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EDITORIAL

ROLE OF DIETETIC RESTRICTIONS WHILE ON HOMOEOPATHIC TREATMENT

It is generally believed that Homoeopathy offers remarkable peculiarities so far as the diet of a patient is concerned. Somehow or other queer notions have passed down the generations. On a careful study of the homoeopathic literature, it will be seen that Hahnemann himself had not put any severe restriction as his followers have.

Hahnemann wrote in a primary paper in 1792 with respect to diet. He says therein, "the *instinct of the stomach is to be attended to* for the regulation of food both in health and in disease." He carefully distinguishes between the true natural instinct of the stomach and those perverted and depraved desires of the stomach that are incidental to the victim of over-indulgence and gluttony. He has ridiculed the idea of standard or normal system of diet for all and insists on adapting a diet to the constitution and digestive power of each individual. "The patient's own feelings are much surer guide than all the maxims of the schools."

In the Medicine of Experience he says, "particularly in acute diseases the delicate and unerring tact of the awakened internal sense that presides over the maintenance of the life speaks so clearly, so precisely, so much in conformity with nature that the physician need not oppose, in any way, this voice of nature by refusing or exceeding its demands." He says further, "as regards food and drink the demand is certainly chiefly for things that give palliative relief, as long as they are not of medicinal character." In case of chronic diseases he says, "he cannot lay down any rules that will be adapted to every case; the practitioner must, in his directions to his patients, be guided by *the peculiar circumstances of each case.*"

Hahnemann's mind, with respect to diet and regimen, can be easily understood from what we have read from his pen above. He gives adequate instructions regarding diet in the *Organon of Medicine* in aphorisms 259, 260 and 261. These aphorisms provide the basis of the widely held views that in order to achieve success by homoeopathic medication, it is essential

for the practitioner to insist that the diet of a patient should be as plain and non-medicinal as possible.

Hahnemann was very much astounded by his incredible discovery of potentiation, and he himself must have been surprised at the tremendous medicinal power of his dilutions (succussions) increasing with subsequent dilutions. His contemporaries did not believe in his discovery and instead ridiculed him. He, therefore, made it sure that the action of the infinitesimal dose is not affected or interrupted by anything whatsoever. So, he advised prohibition of all articles of medicinal value. He thought bland diet would be ideal for the patient. But it is difficult to say if bland diet is essential for faster recovery from disease.

The homoeopathic potentised drug substance develops an incredible curative energy to antidote all morbid processes of the past and present, and restores the vitiated vital force to its normal equilibrium and removes all evidences of sickness at times even in the face of apparent obstacle to recovery. Hahnemann might have thought that if this energy is wasted in fighting other morbid forces, the active disease fighting process in a patient would be retarded. But in practice we find that the resistance offered by unrestricted diet is so minimal that it does not even matter.

Hahnemann's concept of non-medicinal substance cannot be understood fully. Even those vehicles such as milk sugar known to be non-medicinal has been 'proved' and is used as a remedy. Therefore, the 'non-medicinal' is probably comparative in value.

In addition to what he writes in the Organon, he also suggests that in chronic diseases, as long as the digestive functions are not involved there is no need to be strict with the diet except that use of *onions* and *pepper* be restricted. As regards *coffee* he says, *young people should give up at once, but those who have been used to drinking it for many years can often only abandon it gradually.* Roasted rye or wheat may be substituted for it. *Tea must be forbidden* absolutely whether weak or strong. *Wine need not be discontinued* by those accustomed to its use, but should be gradually diminished in its intake, and can be diluted with water. *Brandy must be left off,* and wine can be substituted. Practitioner should be careful to what kind of beer his patients should drink. Vinegar and lemon juice should be abstained from those who are affected with nervous and abdominal complaints. Sour fruits should be taken sparingly and sweet fruits, moderately. Those whose sexual powers are low should eschew chicken, eggs, vanilla. Women with scanty menses should not take saffron or cinnamon and those with weak digestion should use spices and bitters sparingly. Flatulent vegetables should, in all cases, be avoided in abdominal and constipative complaints.

Beef, good wheat or rye bread, milk and fresh butter with a little salt seems to be the *most natural and universal diet* in chronic diseases.

Boenninghausen held still more liberal views in respect of diet. He felt that an article of diet ingested continuously for a long time may cease to exert

any marked (medicinal) influence on the body. It is a well-known fact that when the body is exposed for a long time to any mild influence it develops tolerance and immunity. Therefore, the feeling is strengthened that there is no need to prohibit such articles. Again he said, the withdrawal effect so suddenly effected during the disease state might even interfere with the true disease picture and might cause considerable hindrance in the treatment. The patient in modern times is exposed continuously and considerably to all types of foreign influences and it is the experience of many homoeopaths that the homoeopathic treatment successfully restores the sick to health though these influences continue to operate.

Foods known to be inimical to certain remedies should be carefully avoided. This is a liberal view of many including that of Clarke. Clarke did not object to coffee drinking except when Belladonna, Chamomilla, Colocynth, Ignatia, Lycopodium, Nux vomica were prescribed.

Hahnemann was not very strict about restrictions on diet but he had his own views though not well substantiated.

Boenninghausen and others were very liberal in respect of diet. They allowed many things of daily items and sensibly so.

Many of recent practitioners have not found any of these restrictions of coffee, onion, alcohol as a necessity during the course of treatment and results have not vitiated.

So imposition of blanket dietetic restriction does not seem to be justified by logic and experience.

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