

HOMŒOPATHY AND THE AGING PATIENT

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With the passage of each decade our aging population above the 65 year mark is steadily mounting and is already a problem of great concern, not only to medicine, but to the population in general. Congress and the Government have set up committees to consider the problems of our oldsters and every County and State Medical Society has active Committees on Aging. It is for this reason that we have decided to try to elucidate in a small way, some remedies that we have found in our own practice to be of great value, especially in the general practice of Geriatrics.

First let us look at some of the cardiac remedies, since all of us who live long enough will sooner or later have some heart complaint or other. *Arnica montana*, a drug one is prone to think of mainly with regard to bruises, sprains and fractures, is an invaluable remedy in those cardiac cases where the condition has been brought about by prolonged physical or mental strain. The patient usually will complain of soreness and lameness as well as extreme fatigue. The E.C.G. frequently reveals signs of myocardial degeneration and both arterio-sclerosis and athero-sclerosis are often noted.

For the frequently met complaint in geriatric practice of angina pectoris, before resort is had to the nitrites, we should first consider *Latrodectus mactans* with its picture of violent precordial pain extending to the left axilla and down the arm and forearm to the fingers, with numbness of the extremity. The pulse is feeble and rapid and frequently there is noted weakness and paresthesia of the lower limbs.

Another important anginal remedy is *Cactus grandiflorus* which is marked by constrictive pains, as if the heart were squeezed violently. Pain is aggravated by lying on the left side. The great polycrest, *Arsenicum album*, is frequently indicated in cardiac ailments. Symptoms are characterized by great fear and anxiety, sensitiveness to cold, burning pains, and aggravation of all symptoms in the early hours of the morning. Dyspnea is noted

following the slightest exertion and along with a hypotension, we note a weak, rapid pulse. Frequently there is anasarca and edema of the extremities. X-ray of the chest reveals definite cardiac hypertrophy.

If there is a history of lues, especially with sensitiveness to winter cold, mental depression and suicidal thoughts, *Aurum metallicum* and its salt, *Aurum muriaticum*, must be considered. This is especially true when there is marked evidence of tissue degeneration and arterio-sclerosis with cardiac weakness.

In patients of advanced years where the signs of arterial and cardiac degeneration are observed, one must always consider *Baryta carbonica* and *Baryta iodatum*. The former is the remedy of choice in premature senility as evidenced by childish behavior and mental weakness but the iodide is indicated more on pathological grounds. Where there is glandular swelling with greater comfort in the open air, then our choice is the iodide.

Since this is not a paper specifically on geriatric cardiology, we must skip over many other equally useful homœopathic remedies which find daily use in the treatment of the aged. For those who wish to add to their armamentarium we suggest a study of *Digitalis* in potency which works wonders in heart block and bradycardia. *Tabacum* is for the heavy smoker where nicotine poisoning has caused damage to heart and blood vessels, as well as the more recently publicized carcinoma of the lungs.

Spigelia is a remedy especially useful in rheumatic heart disease, which is almost always accompanied by left-sided neuritis or neuralgia. If pains are on the right side, one must consider first *Sanguinaria canadensis* or even *Silicea*. *Phytolacca decandrum*, *Rhus toxicodendron* and *Strontium* are also remedies that must be borne in mind for the aging cardiac and a review of the materia medica will bring out the specific indications for their use.

In the gastro-intestinal sphere where there is a history of an old duodenal ulcer, with an intolerable burning epigastric pain and much flatulence, *Argentum nitricum* is our remedy. Patients are usually thin, high strung and are chronic worriers. The aged ulcer patient who complains of burning upper abdominal pain, which is partially relieved by heat, is frequently helped by *Arsenicum album*, especially in those cases where malignancy is

suspected. Even though cure is impossible, great relief follows this remedy. Vomiting, if present, usually consists of blood, bile or mucus.

Lycopodium is a remedy for those older persons whose skin shows yellowish spots and whose general complexion is on the clay-colored side. Symptoms run from right to left and are always worse between 4:00 and 8:00 p.m. Many deep-seated, chronic diseases call for this remedy. The mentals are very important in the aged. With *Lycopodium* they fear to be alone and are extremely depressed. They lack self-confidence and their memory is poor, with confused thoughts. In writing they use the wrong words and tend to misspell them. Foods taste sour, and they complain of fullness even following a few bites of food. Where properly indicated, *Lycopodium* is a prime geriatric remedy.

There is one more field in geriatric medicine that must not be over-looked. Advanced hepatitis and cirrhosis of the liver respond more favorably to homœopathy than to the so-called modern drugs. In chronic hepatitis *Magnesium muriaticum* is frequently indicated—because of the hypertrophy of the liver, epigastric tenderness, distension of the abdomen, anorexia and intolerance to milk. Modalities are worse from eating and from lying on the right side.

Chelidonium majus is a frequently used remedy in liver complaints, but in our experience is more valuable in the acute hepatitis accompanied by icterus, severe headache, drowsiness, frothy urine and clay-colored stools. Other liver remedies to be checked are *Carduus marianus*, *Iris versicolor*, *Podophyllum peltatum*, *Myrica cerifca* and *Mercurius*.

We realize, after having specialized in Geriatrics for almost twenty years, that we have barely scratched the surface of remedies indicated in diseases of the aged. The materia medica has a hundred or more remedies as good or better than those we have given. It was not our desire to make this a complete course in the space of a short paper, but we do hope that having pointed out the way, our listeners will have the curiosity to continue to read up and add to those we have submitted. The acute case is yours

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