

## POTASSIUM AND THE POTASSIUM SALTS

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I had the curiosity, when thinking over your secretary's request to open a discussion on the Kali salts, to look them up in the various books cluttering up my desk.

Wheeler discusses *Kali carb.* only, Neatby discusses *Causticum* and *Kali carb.* only, Tyler discusses five : *Causticum*, *Kali bich.*, *Kali brom.*, *Kali carb.* and *Kali sulph.*, while Hering's condensed *Materia Medica* discusses *Causticum*, *Kali carb.*, *Kali bich.*, *Kali brom.*, *Kali iod.*

This gives us some idea of which are important, but they are not gathered under the heading of Potassium and indeed, some tend to forget *Causticum* is one of the group at all.

Dilling, in that official book where I had to learn about 200 drugs for my professional materia medica examination, does his work better. He begins his discussion on Potassium with the remark : "The Potassium ion is a muscular depressant but although the salts retain this characteristic when given orally they are absorbed and excreted so rapidly that the acid radical alone determines their respective actions."

He then proceeds in orderly fashion to list the eight preparations of Potassium in common use by the orthodox school . . .

It is interesting to note that this school teaches that the carbonates and the bicarbonates of Potassium owe their physiological action entirely to the non-metallic ion as being more powerful than the metallic ion which is neglected. In other words, the OH or hydroxyl ion accounts for alkalinity and the metallic ion is neglected, but it is the metallic ion which gives the power in homœopathic pharmacy, according to Neatby in his *Manual of Homœotherapeutics*.

Clarke's *Materia Medica Pura* lists 22 preparations of the Kali salts, but as usual gives no indication to the student which are important, and which it is enough if the student knows of their existence.

Wheeler reminds us that Potassium is associated with body cells just as Sodium is found in body fluids. He also says that Calcium and Potassium appear to neutralize one another in the body, each opposing the action of the other.

Potassium has an atomic weight of 39.096 and the atomic number 19, thus standing next to Calcium whose atomic weight is 40.07 and atomic number 20.

Potassium stands first in the electromotive series of the metals, and the high conducting power of a solution of an electrolyte is due to the ions present.

If one regards an epileptic seizure as a kind of electrical brain storm, one wonders at the accuracy of the early homœopathic prescribers in using the Kali salts for epilepsy without having any knowledge of electromotive chemistry whatsoever.

This is my first practical point. Think of any of the Kali salts in prescribing for epilepsy, that difficult and complex trouble.

My second point is to think of them in connection with feebleness, not only the weakness of old age but also for feeble children. In 1935 Dr. Yingling of Kansas wrote an excellent Repertory of drugs suitable for babies, where he mentions *Kali carb.* and *Kali brom.* five times each, also *Kali bich.* and *Kali phos.*, mostly for the night terrors of children.

My third point about the Kali salts is that they are excellent for the complaints of old age as they have an affinity for connective tissue, an old age simply means a loss of elasticity with stiffness in the joints and wandering pains. *Causticum* and *Kali carb.* are sheet anchors in this part of the country for the pains of rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis.

By far the most important Kali salts are the three called for in patients whose complaints are aggravated by cold; *Causticum*, *Kali carb.*, *Kali phos.*

The second group in importance are the three whose complaints are aggravated by heat, *Kali bich.*, *Kali sulph.* and *Kali iod.*

This is a nice neat division but for the sake of accuracy I would point out that the *Kali bich.* patient, while he feels worse in hot weather, his actual pains are better for hot appli-

cations. One must be careful with the temperature modality. Two other Kali salts are aggravated by cold besides the first three mentioned. These are *Kali arsenicum* and *silica*, both of little importance.

You may think this temperature division is of no great moment but if you happen to show your own patients into the consulting room you will find candidates for the principal three Kali drugs huddled over the waiting room fire in contradistinction to the *Kali sulph.* or *Kali iod.* types who will want the window open like a *Pulsatilla* type.

Incidentally, woe betide you if you keep a *Kali iod.* type waiting too long, for he has almost unpleasant temper.

This brings me to another point. Dr. Tyler quotes Kent as stating: "The *Kali carb.* patient is a hard one to study and the remedy itself is a hard one to study."

I would amplify this by saying that the majority of Kali types are hard to study so much as they are uninteresting people, feeble of body and of intellect. Their personalities are undeveloped. You would expect this in babies and in old age where the personality has shrunk. Occasionally you will have to choose between a *Sepia* and a *Kali carb.*, but *Sepia* is less gutless than the genuine *Kali carb.*

As regards the Emanometer groupings of the Kalis we find *Causticum*, *Kali mur.* and *Kali nitrosum* in group 6, *Kali carb.* and *Kali arsenicum* in group 7, and *Kali bich.*, *Kali brom.*, *Kali iod.*, *Kali phos.* and *Kali sulph.* in group 8.

Schussler's so-called Twelve Tissue Remedies included *Kali phos.*, *Kali mur.*, and *Kali sulph.* Both *Kali phos.* and *Kali sulph.* are a constituent of *Viburnum opulus*, the High Cranbury, an old remedy for uterine cramps. One would have thought therefore to find *Viburnum* in either groups 6, 7 or 8, but I was interested to find it listed in group 4.

Five Potassium salts can be used in conjunction with the *Bowel Nosode B no. 7*, Paterson. This sub-type was observed in Bach's first publication, *Chronic Disease*. The five salts are: *Kali bich.*, *Kali brom.*, *Kali carb.*, *Kali iod.*, *Kali nitrate*. This combination gives further proof that the metallic ion is

the active one in Homœopathic prescribing just as the Sodium ion is the active principle in the Proteus group.

It remains for us to point a few of the essential features of what I will call the big six Kali salts, which I have listed in my order of importance.

(I) *Causticum*. Potassium hydroxide. KOH. Popularly known as caustic potash or potassium hydrate.

Kent says under both *Causticum* and *Kali carb.*: "Adapted to persons with dark hair, but the first have rigid fibre and the latter lax fibre." I would remark that most of my patients requiring either drug have been grey haired, without fibre of any kind.

*Causticum* has the mental confusion associated with a cerebral incident in the circle of Wills. People who start with spoonerisms. Think of it for minor convulsions with paralysis of single parts. Soreness or rawness of any part with burning. Melancholy depressed old people easily satisfied with food. Yellow-faced people subject to warts on hand and face.

In Nash's Leaders the author states under *Natrum mur.*: "I have given more space to this remedy and to *Lachesis* and *Causticum* than to most other remedies for the following reasons. They are all more efficient in high potencies. They are not appreciated by the general profession and I have found that those who value these three remedies are generally good homœopathic prescribers."

Nash also says *Causticum* is an antisycotic as well as an antipsoric.

Remember the *Causticum* cough where the sputum has to be swallowed and where there is dropping of the eyelids. It should be remembered for retarded children slow in walking. It is long acting and a complement to *Carbo. veg.* It is followed well by *Puls.*, *Nux.*, *Calc.*, *Sepia*, but it should not be followed by *Phosphorus*.

*Causticum* folk are chill and gray,  
And gloomiest on a clear fine day.

*Kali carb.* Potassium carbonate.  $K_2CO_3$ .

Right-sided remedy for stitching pains in the old and feeble. Bloated appearance of upper eyelids. Patients full of flatulence,

palpitation and backache with chest aggravation at 3 a.m. compelling them to sit up and lean forward. They cannot bear to be touched. A good remedy after coronaries and childbirth. This is a long acting remedy also complementary to *Carbo veg.* and is followed well by *Lycopodium*, *Sulphur* and *Phos*.

*Kali phos.* Potassium phosphate.  $K_2HPO_4$ .

A good nerve tonic for the feeble, shy and depressed types with drooping lids like *Causticum* or *Sepia*. Females with sore backs, headaches and fidgety feet.

In my opinion those are the three important Kali salts where patients are aggravated by cold.

The second group of three with the heat aggravation :

*Kali bichromate.* Red chromate of potash.  $K_2CR_2O_7$ .

Useful for wandering pains alternating with stringly catarrh and with stomach pains felt in small spots.

In children, one of the best remedies for measles and also useful to clear acne and papules from the skin. Complementary to *Arsenic*, but it does not follow *Calc*.

*Kali sulph.* Potassium sulphate.  $K_2SO_4$ .

Useful for thick yellow catarrhs, asthma and nasal polypi. It has an evening aggravation and the catarrh is always worse in a heated room. It is the *Pulsatilla type* carried a stage further. It has been used in hay fever where the eyes are itchy, but *Kali sulph. chromico*, the alum of chrome, is more effective in low potencies.

*Kali iod.* Potassium iodide KI.

I have found this remedy useful in frontal sinus pain and for bone pains generally. It has as much flatulence as *Kali carb.*, but not so much as *Carbo veg.*, *Lycopodium* and *Nux vomica*. Remember patients requiring this remedy are usually bad tempered and cruel.

In my opinion those are the three important remedies aggravated by heat.

A smaller group of three less important Kali salts is :

*Kali brom.* Potassium bromide. KBR.

This is the earliest transquillizer of the old school. By the way, we should remember we have a group of tranquillizing

drugs, *Aconite*, *Arsenic*, *Gelsemium*, *Argentum nit.*, *Kali phos.*, quite as efficient as the dangerous products now flooding the market.

Homœopathically, *Kali brom.* has only been used by me for fat fearful children who are afraid of the dark.

*Kali mur.* Potassium chloride. KCl.

I have used this remedy for middle ear catarrh. It is said to be good for dandruff, but *Selenium* is better.

*Kali nit.* Saltpetre.  $\text{KNO}_3$ .

Supposed to be good for Ménière's disease and for asthma.

Gunpowder is composed of pot. nit. 75 per cent., charcoal 15 per cent., sulphur, 10 per cent. *Gunpowder* in low potency is supposed to be good for boils and carbuncles.

It is merely necessary to mention the other kali salts :

Pot. aceticum, used in diabetes.

Pot. arsenicosum.

Pot. chloricum, used in nephritis.

Pot. chlorosum, bleaching fluid.

Pot. citricum, gravel.

Pot. cynatum.

Pot. ferrocyanatum, prostration.

Pot. oxalicum, lumbago. Salts of Sorrel.

Pot. permanganicum.

Pot. picricum, jaundice.

Pot. sulphuraticum, hiccough.

Pot. sulphuricum.

Pot. silicum.

Pot. tartaricum, paraplegia.

Pot. telluricum, halitosis.

From this list it can be seen that Potassium readily enters into combination with other metals.

Dr. Kent once said in his lectures on *Materia Medica*, written in 1904 : "At the present time there is only a very small number of homœopathic physicians who can come together in a body and say things that are worth listening to, a shamefully small number when we consider the length of time Hahnemann's books have been before the world." He makes this remark in his lecture on *Kali carb.*

It is up to us even at this late date to try to prove him wrong and I have always thought that we should press the Faculty to form a small committee to revise our drug presentations with the strong recommendation that they employ a first class chemistry professor to bring our inorganic and organic texts up to date.

For instance, the Russian scientist, Mendelejeff, perfected a table of the periodic system in which the elements based on their atomic weights were arranged in chemical families rising in octaves. One such family contains lithium, sodium, potassium, rubidium, silver, caesium, gold.

The old provers of these elements and their salts were, in many opinion, most accurate in their provings of the mental characteristics of the drugs. For instance, I have said that the Kali candidates are as a rule uninteresting depressed types of people. The same has been proved of the patients requiring *Natrum mur.*, *Argentum met.* and *Aurum*. Rubidium and caesium have never been proved, nor has lithium, though Hering in his proving of *Lithium carbonate* says: "Disposed to weep at his lonesome condition with hopeless anxiety at night."

Lithium ought to be proved as it is now being used extensively in many industries. It keeps lipstick from melting. A light isotope of lithium with neutrons from atomic fission creates tritium which, when fused with deuterium creates a thermonuclear explosion and is the motive power for guided missiles and rockets. I am sure if workers with this element, most of which comes from Southern Rhodesia, came down with depression as a presenting symptom, the up-to-date Homœopath would not put his mental condition down to the lethal nature of his work. He would remember that lithium is a kind of lightweight cousin of sodium and potassium and the patient would get a homœopathic dose of lithium or of the related sodium or potassium homœopathic salts.

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