

HOMOEOPATHY, WHEN NO EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE*

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INTRODUCTION

There are a great many situations in which Homoeopathy offers a safe, cheap and effective alternative to pharmaceutical preparations, but it can be difficult for the doctor new to Homoeopathy to lay aside his allopathic way of thinking and put his confidence with a good conscience in this strange, almost incredulous system of prescribing which he has heard scorned by many of his learned superiors. But those illnesses where there is no effective alternative provide golden opportunities to give Homoeopathy a fair trial. The rapid and effective use of Arnica in acute trauma and Chamomilla for teething infants with frantic pain has convinced many a sceptic, and encouraged them to continue further with homoeopathic prescribing.

Homoeopathy is of great value in the problems of the expectant mother, where allopathic drugs are withheld because of the risk of harm to the foetus, and also in the problems of the elderly who are often very sensitive to allopathic drugs and easily suffer from adverse effects. Patients with allergic conditions, particularly multiple allergies, often respond extremely well to homoeopathic treatment and lose their sensitivities quite quickly. But in this paper I would like to concentrate on one area of medical practice where orthodox medical treatment has very little to offer, and that is when it concerns virus infections. In such illnesses healing and recovery is entirely dependent upon the healing resources of the body, and the morbidity and mortality from virus infections can be extensive. While the search goes on to find specific anti-viral preparations which are free from side-effects, Homoeopathy can be used effectively to treat patients in four ways:

(1) *Prophylaxis*: to generate resistance to the infection; (2) *Treatment in the acute illness*: to reduce the length and severity of the illness; (3) *Restoration*: to revitalize the patient during convalescence; (4) *Correction of the chronic sequelae*: to restore the patient to his former state of health.

PROPHYLAXIS

The prevention of illness by using the agent which may cause or transmit the disease has been known for centuries, and some of the earliest examples of this were to protect against virus infections. The Chinese used to give protection against smallpox by compulsory wearing of the garments of a patient in full suppuration, or by the introduction of a one-year-old dried pustule into the nostrils, and during the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe

* A lecture given at the 9th annual symposium on homoeopathic medicine, Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham, Saturday, 12 November 1983.

vaccination against smallpox using inoculation with variolic pus was carried out. Hippocrates recommended the slimy saliva from under the tongue of a rabid dog, taken as a drink, as a protection against rabies.

These are examples of Isopathy, a form of therapy based on the principle of treating with the same agent that may cause or transmit the disease, as compared with Homoeopathy which is based on the law of similars. I wonder how many antagonists of Homoeopathy realize that the work of Edward Jenner, who confirmed the belief that infection with cowpox would protect a person against smallpox and so laid the foundation of modern immunization, is in fact a clear illustration of the homoeopathic principle.

Every immunization procedure carries some risk of adverse reactions when material amounts of disease agents are used, be it an actual infection or else an immunological reaction, and these risks may deter both doctor and patient from using them in individual cases. Here homoeopathic preparations of disease products in potency, known as nosodes, can be used, and as a result of many years of clinical use there seem to be good grounds for recommending their efficacy and safety. In only a few cases, however, such as Pertussin for preventing whooping cough and Meningococcin for cerebro-spinal meningitis, have sufficient numbers been immunized in this way to offer any kind of data to provide statistical proof. Little research has been carried out on the immunological effects of nosodes in the body, although Diphtherinum, a homoeopathic preparation of diphtheritic membrane, has been shown to induce a positive Schick test 2-9 weeks after giving the 200c potency.

Regarding Meningococcin, the homoeopathic preparation of *Neisseria meningitidis*, in 1974 there was an epidemic of cerebro-spinal fever in the Sao Paulo region of Brazil, and about 18,000 people were immunized with a single drop of Meningococcin 10c on the tongue, and only four of these developed meningitis during the epidemic. Compared with the incidence in the non-immunized group, the results were statistically highly significant. One further patient fell ill two days after immunization, suggesting that the single dose of the remedy was not powerful enough to halt an infection which was already being incubated, and two persons fell ill with the infection the following year, suggesting that the period of resistance was limited.¹

I have found similar results using Pertussin in the prevention of whooping cough syndrome. Pertussin is prepared from the sticky mucus in the throat of a patient suffering from whooping cough, and has been used in the treatment and prevention of this illness for about 80 years, usually in the 30c potency. It appears to be helpful in both true *Bordetella pertussis* infection, and the similar symptom picture caused by several different viruses. It is safe to immunize the child with Pertussin at any age, even the neonatal period, and advisable to give booster doses either annually, or when there is risk of future contact. A single dose, or a split dose of the 30c potency, does not seem to be enough to prevent an infection that is already being incubated, and in such cases I have given Pertussin 30 b.d. for seven days with apparent success.

Morbillinum is prepared from the exudate taken from the mouth and pharynx of a patient with measles, and has been used prophylactically in the 30c potency given at weekly intervals during the incubation period. Alternatively, homoeopathic remedies which have a similar symptom picture to that caused by the infection can give prophylaxis. In the case of measles, Pulsatilla has been used as a preventative, given in the 6c or 30c potency daily during the incubation period until the danger of infection is past.² One of the earliest uses of a homoeopathic remedy in this way was Hahnemann's use of Belladonna in epidemics of scarlet fever in the early 19th century. Not only did it work curatively, but it also gave prophylaxis to other members of the household where the disease was present. His results have since been confirmed by other doctors, using principally the 6c and 30c potencies. In the case of poliomyelitis immunization, when the use of the orthodox vaccine is contraindicated, Lathyrus sativus, the chick-pea, gives a drug picture very similar to that of poliomyelitis, and has been used with apparent success as a preventative, using the 30c or 200c potency every 3 weeks during epidemics.² One could also use Poliomyelitis nosode, prepared from the virus, in a similar way.

Various influenza nosodes have been used over the years, and Influenzinum appears to be a safe and effective alternative to the orthodox vaccine, given each winter in the 30c potency. Different types of influenza nosode are also available, e.g. A, B, AB, A2 (Hong Kong 1968), B (Hong Kong 1972), etc. Concerning the prevention of recurrent respiratory infections in general, the tubercular nosodes Tuberculinum bovinum and Bacillinum have been found effective, especially in children.

Oscillococcinum is a nosode used especially in France to prevent and treat respiratory tract infections. It is prepared from autolyzed duck heart and liver, and is so named because the germs observed in the original culture exhibited an oscillating movement. It is most often used in the 200c potency at regular intervals through the winter months as a preventative for influenza and other respiratory infections.¹

Other nosodes that have been used to give prophylaxis are Rubella nosode, Lyssin, prepared from the saliva of a rabid dog, Variolinum, prepared from the discharge from a smallpox pustule, and Malandrinum, prepared from the serous discharge of a horse with malandra or "grease", a weeping eczema in the hollow of the fold of the knee, believed to be caused by the same virus as causes cowpox.

TREATMENT IN THE ACUTE ILLNESS

Concerning the treatment of virus infections, Homoeopathy has much to offer, from the most benign upper respiratory tract infection to the most serious illnesses such as smallpox and yellow fever. One of the benefits of Homoeopathy is that one can commence treatment at whatever stage the patient presents, even if one is still waiting for a definitive diagnosis to be made on the basis of serology, culture or microscopy, and in no way does

the homoeopathic treatment interfere with diagnostic procedures.

Viral infections affecting especially the respiratory tract: The vast majority of respiratory infections are of viral origin and for the most part allopathic medicine has little to offer other than symptomatic palliation, which may indeed be detrimental through suppressing what could be regarded as one of the body's emergency excretion routes—catarrhal discharge. Only in the relatively few cases of septic tonsillitis, diphtheria, epiglottitis and bacterial pneumonia are antibiotics of benefit. Being able to prescribe homoeopathic remedies with confidence is one way in which the honest GP can overcome the almost superstitious demand for an antibiotic by the anxious parents of children whose respiratory infections comprise a major part of the work load in general practice in this country.

As with other areas of homoeopathic practice, one prescribes on the total symptom picture of the individual patient, especially the leading mentals, generals, and the outstanding and unusual particular symptoms with their modalities. Since the respiratory tract can only respond in a limited number of ways to any noxious stimulus, namely increased mucus secretion, cough and sneezing reflexes, damage and shedding of mucosa, spasm or paralysis of bronchial smooth muscle, and alveolar collapse or consolidation, not only can all the clinical pictures of acute respiratory disease (e.g. coryza, sore throat, croup/laryngitis, bronchitis, pneumonia and influenza) be caused by many different viruses, but also many homoeopathic remedies may be applicable to respiratory illnesses, and the same homoeopathic remedy be applicable to several clinical syndromes, e.g. Aconite, Belladonna, Bryonia, Mercurius, Gelsemium, Ipecacuanha, etc. These polycrest remedies which are useful in so many situations are worth learning in detail, so that we can recognize them like 'familiar friends'.

Figure 1 illustrates the points to note when seeking to treat a viral respiratory infection. We take a history, examine the patient, and do any necessary investigations in order to arrive at a pathological diagnosis. In addition we note those other items of information supplied by the patient which can enable us to decide on a homoeopathic remedy. A knowledge of the precipitating factors can be useful, e.g. the infection followed exposure to a cold wind or after getting soaked. The mental state of the patient is important, especially if he is anxious or irritable, or tearful. The general symptoms include his fever pattern, his reaction to different temperatures, and his desires for drink and food, his thirst or absence of thirst. The particular symptoms relating to the respiratory tract concern the discharge of mucus, its colour and consistency, whether it be bland or excoiating, and so on: pain in the throat and its appearance; cough and expectoration; and wheezing. The modifying factors which aggravate or ameliorate these symptoms are extremely useful in differentiating remedies, and the presence of certain concomitant symptoms, such as pleurisy, headache, sinusitis or otitis, may further help us to decide on a remedy. Finally, the presence of any strange or peculiar symptoms may clinch the homoeopathic diagnosis for us.

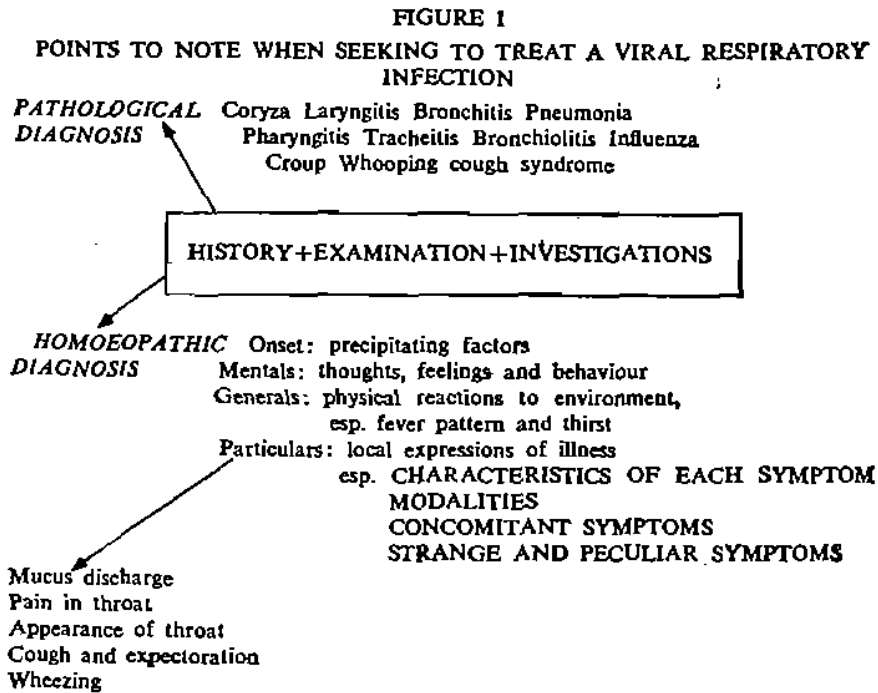


Figure 2 illustrates some of these leading symptoms and the remedies to consider with them. Because of the homoeopathic approach, a condition such as the 'common' cold becomes much more interesting, especially when we are able to reduce the degree and duration of discomfort by means of the well chosen homoeopathic remedy.

Some may ask: whatever do the weather and one's emotions have to do with being infected by a virus? Surely in this scientific age such remarks should have been dropped from the medical books long ago! Not at all. At last doctors are beginning to understand scientifically what simple folk have observed for centuries—that factors which stress the human body in some way predispose to illness, and then these viruses which are all about us, and perhaps dormant within us, have their opportunity to strike when our resistance is low and our body a suitable host for these amazing parasites.

The viral infectious mononucleoses: The Epstein-Barr virus and the cytomegalovirus not only affect the respiratory tract, but produce the clinical features of glandular fever with hepatosplenomegaly, lymphadenopathy, and involvement of other organs. Many homoeopathic remedies can be used, especially those which are also considered in the treatment of patients with influenza, hepatitis, tonsillitis, diphtheria and rubella, but two remedies have emerged as being of special benefit: Carcinosis, the sarcode of breast cancer tissue, and *Ailanthus glandulosa*, the tree of heaven, both of which have produced remarkable and rapid recoveries from glandular fever in very sick patients.³

FIGURE 2

ILLUSTRATING SOME LEADING SYMPTOMS AND SOME ASSOCIATED REMEDIES WHICH CAN MAKE A COMMON COLD NOT SO COMMON

Onset Climatic and seasonal factors:

Cold dry weather and cold winds: Acon., Asar. eur., Bry., Caust.,
Hep., Kali. c., Nux v., Spong.

Cold damp winds: All. c.

Cold damp weather: Ars., Calc., Dulc., Rhus t., Sulph.

Snowy weather: Puls., Rhus t.

Warm moist weather: Gels.

Hot summer weather: Bap., Bell., Bry.

Wet weather: All. c., Dulc., Hep., Merc., Puls.

Spring colds: Ars., Carb. v., Gels., Lach., Psor., Sep., Sulph.

Autumn colds: Ars., Bap., Bry., Nat. m., Nux v., Rhus t., Sep.

Getting chilled when overheated: Ars., Carb. v., Puls., Sil.

Emotional factors:

From fright: Acon., Ars., Bry., Gels., Ign., Lyc., Merc.,

Nux v., Op., Puls., Sil.

grief: Gels., Ign., Nat. m.

vexation: Acon., Ars., Bry., Gels., Merc., Nux v., Rhus t.

excitement: Calc., Gels., Ign.

Some Mentals Irritable: Ars., Bry., Hep., Nux v.

Anxious, fearful: Acon., Ars., Bry.

Nervous, delirious: Bell., Bry.

Tearful, desires consolation: Puls.

Some Generals Chilliness: Acon., Asar. eur., Ars., Bry., Merc., Nat. c.,
Nux v., Puls., Sil., Spong., Sulph.

Thirstless: Apis, Gels., Ipec., Puls.

Thirst for long cold drinks: Bry., Phos.

Thirst for frequent sips: Ars.

Some Particulars Characteristics:

Coryza—dry: Bell., Bry., Nux v., Dulc., Kali bi.

acid and excoriating: All. c., Ars., Gels., Kali i., Merc.,
Nux v., Sulph.

bland: Euphr., Puls.

watery: Acon., All. c., Ars., Nat. c., Hep., Nux v.

purulent: Calc., Hep., Kali bi., Kali i., Merc., Phos.

Modalities:

Cold air aggr.: All. c., Ars., Dulc., Hep., Nux v., Phos.

Warm room aggr.: All. c., Merc., Nux v., Puls., Tub.

Walking amel.: Dulc., Phos., Puls., Rhus t.

Concomitants:

With lachrymation: All. c., Bry., Euphr., Kali i., Puls.

With laryngitis: Acon., All. c., Bell., Bry., Carb. v., Euphr., Hep.,
Merc., Nat. m., Phos., Rhus t.

Frontal sinusitis: Ars., Kali i., Merc., Sil.

With nausea: Ipec.

With croup: Acon., Ars., Hep., Spong.

Strange and peculiar symptoms:

Acrid lachrymation and bland coryza: Euphr.

Bland lachrymation and acrid coryza: All. c.

Viral infections of the gastrointestinal tract: Ailanthus has also shown itself to be a very useful remedy in the treatment of primary herpetic stomatitis. Aphthous ulceration of the buccal mucosa can be a very distressing and chronic problem, and here remedies such as Borax, Kali bichromicum and Kali carbonicum, Mercurius, Acidum nitricum and Acidum sulphuricum deserve special mention.

Several of the homoeopathic polycrest remedies have been of value in the treatment of mumps, particularly Aconite, Belladonna, Lachesis, Mercurius, and Rhus tox. Another leading remedy in this condition is Pilocarpus, characterized by profuse sweating and salivation, and helpful in the management of associated mastitis and orchitis. Pulsatilla is also useful for mastitis and orchitis, also Carbo veg. and Arsenicum for orchitis, and Phosphorus for pancreatitis.

Viruses are the main cause of gastroenteritis in this country, rotavirus being the commonest. Respiratory symptoms, usually nasal discharge and cough, are followed by conspicuous vomiting, diarrhoea and fever. The leading remedies for simultaneous vomiting and diarrhoea are Arsenicum, Baptisia, Ipecacuanha, and Veratrum album.

A wide variety of remedies are useful in the treatment of viral hepatitis, including all the major polycrests. Other important liver remedies are Chelidonium (greater celandine), China (Cinchona bark), Chionanthus (fringe-tree), Leptandra (black root), Digitalis (foxglove) and Podophyllum (may-apple). Lesser known liver remedies which are useful also in chronic hepatitis are Cornus circinata (green osier), Carduus marianus (silybium), Myrica cerifera (bayberry), Dolichos pruriens (cow-itch), and Ptelea trifoliata (shrubby trefoil).

The viral exanthemata of childhood: Accurate homoeopathic prescribing can do much to expedite recovery from measles. Here again remedies like Aconite, Belladonna, Bryonia, Gelsemium, Pulsatilla, Euphrasia, Rhus tox., Ipecacuanha, Kali bichromicum and Phosphorus are of great value, and one looks for the distinguishing clinical features in each patient. Sulphur is useful when there is an absence of any particularly striking symptoms, except the common symptoms of measles, which also fit well with Sulphur.

Many of these remedies also apply to patients with German measles, and other viruses which produce similar macular and maculo-papular rashes.

Antimonium tartaricum is often thought of first in the treatment of chickenpox, together with Aconite, Belladonna, Rhus tox., Mercurius and other polycrest remedies.

Viral infections of the nervous system: A wide variety of neurological illnesses are caused by viruses. Virus meningitis often has an acute onset and rapid recovery irrespective of any treatment, but remedies like Aconite, Belladonna, Apis, Cicuta, Gelsemium, Veratrum viride and others may be indicated. Many different viruses can cause encephalitis, with varying clinical pictures commending different remedies, many of the polycrests in particular.

During poliomyelitis epidemics, the leading remedies have been Belladonna, Gelsemium, Physostigma and Lathyrus, with considerable success.

Other remedies to consider are the Mexican plant *Karwinskia humboldtiana*, which in toxic amounts produces symptoms resembling poliomyelitis, and the seasnake *Hydrophus cyanocinctus*.

Herpes zoster responds well to homoeopathic treatment and very rarely is postherpetic neuralgia a problem. The leading remedies are *Apis mellifica*, *Arsenicum*, *Mezereum*, *Ranunculus bulbosus*, and *Rhus tox*.

There cannot be many homoeopathic doctors today who have had the opportunity to treat rabies with homocopathic remedies, but the leading remedies to consider are *Agave americana* (century plant), *Belladonna*, *Cantharis*, *Curare*, *Helleborus*, *Lyssin*, *Hyoscyamus*, *Lachesis*, *Scutellaria*, *Stramonium*, *Tanacetum vulgare* (tansy), *Xanthium spinosum* (cockle) and *Vipera*.

Tropical virus infections: Smallpox and yellow fever have been treated homoeopathically, and there is no reason to suppose that the more recently discovered virus infections such as Lassa fever and the illnesses caused by the Marburg and Ebola viruses should not also respond to homoeopathic treatment.⁴

Virus infections of the skin: Warts and verrucas often disappear in the course of treating a patient with the constitutional remedy. In addition, there are also certain remedies which apply to the characteristics of the skin lesions, namely *Antimonium crudum*, *Nitricum acidum*, *Causticum*, *Graphites*, *Dulcamara*, and *Sabina*. Several plants have gained a reputation as wart removers in folk medicine, e.g. dandelion, wood spurge and greater celandine, but the only homoeopathic remedy used frequently in a topical manner is *Thuja*.

RESTORATION

Although children can recover rapidly from acute viral infections, older patients particularly may be left debilitated and have a prolonged convalescent period. In addition to a nourishing diet with generous amounts of vitamin B complex and vitamin C, certain homoeopathic remedies have been of special benefit. *China* has gained a reputation for relief of post-infection debility where there has been a lot of fluid loss in the form of sweating, vomiting, diarrhoea or haemorrhage. The chronic debility following glandular fever may be helped greatly by *Carcinosin*.

Post-influenzal debility is well recognized. Where this is predominantly physical, remedies like *China*, *Gelsemium*, *Sulphur*, *Phosphoricum acidum*, *Cadmium*, and *Avena sativa* are of value. The last-named is used in mother tincture, and one wonders if its stimulant effect could be due to a high vitamin B content. Mental debility can be greatly helped by remedies such as *Kali phos.*, *Cypripedium* (lady's slipper), *Arsenicum*, *Pulsatilla*, *Valeriana*, *Scutellaria*, *Silica*, *Aurum*, *Picricum acidum*, and *Cocculus*.

CHRONIC SEQUELAE

The syndrome of 'never well since' a particular virus infection is well recognized. The actual symptoms may vary, but the main point is that the initial infection produced a state of imbalance in the body from which it has

not totally recovered. In such cases the relevant nosode can be of great value, e.g. Morbillinum for the chronic sequelae to measles, Varicellinum to chickenpox, and Parotidinum to mumps.

The remedies for post-influenzal depression have already been mentioned, but probably the most common and troublesome sequel to influenza and other respiratory tract infections is chronic upper respiratory catarrh affecting the nose, sinuses, eustachian tube and middle ear. This responds very well to remedies like the Kalis (especially Kali bichromicum, iodatum, carbonicum, muriaticum and sulphuricum), Silicea, Mercurius, Pulsatilla, Alumina, Nux vomica and Conium. Persistent cervical lymphadenopathy, and hypertrophy of tonsils and adenoids, responds very well to remedies like Calcareo carbonica and phosphorica, Baryta carbonica and Silicea, and a particularly useful little remedy for reducing the size of enlarged tonsils and adenoids and relieving middle-ear catarrh is Agraphis nutans, the Bluebell.

Herpes simplex nosode can be useful to prevent further attacks of recurrent herpes simplex, and Herpes zoster nosode to clear up the legacies of shingles. Helpful remedies for post-herpetic neuralgia are Hypericum, Kalmia, Magnesia phosphorica, Causticum, Mezereum, Arsenicum and Variolinum.

Finally, when a patient's chronic ill-health dates back to the time of a smallpox vaccination, the ill-effects of vaccination can be antidoted by Thuja or Malandrinum.

CONCLUSION

Anti-viral chemotherapy is still very much in its infancy, and therefore homoeopathic treatment can play a leading part in the management of acute virus infections. If in such cases where there is no effective alternative doctors would prescribe homoeopathic remedies in accordance with the law of similars, I believe that they would be pleasantly surprised and encouraged to go on further with Homoeopathy.

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—*The British Homoeopathic Journal*, April 1984