

THE SALTS OF MAGNESIUM—A COMPARISON

DR. NEIL MACKILLOP

There are four salts of Magnesia used in homoeopathic practice: Mag. carb., Mag. mur., Mag. phos., Mag. sulph., and the make up of these indicates in a general way a thin, emaciated, sensitive, almost neurotic individual, worn out, exhausted; in other words—done. This then in a general way is the make-up of the magnesium person. In Mag. carb. the worn out, done appearance predominates; in Mag. phos. associated with the thinness, the emaciation etc., the neurotic characteristics predominate while in Mag. mur. there is a *slow, sluggishness of everything, the liver and the circulation in general.*

GASTRO-INTESTINAL SYMPTOMS

Magnesium carbonicum: Mag. carb. was the first of the Magnesium salts to be proved by Hahnemann and we must study it, in children, women and men. The child is one of the *puny, sickly variety, due in most cases not to any obvious cause, but simply to defective nutrition, the reason for this being hard to discover.* It may be because it refuses to take milk which is the natural food of childhood, or if persuaded to take it, colicky pains come on in the pit of the stomach and the milk is passed undigested. How can such a child be expected to thrive? What is the use of giving it substances containing vitamins A, B, C, D, and so on if all it desires is some acid drink? Or, if just beyond the baby stage some meat, in fact always meat? So you see from the very outset the magnesium child has got a hard fight to put up before it can become a healthy member of the community. If such a child in Germany were the possessor of a curved nose and a great-great grandfather named Isaac as Priestley pointed out recently in a post-script, it would have little hope of survival. It was in such children that sea water plasma was used for a while but this form of treatment was soon discontinued. Colicky pains forcing the child to draw its legs up, very similar to that of Colocynth, are characteristic. The character of the stools is the same in children as in adults. The stools are green and slimy, like the scum of a frog pond. Sometimes it looks as if there were lumps of tallow floating in the stool. Here then is found something that is an indication for Magnesium. In Chamomilla there is a yellowish-green stool, like chopped eggs. Calcarea has also rejection of milk, but here we have in addition, sweating of the forehead, sweating of the feet and distension of the abdomen. In the adult there is what is commonly known as "the acid dyspeptic type". Starchy foods seem to upset him; potatoes upset him whenever he eats them. Cabbage and, in general, all starchy foods seem to produce a warmth which seems to increase in intensity: *anxious and warm in the whole body especi-*

ally in the head while eating warm food. This is the first important rubric described by Hahnemann and he lays great stress on it so we find in the adult what has been called acid dyspepsia predominates as a symptom; acid risings into the mouth often with vertigo, nausea, retching and even vomiting. The stomach feels sore and pressure elicits hypersensitiveness, common to all magnesias. There is great rumbling of gas in the abdomen and there is loss of tone in the abdominal muscles, with a lack of firmness in the underlying viscera with splashing on percussion with frequent passage of frothy liquid stools which smell sour. In fact, in the child everything about its make-up is sour. It breathes sour, it smells sour. The breath is sour because of the catarrh and the result of errors of diet. Even the perspiration is sour. When there is abdominal pain it takes the form of colic and griping which is ameliorated by bending forward. The child is one of lax fibre, obviously of a nervous type and decidedly anxious and irritable, but above all sour. A definite craving for meat is present. In the stools often worms are found. In Mag. carb. the stools are green and frothy with white lumps floating about.

Magnesium muriaticum: In Mag. mur. we get an entirely different picture. The stool is hard and knotty, difficult to pass or they may be crumbly at the anus or covered with blood and mucus. Faeces may accumulate to such an extent as to cause obstruction. In Mag. carb. there is an absence of tenesmus but in Mag. mur. there is violent tenesmus with burning and smarting at the anus.

Magnesium phosphoricum: In Mag. phos. the picture changes again, the stool is thick, brown and watery, changing colour from brown to almost white and lately covered with blood. There may be spasmodic retention of urine during stool with desire to urinate on standing erect again. This symptom we encounter in dysentery so that Mag. phos. should suit a dysenteric patient, not in the acute stages but in later stages when there is a catarrhal condition of the bowels left as a sequel. In the acute stages of dysentery Nat. sulph. comes in with the liquid stool intermixed with blood and here the blood predominates in the stool.

Magnesium sulphuricum: In Mag. sulph. with the diarrhoea we get great thirst. In fact thirst is a marked and essential symptom of this drug. When a chill is present it is followed by thirst though sometimes this thirst marks the beginning of the chill. This thirst is worse in the early morning, better after breakfast, though it may be present in the evening as well, particularly during menses. There is a complete loss of appetite too along with this thirst. The very thought of food seems to upset at times and as for meat we find instead of the craving it is replaced in Mag. sulph. by an aversion. Mag. carb. has violent thirst as well but more often in the evening and at night. Mag. mur. has dryness of the mouth at night, but has little or no thirst with the dryness but in this drug we get a peculiar thirst which comes on with intensity at 3 a.m. In considering the female symptoms we

find under Mag. carb.—menses delayed, scanty, but more profuse at night than by day; discharge dark like pitch; any pain present during the menses is ameliorated by pressure on the abdomen and by stooping. In Mag. mur. we find hysteria with marked globus and diarrhoea. In Mag. phos. pain precedes the flow with great weakness. In Mag. sulph. the characteristic feature is the thick dark, often black flow.

THE EFFECT OF THE MAGNESIUM SALTS ON THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Magnesium carbonicum: In Mag. carb. the nerves come in for special attention; as regards the face we find a tearing in the left zygoma at night. It forces her to sit up in bed, but even that is not enough. She gets out of bed and rushes from room to room holding the painful side and wagging the head, and whenever she remains quiet back it comes in its full intensity. When it comes to toothache we find a similar state of affairs, pain radiating to the temple and driving the patient out of bed. In Mag. mur. there is a heaviness in the head with reeling and the feeling almost of loss of consciousness. Sometimes the headache is so intense that it feels as if the head would burst, somewhat ameliorated by hard pressure from both hands. Wrapping up the head also seems to help a neuralgic headache round the eyes worse for motion and worse for fresh air, but better for pressure. This type of headache is often associated with liver symptoms.

Magnesium muriaticum: If in Mag. mur. the predominating symptoms are referable to the hepatic region—pressing pain in the liver; seems to be hard and enlarged.

Magnesium phosphoricum: In Mag. phos. the pains are more of a nervous nature. The abdominal pains are of a more general hypersensitive nature more in the nature of a colic generally radiating from the navel, ameliorated by bending double or from deep pressure of the hands and by hot applications and often associated with a watery diarrhoea.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

Magnesium carbonicum: In the mentals of Mag. carb. there is definite strain of uneasiness together with a decided fear. This fear is manifested in various ways from a general trembling of the hands to a generalized trembling. All day this fear, almost amounting to anguish, is apparent. There is no desire to talk for talking, or any mental exertion whatsoever, simply makes the condition worse. The trembling and fear seem to pass off on going to bed at night.

Magnesium muriaticum: In Mag. mur. though we do not find the same turmoil of mind, there is the desire for solitude with the disinclination to talk. Here also mental exertion seems to tire easily and although there is anxiety this is relieved in the open air. But there is a softness about this drug that does not appear in the carbonate, shown by a tearful outlook. In Mag. phos. the mind dwells more on the actual pain than the other magne-

sium salts. One cannot lead him into any other train of thought. The pain is there and the patient keeps lamenting that it is still there and nothing seems to shift it. All sorts of nerve pains are found, intercostal neuralgia, sciatica, tic-douloureux. It has proved an excellent remedy in writer's cramp and in shingles. He is in a constant state of nerve tension and the paroxysms of pain are so sudden that he almost lies waiting for them. After they seem to come in waves, cutting or boring into the body and changing from one place to another to such a degree as to make the poor sufferer sob and even scream out and lament against the fates that have inflicted this dire trouble on him.

Magnesium phosphoricum: The Mag. phos. patient has difficulty in concentration. Everything has got to be noted down. Mental effort also tires and if a student there is marked disinclination to settle down to studying, in fact a mag. phos. patient can never be a 'swot' until he has had a few doses of Mag. phos. If he should be forced to make an effort with the shadow of an examination coming nearer and nearer to him his mind may suddenly seem to be clearer but when he begins to study he has great difficulty in warding off that insidious feeling of drowsiness which seems to come over him.

Magnesium sulphuricum: Now let us turn to consider the mental make up of Mag. sulph. As in all magnesias there is apprehension with general uneasiness in fact it may lead almost to complete prostration till she is almost beside herself with anxiety. All kinds of figments of the imagination are present even to believing that she sees persons who are not there. Everything somehow seems to be wrong. No use trying to calm her for she only flies into a passion, then tends to pass into a state of anxious weeping. Of the use of this drug in the treatment of diabetes there can be no doubt and this can probably be traced to its diuretic action with great thirst which tends to pass off after breakfast. Mag. sulph. has, however, a dislike to meat, thus markedly differing from the carbonate.

COMPARISON OF THE OUTSTANDING SYMPTOMS OF THE MAGNESIUM SALTS

Magnesium carbonicum: As it is only in details that we get any difference between the magnesium salts we must make Mag. carb. the central study and compare the symptoms of the others with it and in a paper like this only the outstanding symptoms can possibly be given. Mag. carb. is the senior partner of the old established firm of Messrs. Pulv Rhei Co., and it is surprising how often Mag. carb. is beneficial to people who have been dosing themselves with this powder and here also Nux comes in useful. Clarke points out that one leading note is sensitiveness, mental and bodily, sensitive to touch, sensitive to air. Thus, this is a remedy to be considered in the treatment of the effects of shock, blows or mental disorders. A characteristic symptom often found in children as well as adults, is that the least touch causes starting. Often this is to be found in children with dilated

stomachs, whose condition has been brought about by unhygienic conditions and improper feeding. These are children of lax fibre, who smell sour and are sour, children of a highly nervous temperament and who are very irritable whose faces are pale and of an earthy colour, alternately red and pale. Often toothache is their complaint, sometimes after eating, after a bus journey, reaching into point of greatest intensity at night. In such children the teeth have been late in erupting, often with herpetic eruptions round the lower point of the mouth. A peculiar symptom sometimes met with in adults is that the teeth feel too long, with a sour bitter taste in the saliva with a dry mouth. Farrington says that almost all the symptoms of Mag. carb. seem to centre around the action of the drug on the gastro-intestinal organs and that all other symptoms depend upon this action more or less. There are certain other remedies which resemble Mag. carb., such as Colocynth, and more closely still Rheum, and in children Chamomilla. But Colocynth, does not have the green, slimy stool. The stools of Rheum are sour, slimy and frothy, followed by colic. If a child, it cries for different things and rejects its favourite toys. Sleep in Mag. carb. is never refreshing. In children when the craving for meat is out of all proportion, look for a tubercular family history. In the female during pregnancy there is toothache (Ratan.) and a grand indication in this remedy is that the flow of the menses is only at night (Am. m.) or lying down and ceases when walking. Clarke sums up the sensations of Mag. carb. as follows: "As if white of egg had dried on the face. As if teeth were too long. Throat as if scraped by an awn. As if rectum pricked by needles. Back as if broken." Pain in the right deltoid such as we find in Sanguinaria may also be present. Like some other drugs Mag. carb. has a periodicity every second day and every three weeks. In Mag. mur. the periodicity is every six weeks. As regards the eye symptoms there is nothing of very great importance though cures have been reported in cataract, but in Mag. mur. we get a green halo round the candle in the evening. In Mag. phos., however, eye symptoms are more marked. For here we get all sorts of things, such as horizontal double vision, rainbow colours, nystagmus and ptosis. In Mag. sulph. we find pains in the eyes as if protruding from the orbits when looking aside. In both Mag. sulph. and Mag. phos. there is photophobia.

Magnesium muriaticum: In Mag. mur. as already mentioned there is a slow sluggishness of everything. It is more often indicated in women than the carbonate, especially in hysterical women, who are worse after dinner; who rise from the table suffering from nausea. Their digestion has slowed up. The liver is sluggish and even enlarged and there are pains in the liver, worse for touch and lying on the right side. After dinner too in addition to the nausea, there are noisy eructations with a feeling of faintness, or with a headache which has the sensation of boiling water in the head and has to be relieved by pressure of the hands against the temples. Globus is also present and is relieved by eructation which can be easily understood

when one considers the laxness and distension of the stomach. We must also expect with the liver disturbance and with the interference with the portal circulation that the lower extremities should suffer. A vicious circle is set up involving the heart with consequent dyspnoea and oedema of the legs and feet. We find this liver condition also present in rickety children. We find too as an irritating symptom, palpitation of the heart, worse when the patient is quiet and in this it resembles Gelsemium very closely and differs from Digitalis. There are also uterine symptoms of a spasmodic nature with pitch-like menses with pain in the back. The Magnesium salts have a distinct effect on the nervous system. Thus we find that although all the Magnesium salts affect the intestinal tract and the nervous system the carbonate or phosphate are indicated in repeated attacks of neuralgia. In people of lax, debilitated fibre. Mag. mur. takes its place in hysteria. The stools in Mag. mur. are crumbly as if burnt. A symptom that has often proved useful in the muriate is that, during dinner, or after, the mouth fills with water and heat mounts up to the face. This by the way, is one of the symptoms of dysentery, not in the acute stages, but much later when one has been left with a certain degree of colitis due probably to the fact that one, or more, small portions of the lower bowels have been stripped of their endothelial lining so the Magnesium salts ought to prove useful in the treatment of dysentery.

Magnesium phosphoricum: Farrington says that the fact that the Magnesiums acted as tonics to the nervous system lead Schiessler to Mag. phos. as a nerve tonic and in his tissue remedies we get an excellent proving of this remedy. Wheeler in his recent book suggests that the use of Belladonna in the relief of paroxysmal pains is probably due to the Mag. phos. contained in it. So under sensations we find in Mag. phos.: paroxysms; shooting; lightning-like cramps, paralysis in other words a leader in this remedy is the paroxysmal character of the pains aggravated by cold air or water, by touch, at night, on motion and ameliorated by warmth. She seems to be continually talking to others about her pains. Here we get the brain fog. The schoolboy gets so easily tired that he cannot study. For the type of headache, called the nervous headache, it is often indicated. The ptosis observed in this remedy is not due to any organic trouble, but simply due to tired nerve. The nervous spasms are ameliorated by heat. It must never be forgotten in the hiccough which comes at a late stage of carcinoma, or for that matter hiccough, no matter what the cause and also in spasmodic retention of urine which is loaded with phosphates while the urine of Mag. mur. is highly coloured and that of the carbonate pale green with a dense white sediment, and the sulphate also pale green and in both the sulphate and phosphate nocturnal enuresis is present. The gastric pain in the phosphate is relieved by drinking hot water and this symptom does not appear in any of the other Magnesiums. The phosphate patient does not like cold water, especially in the mornings as it sets up colic and this colic is of the same

character as all the other pains in the phosphate—cutting, drawing, cramping, in fact the phosphate does not like the cold at all and often brushing the teeth with cold water is intolerable. Royal called Mag. phos. his homoeopathic opiate.

Magnesium sulphuricum: Now let us consider the symptoms of the sulphate, so well known to the old school as Epsom salt. An advertisement as to their virtues reads thus: "They relieve acidity and sweeten a sour stomach at once. The stomach starts digesting food right away and finishes its work with perfect ease. You feel nothing—no heartburn, no flatulence, not a twinge of your old stomach pain. Try them today". How does it differ from the other Magnesias? It has got the softness and the lack of tone of the others with the tearfulness, the uncasiness, the pains in the malar bones, the hypersensitiveness, the urinary symptoms, but it differs from the carbonate in its dislike for meat. In the sulphate there is more weeping, resembling to a certain extent that of Pulsatilla, foreboding anxiety too is prominent; melancholy and apprehension with, as mentioned before, the tendency to fly into a passion and to take everything in bad part. A peculiar symptom is stinging in the fauces more between than during acts of deglutition and in this it closely resembles Ignatia with the throat symptoms of Ignatia are better for swallowing solids and worse for liquids and in this Ignatia resembles Mag. phos., whose throat symptoms are worse for swallowing fluids. While Mag. sulph. is better for walking, even a short walk seems to tire the carbonate. We find peculiar symptoms too: That she packs and unpacks her clothes on a journey without consciousness of having done so. Both have the lassitude—though in the carbonate this affects the feet mostly and when seated, while in the sulphate there is more tendency to stagger and with the lassitude there is a peculiar sick feeling with dry warmth of the skin and intense thirst.

GENERAL SUMMARY

In a general way we can sum up as follows: Mag. carb. shows the effects of mental distress, vexation and fits of passion; the results of injudicious feeding and the bad effects of milk; and above all the green frothy stools. Mag. mur. has the ailments arising from a sluggish liver and a sluggish circulation with the stools dry and knotty, while Mag. phos. with its intensity of nerve involvement shows adverse reactions to cold winds, cold bathing, standing in cold water, working with cold things and amelioration from warmth and lastly Mag. sulph. which produces marked urinary symptoms, accompanied by intense thirst and loss of appetite.

This brings to an end the comparison between the magnesium salts.

—The British Homoeopathic Journal, May 1941