

## PRESCRIBING HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICINES

DR. R. A. F. JACK, M.B., CH.B., M.R.C.P., M.R.C.G.P., M.F.HOM.

Among the many people who are now coming for treatment with homoeopathic medicine, an increasing percentage have very little knowledge of Homoeopathy. Where such ignorance exists they appreciate a simple explanation of the different approach the homoeopathic physician adopts towards his patients; and why, as a result of this difference, it is necessary to ask a number of apparently bizarre and unrelated questions, some of which may appear totally irrelevant to the present illness. If, for example, the patient presents with five different sets of symptoms, attributable to five different systems in the body, he may well under conventional treatment end up with five different medicines. He may be told, "I am giving you some pain tablets for your headache, some antacid for your indigestion, a laxative for your constipation, a hypnotic for your insomnia, and a cream for your skin rash". For good measure he might even be prescribed an antidepressant and/or a tranquillizer as well. If, at the same time, he has raised blood pressure, he would probably also be given a hypotensive drug, a diuretic, and probably a beta blocker. The result: nine different medicaments, some of which will interact with each other, either potentiating or inhibiting their action.

How much simpler to give one medicine which, when given to a healthy person in repeated small doses, produces those identical symptoms; and so which, when given therapeutically, in homoeopathic potency, to the patient in question, will reverse all his symptoms. To the initiated this makes sense. The problem is finding that one medicine. It must at once be admitted that there will not be a single similar medicine in every case, but more often than not, there is one that matches sufficiently accurately to be effective. In fact, another problem may arise; there may be several medicines that seem indicated, and the skill required is to choose the most suitable one. Conventional medicine rarely adopts this approach except in cases of depression, and the deficiency diseases such as pernicious anaemia, thyrotoxicosis, diabetes, etc. The treatment of diabetes is one such occasion when the allopathic physician treats an underlying disorder, rather than a plethora of symptoms. The patient complains of a dry mouth, excessive thirst, even during the night, loss of weight and energy, and possibly recurrent boils. The alert doctor tests the patient's urine and finding that it contains sugar, institutes investigations for diabetes and starts treatment. He does not give five different medicines for the symptoms listed, but one antidiabetic agent that controls the blood sugar levels, and indirectly reverses the other symptoms. In other words, he is treating the whole person and not parts of him, and anything short of this will prove ineffective.

In homoeopathic medicine treatment is not determined by the name of

the illness, but by how that particular patient responds to his illness. Identical twins could both suffer from migraine, but if they were as different from each other in disposition, temperament and emotions, as chalk is from cheese, they would need different medicines to control their attacks and to cure their condition. The first might need Bryonia in her attacks because she has to lie down, in a dark room, holding her head with her hands, keeping perfectly still, resenting both noise and interference. Later, when the attack had subsided, she would require a dose of Natrum mur. because she is a Natrum mur. type. Her sister's migraine is very different. Although she has a throbbing headache, which is worse from motion, she cannot lie down as this aggravates it. Although it is worse from noise and light, she likes to be stroked, as it soothes her. Moreover, she very often finds that she becomes hungry before or during the headache and will eat, and feel better for it. She requires Phosphorus to relieve the attacks, and if taken at suitable intervals between her attacks, will find that they lessen in frequency, severity and duration, and ultimately disappear. I have a friend who is a typical Phosphorus type, and whose migraine was always precipitated by thundery weather. She surprised me the first time I saw her in an attack, because she was enjoying coffee and huttered toast! This is one of those "strange, rare or peculiar" symptoms that, when discovered, provides a short cut in the search for the remedy. When you get such an unusual symptom as this, you then search for it among the lists of symptoms that different drugs produce in their 'provings'. These 'provings' or testings are simply the side effects (subtoxic effects) and healthy volunteers have noticed and recorded when being tested with these medicines. In these 'blind' trials the volunteers do not know what medicine they are taking, or even if the substance taken is medicated or not. It is really a waste of time trying to prescribe on symptoms like 'headache', 'nausea', 'constipation', etc., unless they are qualified. Most drugs in sufficient doses will ultimately produce these. But headache relieved by a hot flannel is unusual and might suggest Silica, a dry mouth without thirst might indicate Pulsatilla, constipation and straining with a soft motion points to Alumina and so on. In the search for the medicine for that illness such clues are good pointers. In the old-fashioned children's game where you hide something in the room, and they look for it, you say 'warmer' or 'colder' according to whether they are getting near to, or further away from, the hidden object. In the search for the 'like' remedy in homoeopathic prescribing—the more features you find in common between the patient's symptoms and those of the drug provings (the drug picture), the 'warmer', or nearer, you are getting to the drug of choice. Since few patients react identically to the same illness or infection, Homoeopathy has to be 'tailor-made' for the individual. It cannot be bought 'off the peg' because the individual's measurements are too varied to make this possible. Hence the need to get all the details.

The homoeopathic approach is further exemplified in the treatment of skin disorders. Many patients attend, or bring their children, for the treatment of

intractable eczema, psoriasis, or acne. They feel they are 'scraping the barrel', as years of conventional treatment at hospital clinics have not afforded a sustained improvement. The homoeopathic doctor has his failures too, but he has the advantage that he has over six hundred medicines to choose from and thereby is not so limited in his therapeutic armamentarium. Also his approach is entirely different. To treat a skin eruption by suppressing it and driving it in' can be likened to weeding the flower bed by pulling out the weeds, but leaving the roots behind. The immediate result is gratifying, but the long term disastrous. So, too, a local application of a steroid will usually ease and clear the condition quite dramatically—only for it to return all too soon the moment the treatment is discontinued. In fact, the long continued use of cortisone applied to the skin can lead to irreversible damage. In contrast the experienced homoeopathic doctor will try to find the patient's constitutional remedy, which will usually work slowly and is deep-acting. The chances are that the rash or skin condition will initially get worse, depending on how high a potency has been given. This 'aggravation' is unavoidable, but can usually be mitigated, if necessary, by taking a very low potency of the same or another remedy. It is important to warn the patient of this possibility, so that he will not be alarmed and consult another doctor for a cortisone cream to suppress it. It is as if the medicine were 'driving out' the rash a little too vigorously. The comforting fact is that if the relapse of the dermatitis is due to an aggravation from the homoeopathic potency one can confidently expect the condition will improve as soon as the aggravation has worn off—which may be in a few days or a week or two. But despite all this the patient will notice and admit that he feels much better in himself. This illustrates the old homoeopathic dictum 'symptoms worse, but patient better'. Hahnemann taught that the basic principles of Homoeopathy were:

Find and give the 'similar' medicine in a single potentized dose,  
Expect an initial aggravation to be followed by improvement,  
Do not repeat the dose until this improvement has worn off.

Although it is an advantage to have such a wide range of medicines from which to select the remedy, it can also be a disadvantage. Where there is only one available medicine, prescribing becomes easy and routine. Where many remedies compete it may be necessary to work through several as all will help, but the absence of clear-cut clues makes differentiation difficult. Also, in chronic conditions the first medicine often only produces a certain improvement, but not a total cure. It will, however, modify the symptom picture sufficiently to make it necessary to re-prescribe, as the first medicine is no longer indicated. If the first prescription results in a significant improvement the doctor may wish to wait until its effects have worn off, then either repeat that medicine in the same or higher potency, or give a medicine that supplements it.

There are various ways of using homoeopathic medicines:

(1) For example, in treating hayfever, immediate relief could be afforded by giving the 'like' medicine, whether that be *Allium cepa* (onion), *Euphrasia* (eyebright), *Sabadilla* (cevadilla seeds), *Ambrosia* (ragweed), etc.

(2) Later the patient could be desensitized against the particular pollens that caused his allergy by giving a homoeopathic potency of that pollen. Preferably this should be done preseasonally—a month or so before he is at risk. Most sufferers eventually identify the causal agent, and in those who cannot, skin testing is a quick, safe and simple procedure. Within five minutes a positive response reveals whether the cause is due to mixed pollens, summer flowers, trees, etc., or even whether a house dust mite allergy is involved. Specific homoeopathic medicines are available to treat all these and are taken orally.

(3) However, some still need further treatment, in which case their constitutional remedy should be ascertained and given. This is not always as easy as it sounds. Some patients fit very neatly into a 'constitutional' type, but many do not, and I know several homoeopathic doctors who are not sure of their own constitutional medicine. The problem is that one can be a *Lycopodium* type at one time and later be a *Sulphur*, or *Argentum nitricum* type. Those three are all 'warm blooded' types who tend not to feel the cold, and prefer cooler surroundings than those about them, but more confusing still is the fact that in acute illness a 'warm blooded' *Pulsatilla* type can alter and become very chilly and display all the features of a patient who requires *Arsenic* in homoeopathic potency.

(4) Sometimes the patient on questioning will recognize that his illness dates from some shock, accident or severe mental trauma, in which case medicines like *Opium*, *Arnica*, *Natrum mur.*, *Staphisagria*, etc., would be indicated. It is interesting to find that Kent, in his *Repertory*, listed medicines to counteract the effects of ailments from: anger, disappointed love, grief, reproaches, scorn, and 'mortification' (humiliation). The homoeopathic physicians were a century ahead of their colleagues in the understanding and treatment of psychosomatic illness.

(5) One even sees children whose asthma, eczema, arthritis or other chronic condition originated after a smallpox vaccination or an infection, such as measles. Giving the appropriate nosode often results in a cure of an illness that has resisted years of conventional treatment. A nosode is made from disease products and the appropriate two for the causes mentioned would be *Variolinum* and *Morbillinum*. If the patient complains that he has never felt well since he had a BCG inoculation, he requires a similar product given back again in the form of a potency called *Tuberculinum bovinum*.

(6) Alternatively a person may suffer from recurrent colds or excess sweating and have a family history of TB. There is no question of him suffering from TB himself, but because one of his parents or grandparents did, he may have some inborn genetic trait, or diathesis, which has been transmitted,

and which is causing his present disability. Again a high potency of *Tuberculinum* will alter this disposition and improve or cure him.

(7) Finally, certain chronic conditions which improve, but are not cured when the indicated medicine is given, may need a 'bowel nosode' to complete the recovery. In an article of this sort it is not possible to amplify this statement except to say that groups of homoeopathic remedies have been found to correlate with certain of the bowel flora, and potencies made from these bacteria can be used to enhance the action of medicines to which they correspond.

Thus it will be seen that homoeopathic prescribing is a fascinating study that embraces every aspect of the patient, mentally, physically, environmentally, including his past, and family history. It may be time-consuming, but the results are highly rewarding, and people who have been successfully treated homoeopathically rarely want to revert to allopathic treatment.

—*The British Homoeopathic Journal*, April 1978

---