

## BACK TO BACK

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You will be amused to know why I chose this subject. A very pseudo-homoeopath from Flower Hospital, who shall be nameless, but who is a bone specialist, came to me and said, "You know, there is something in this Homoeopathy, but I haven't the time to study it. I am just going out of business if somebody doesn't teach me how to cope with backaches. For some reason, doctors refer their backaches to me, because I am a bone specialist, and I am fed up with it."

So I kidded him and tried to get him to come to the homoeopathic summer school, and he said, "My Lord, I am second in the department at the hospital and busy as can be. I have no time to go. Why don't you write me out an epitome of the symptoms calling for the best remedies for different kinds of backaches?"

I said, "Well, why don't you take out two weeks and come to medical school to me?"

We had a good laugh, and then I thought I hadn't given a title to Dr. Lipton, so I said, "All right, I will write a paper on backaches, and I will get a reprint from Allan Sutherland and send it to you, and you tell me how you get on doing it."

So this is really a paper for a novice in backache. I called it 'Back To Back.' I wanted to call it 'Dosey-Do,' but I thought nobody would understand, because 'Dosey-Do' is where you turn your back to your partner and try to escape bumping, and this was what this doctor was trying to do with Homoeopathy. *That is why I called it 'Back To Back.'*

If you are going to treat backache, you have got to know whether the backache is caused by fallen metatarsal arches; or some deep varicose vein trouble; or pure posture—or impure posture, that is—or whether it is caused by a slipped sacroiliac; or whether it is caused by a fibroid; or a tipped womb; or whether it is caused by a kidney trouble; or whether it is caused by referred pain from any of a number of possible conditions, such as kidney-stones, gallstones, stomach cancer of the posterior wall, colon cancer, or tumor, or terrific mucous colitis, because colon pain refers definitely up higher, which is very bewildering sometimes; or by heart pain, which often goes through the back and they have no pain in the front, and they come to you with a heck of a pain in the back, and if you are not smart, you will think it is something else; or—and you will laugh now—backache from a leftover shingles several years ago, which they don't know it is.

And, of course, there is pleurisy, and pneumonic backaches, which usually are of a different type. They are usually so sharp that they can't be classed

as backaches. They are violent pain, and you can probably think up many other possible differential diagnoses.

Of the actual types of backache, lumbago is possibly the commonest one, whatever that means. It may come from a wetting, or a strain, or a chilling, or over-exercise, but it is the thing that gets them here (indicating), and they go like this (illustrating). It makes old men of young ones!

Then there are the various sacroiliac backaches. There are backaches according to location, some of the most troublesome ones, of the nape of the neck with extension into the shoulders, which may or may not be due to displacement of the cervical vertebrae, or to sheer nerve tension at the back of the neck.

Then there are the dorsal backaches; the intrascapular distresses; the tight, burning intraneuro-subscapular.

Then we have the big muscle, the big latissimus dorsi and so on, the lumbar ones, the sacral ones, and, last but not least, the coccygeal pains.

Now, the lead remedies—if anybody asked me to make up a little kit, as this doctor probably will do, of the most frequently needed backache remedies, I should put in the following, *ab sine qua non*: Bryonia, Kali carb., Natrum mur., Nux vomica, Rhus tox., Sepia, and Sulphur. These seven will cover such a wide proportion of backaches that it isn't funny.

In my secondary list I would put *Aesculus hippocastanum*—you remember in the old days they put coral around the baby's neck to keep it from coughing at night, and a bit of amber around to keep it from crouping, and you carried a horse chestnut in your pocket to prevent the piles. The farmers will tell you also that the horse chestnut is very good for what ails you in the back when you have been "spadin' too hard," and *Aesculus* is a wonderful remedy for sacroiliac strain—which you may think is *Rhus* or *Sepia*, and isn't—right-sided, or sacroiliac backache which is relieved by standing.

*Aesculus*, of course, also has a concomitant of piles. If you can find that, that points you to it.

Another remedy that would go in the subsidiary list is *Antimonium tartaricum*. You all know the story of the smallpoxes. What do they have? A backache with a capital B, and some of the worst backaches, particularly in acute diseases, are *Antimonium tartaricum*.

Then in your second degree you have to have *Calcarea phosphorica*. I have missed, in my haste, more back troubles, more sacroiliacs, more neuralgic and seiatics that should have been *Calcarea phosphorica*, and I didn't see it until the second prescription. So never forget *Calcarea phosphorica* in the nape of the neck and cervical regions, and the sacroiliac regions.

Also in acute things, the queen of backaches, *Eupatorium*. When grippe cases do not complain of muscular aches, do not complain primarily of headaches, but of backaches and eye aches, and you later find that they also

have a terrific thirst while chilling, and pains in the bones rather than the muscles, there is Eupa-torium on a silver platter.

Here is one that will surprise you, in my supernumerary list, Magnesia carb. for some of these back things. That is one of my pet remedies. You know the Magnesia carb. patient, the typical orphanage kid that nobody loves, who is really pitiful, weak, emaciated, restless, no place to hang its spiritual hat, and they have all sorts of back troubles relieved by motion. When you see back troubles relieved by motion don't go leaping for the Rhus bottle. Look and see whether it may not be Magnesia carb.

Also, curiously enough, in the intrascapular backaches, Phosphorus. Sometimes when it is more a weakness, and the pains of weakness, if the other symptoms agree, particularly if there are leucorrhoeas or neuralgias, Stannum, where you can't hold yourself up. And never forget the backache of Variolinum, which comes under the same category as the backache of Antimonium tartaricum.

Now just a few things about our main big seven. You all know a Bryonia lumbago when you see one. They take to their bed. They can't move. They want pressure, something hard under the back, and preferably cold, and they are thirsty and grumpy, and worse at nine or at three by the clock.

The Kali carb. backaches are lower. They are sacral and they often go with menstrual difficulties. They are the kind where the patient says, "My back is broken in two," and the pain goes down the back of the legs, with the typical Kali carb. symptoms, the whimsical, difficult, fussy, fat, chilly, rather ticklish patient in both sexes, ticklish both in the soles of the feet and in the disposition.

Natrum mur. is, of course, a great standby backache. There they want pressure. They want to put a book behind them in the chair, a hard thing under them in the bed. They go around sitting in chairs with their hands back here (illustrating), and you all know the Natrum mur. characteristics that may well go with that.

Nux vomica has the backache of the big muscles, all up and down the back, the latissimus dorsi, and so on, usually from chilling; often, though, from overexertion followed by chilling, with the crankiness, the aggravation in the morning, until they get limbered up, although motion does not help, but getting going in the morning helps. The relief from heat, the constipation, the impatience, the irritability, all come in here.

I had a beautiful case recently of a terrible lumbago in an insurance agent who just showed me such a picture of Nux vomica that it was unbelievable, and Nux 10M helped him handsomely and quickly over the lumbago which he had had undoctored for about two months.

Rhus tox., of course, you know, and don't forget that although Rhus tox. is left-sided, a right-sided sacroiliac will respond like mad to Rhus tox.

Also, I once had a backache from falling off a horse. I went to an

osteopath. No soap. I went to a chiropractor. No soap. I got a belt. No soap—and an awful lot of expense. Finally, I went to my beloved Dr. Stanton in New York, and he gave me Rhus tox. 20M. No soap. I was getting a little fed up, so at the summer school I said to Dr. Roberts, "What do you do when Rhus tox. is indicated and it doesn't help you?"

Old Dr. Roberts looked at me in his slow way and he said, "You change the potency."

So I said, "All right, Stanton gave me 20M. What do you give me?"

So he gave me the 200 and, having had a sacroiliac for ten weeks, after two hours I didn't have one again for about five years. That is very interesting. Your lovely high potency 20M, no, no, and a 200 of the same thing—quick! I have to tell stories against myself once in a while.

Sepia you all know—the dreadful backaches from visceroptosis with the bearing down, the washerwoman's backache, the ironer's backache, worse from using the arms, with the symptoms of Sepia.

And our prize friend, Sulphur, who can't get out of a chair without pushing and standing and waiting. I think more backaches in my practice have been helped by Sulphur than by any other remedy, but those are perhaps the backaches which are pre-arthritis, where an x-ray of the back would show you a certain amount of osteo-arthritis of the spine. Of course, we all have it as we get older, but Rhus is not only for the creaky thing, creaky rusty hinge. When they can't get up out of the chair, and when they try to sit down and get within four inches and fall into the chair, think about Sulphur.

So much for back to back, for our poor, bemused non-homoeopathic specialist.

—The Homoeopathic Recorder, February, 1955

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