

SIMILIA SIMILIBUS CURENTUR

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The student of elementary Latin will be able to translate the title of this article, but it will need a special study of medical history to find its origin and tell of the story of its therapeutic application. Hippocrates says: "Disease is caused by similars; and by the administration of similars the patient is restored from disease to health.¹ Others² recorded their impressions that certain cures were effected by the drugs which themselves caused the complaint.

As the Danish army physician Stahl wrote in 1738: "The rule generally acted on in medicine to treat by means of oppositely acting remedies (Galen's *contraria contrariis*) is quite false and the reverse of what ought to be. I am, on the contrary, convinced that disease will yield to, and be cured by, remedies that produce a similar affection (*similia similibus*) . . ." But no one taught this form of therapeutics until Samuel Hahnemann convinced himself of its truth and so founded that system of medicine known as homœopathy.

THE MAN HAHNEMANN

Hahnemann was born in 1755 in Saxony, the tenth child of a painter of porcelain. Though money was short, he had an intense desire for knowledge and persevered in a classical education, mastering seven languages and becoming a doctor of medicine at twenty-four. He studied chemistry and translated many well known works of his day in a most painstaking and scholarly manner. He also published an "Apothecary's Lexicon" between 1793 and 1799, which contained notes on the preparation, chemistry and medicinal properties of drugs.

In a time of expanding knowledge he always sought to be accurate, shunned conjecture, and acknowledged his own errors. Hahnemann approached the practice of medicine with an enquiring and open mind, being in advance of his age in the general hygiene and diet recommended for his patients. He

prescribed single drugs and avoided excessive bleedings, while his contemporaries were using blunderbuss prescriptions containing anything up to fifty or more ingredients and venesection for practically all conditions.

Furthermore, Hahnemann was one of the first to practise humane treatment of the insane and attributed certain skin conditions and cholera to "small animalcules," although the germ theory of disease was not propounded until Pasteur's time (1822-1895). Indeed, all acknowledge Hahnemann's superior wisdom in condemning the drastic bleeding, purging and salivation practised in his day.

HAHNEMANN MAKES HIS DISCOVERY

It is such a man as this who followed in the footsteps of Haller (1708-1777) and others in experimenting on the healthy human to supplement the knowledge of the action of drugs previously obtained by observation of their effect in diseases. And it was in 1790 that Hahnemann, engaged in translating Cullen's "Materia Medica," and being dissatisfied with the explanation of the action of *Cinchona* bark in ague, decided to test the drug on himself. He took four drachms of the crude drug twice daily and experienced rigors, which ceased when he stopped taking the drug.

He continued to experiment with other drugs over a period of six years, and only then published his findings in Hufeland's Journal, a leading medical magazine of his day. He recommended the use of only small material doses of the drug by those who used the principle that he was investigating, namely that a drug which produces a particular group of symptoms in the healthy cures a disease showing a similar group.

Hahnemann experimented with ninety-nine drugs in the course of some fifty years³ before his death at the age of eighty-eight in 1843. His exposition of homœopathy is contained in the "Organon of Medicine" published first in 1810 and finally revised in 1842. To avoid the aggravation of symptoms met with by administering even quite small material doses he gradually reduced the amount still further, and first noted the efficacy of the microdose in 1801.

Practice for him always preceded theory, and it was the good results he was obtaining with the single remedy and the minute dose which led him to formulate a theory of "dynamization" (§269 in "The Organon"⁴) whereby sub-division was found to increase the power of a remedy, hence his word "potency". He recorded in the minutest detail the method he used in preparing his medicines. His followers have continued to make new medicinal preparations and record their effects on healthy humans, so that today there are some 1,500 remedies in the homœopathic materia medica.

THE PREPARATION OF HOMŒOPATHIC MEDICINES

Hahnemann's principles need to be followed by those present-day pharmacists who prepare medicines for homœopathic use and great care has to be taken over the identification and preparation of the raw materials. In the case of plants, these are collected at the same time of year and in the fresh wild state, as were those from which the originally proved drug was made, to ensure that the same medicinal principles are contained in the final preparation.

This is made by expressing the juices of the fresh plant and mixing them, together with the pulped plant parts, with the requisite quantity and strength of alcohol. This, after filtering, forms the "mother tincture". To produce the potencies or "dynamizations" the proportion of one drop of mother tincture is added to ninety-nine drops of redistilled alcohol in a small bottle or vial.

It is shaken vigorously (succussed) twenty to fifty times, usually using a specially designed small machine. This is the first (centesimal) "potency". A drop of it is added to ninety-nine drops of redistilled alcohol in a second vial, which is then succussed as before to produce the second (centesimal) potency. This process is repeated thirty times to give the thirtieth potency. Higher potencies than these are often used.

The drugs are usually dispensed as powders or in small bottles of medicated pills, tablets or granules. These are made of cane sugar or sugar of milk as an inert base, and are medicated by saturating with a few drops of the required potency.

There is also a special technique used to produce potencies from insoluble substances such as the metals and certain inorganic salts, etc.

DRUG PROVING

Hahnemann's concept of disease is fundamental to his understanding of the action of drugs. He writes: (§11) "When a person falls ill, it is only his spiritual, self-acting, vital force everywhere present in his organism, that is primarily deranged by the dynamic influence upon it of a morbid agent inimical to life." Hahnemann further points out that (§18) "the sum of all the symptoms and conditions in each individual case of disease, must be the sole indication to direct us in the choice of a remedy."

A drug is only a drug by reason of the distinct alteration it causes in the state of health of the human body. A drug given to a healthy body, in suitable dosage, will cause certain subjective symptoms and objective signs, which will regress when the drug is withdrawn. However, all persons are not equally susceptible to the action of all drugs, and Hahnemann found that in testing drugs, or "proving" them, as it is called, he had to choose healthy persons of differing physique and temperament.

They had to be careful observers, able to record their different sensations accurately, and be willing to abide by a uniform regime of living. His early provings were made with small material doses of the crude drug but later he found the power of the drug incredibly enhanced by the process of potentization of succussion described above. Later provers were therefore given globules of the thirtieth potency in increasing frequency until the symptoms produced were definite. Some of the provers were given unmedicated doses as controls.

The order of development of the symptoms, factors that caused aggravation and amelioration, were carefully noted. By comparing and adding together the reactions of a dozen or so provers the complete picture of the drug was recorded. It was deemed complete when subsequent provers failed to add to the list of symptoms and signs already noted for each system of the body.

THE POWER OF POTENTIZED DRUGS

Recent research has helped to explain the action of high potencies.⁵ In January 1954 Dr. W. E. Boyd published a report on the "Bio-chemical and Biological Evidence of Activity in High Potencies," which was later a news item in the general Press (see *The Daily Telegraph*, 19th August, 1954). Micro-doses of the order of a 10^{-6} dilution of mercuric chloride were shown to catalyse the hydrolysis of soluble starch with malt diastase (no spectrographic evidence of the presence of mercuric chloride could be obtained above the 10^{-8} dilution). High potencies of *Strophanthus* were also shown to have an effect on the frog's heart rate.

Work at the Boyd Research Institute in Glasgow continues, to investigate the characteristics and properties of the energy contained in homœopathic potencies and in human tissue fluids, as well as to simplify the technique of these physiological experiments.⁶ In the October 1957 number of the *British Homœopathic Journal*⁷ an account is given of the increased excretion of certain metals after the administration of the potentized metal in guinea-pigs. These animal experiments show to the enquiring physicist and physician that there is power, and indeed useful power, in the potentized drug.

HOW DOES A DRUG REALLY ACT?

However, it has not yet been established how a drug, whether used in tincture form or potentized, actually effects a cure when prescribed according to the law of similars; for example, when opium was used by older physicians to cure certain cases of constipation, though its pharmacological effect is to produce this condition. Hahnemann has elaborated a theory to explain the action (see §29 and following in the "Organon").

Very much simplified it is this: that the alteration in health produced by the drug wholly takes the place of the disease symptoms. These are consequently no longer felt, and since the drug soon ceases to have any effect the patient is restored to health. Whether it is perfect health or not will depend on how closely the drug picture (as discovered by proving it on

the healthy) corresponds to the totality of signs and symptoms present in each particular patient.

However, the drug does in fact effect a cure, and the truth of the last sentence is proved constantly in practice. To help the physician gain the knowledge necessary to achieve this correspondence between the picture presented by the patient and that of the drug of his choice, Hahnemann has posed three pertinent questions and given comprehensive answers (§77 ff.).

1.—*How is the physician to find out what must be known in order to cure disease?*

His answer is to obtain a full medical and personal history from the patient and his relatives, and to follow this by a complete clinical examination (§84-90), the practice of which would earn high commendation even for the best brought up students.

2.—*How is he to gain a knowledge of the instruments adapted for the cure of disease—the power of medicines?*

Here Hahnemann gives an account of proving of drugs, the results of which the physician must know thoroughly in order to practise the art of healing.

3.—*What is the most suitable method of employing these artificial agents (medicines) for the cure of disease?*

Here follow accounts of Hahnemann's use of these remedies (§146 ff.) both in physical and mental disorders. He mentions the usefulness of hypnotism (Mesmerism was then over a hundred years old) and the function of massage, both of which find application in modern medicine.

The foundations for the practice of the rational art of healing are thus shown to have been completely laid by Hahnemann nearly two hundred years ago. Since his time homœopathy has come to be known and practised in most countries. This in itself is testimony to the efficacy of its therapeutics, and this aspect of the subject will be dealt with more fully in a subsequent article.

REFERENCES

1. In the book attributed to Hippocrates by Froben.
2. Men such as Basil Froben (1538), Bouduc (1710), etc.

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3. His observations are recorded in:
 - "Fragmenta de Viribus Medicamentorum Positivis," 1805.
 - "Materia Medica Pura," 1811-1821.
 - "Chronic Diseases," 1828.
4. Paragraphs refer to those in Hahnemann's "Organon of Medicine," VI Ed., translated by Boericke.
5. Early work is critically examined by a committee under Sir Thomas Horder and published in a pamphlet by Bale, Sons and Danielsson Ltd., in 1925. Dr. Boyd's report is in *The British Homœopathic Journal*, 44, 1.
6. Personal communication, December 1957.
7. "Influences of Infinitesimal Doses on Elimination Kinetics," by Lise Wurmser.

*—Homœopathy, June 1958.***WHY HOMŒOPATHY IS NOT SO POPULAR
AS ALLOPATHY***(Cont. from Page 91)*

Students have no future prospect but to try their luck in establishing themselves as practitioners.

Medicines being similar acts in a harmonious manner with the life force and the sick person is restored to health without leaving any trace.

Even a most inefficient doctor becomes a Health Officer in a big firm or State enterprises.

Medicines being dis-similar (Allos) Act only on the material body and suppress the cause of the suffering (pathos) temporarily. That is why Allos+pathos= Allopathy.

—The D. N. De Homœo. Med. College Re-Union Magazine, Sept. '61.