisoning. There are 1. attacks of pain which recur at periodic intervals, 2. restlessness at night, 3. the pains have a burning character.

Modalities: Aggravation: 1. after midnight, 2. through cold, 3. through rest. Amelioration. through heat.

Sometimes the sciatica develops in connection with a severe stomach upset or Basedow's disease. The type of patient is mostly thin, emaciated.

Bryonia alba 2x to 3x—bryony with black berries, belongs to the family of the cucurbitaceæ. The yellow tincture is obtained from the root which is dug up before the time of blossoming, tastes repellingly sharp. It is indicated in the sciatica whose cause according to *Edinger* is to be sought in a swelling of the vein system surrounding the sciatic nerve. *Bryonia* has an affinity for the covering of the various organs, for example the covering of the liver. Since it is a liver remedy, the mood of the patient is often irritated, annoyed. There is a tendency to constipation on account of extreme drying out of the membranes and a great need of rest.

Modalities: Aggravation through motion. Amelioration: 1. through rest, 2. through lying on the side affected. Let one think of the action of *Bryonia* in dry inflammation of the pleura, when the patient also lies on the side affected and the action of the lung is impeded because of it.

Magnesia phosphate 6x—Key remedy for still cramp-like pain, hence indicated for cramp-like sciatica.

Modalities: Aggravation: at night. Amelioration: 1. through moist heat, 2. through pressure, 3. through curling up (compare *Colocynthis*).

Mercury preparations 3x to 4x for sciatica after inflammation of the jaws are especially characterized by the following guiding symptoms: 1. aggravation at night, 2. abundant sweating without relief.

As intermittent remedies may be mentioned in passing:

Mercurius sulfur. ruber (cinnobar) cx—red mercuric sulphate.

Mercurius solub. Hahnemanni.

Causticum 3x, Hahnemanni, consists predominantly of ammonia. This remedy is often successful in the characteristic feeling of shrinking of the muscles (results of changes in the joints), especially in many chronic cases. It is otherwise a remedy in cramp-like diseases which have their origin in the spine.

Cuprum acet. 4x—acetic copper—verdigris.

Cuprum arsenic. 4x—arsenate of copper—both joint remedies, which represent above all the principal cramp remedies. Cramp symptoms are present. The copper arsenate combines the effect of copper and arsenic. The pains appear like an attack, like lightning.

Modalities: Aggravation: 1. at night, 2. through wet weather. Amelioration through pressure.

Sometimes a nerve pain, which occurs in a surface nerve at the side of the upper thigh, is confused with the picture of sciatica. The chief remedy is *Phytolacca decandra* 4x—kermes berry (a shrub with red fruit) from the *Phytolaccaceæ* family. The yellow tincture is obtained from the fresh roots, smells peculiar and tastes somewhat bitter. According to *Saller* there pre-

vails a condition of inflammation with predominant affinity for the glandular system and in the case of a rheumatic constitution has all the symptoms of this remedy. It is also indicated in sciatica following syphilis.

Modalities: Aggravation: 1. at night, 2. in wet weather, 3. on motion, 4. with pressure.

The remedies just mentioned should make it possible for the non-homœopathic physician to submit suitable cases of sciatica to homœopathic treatment.

One who wants to work his way into this difficult, but highly successful art of healing must study every single remedy thoroughly. That non-homœopathic physicians advise experiments with homœopathic remedies can be proved by the excerpts from Prof. Hoff which I cite from his excellent book *Treatment of Internal Diseases*: "On the other hand we have had such surprising results in many cases of sciatica which were difficult to cure by other means that one can advise an experiment as follows", and he goes on after some expositions on the remedies *Mercurius solub.* 3x, *Bryonia* 1x or 3x, as well as *Rhus tox.* 3x: "I have the impression that in the area of neuralgia valuable enrichment can be gained from the medicinal treasury of Homœopathy. Here is a systematic testing and proving should be established on a broad basis. I myself owe much inspiration in this field to Herr. *Stiegele*, of *Suttgart*." It is a gratifying sign that more and more leading clinicians are devoting themselves to the study of Homœopathy.

—Layman Speaks, February, '60

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maladies by instructing them in the dispositions which they should acquire till they are restored to the right path."

Let me summarize and conclude: There is nothing new under the sun, there is an endless "becoming." We are back with Ecclesiastes and with—Heraclitus!!!

—Layman Speaks, Dec., '59