

COUGHS

A HOMOEOPATHIC PHYSICIAN

The word cough belongs to that primitive, maybe the most ancient, collection of words which are initiative in their origin and one can imagine ape man, as he slowly dragged himself from his bed of winter sickness (maybe bronehitis or pneumonia), having the imprint upon the, as yet, almost undeveloped word centre of his brain the sound (with as yet only a glimmering of a word) of 'coughing' and, since it would not be far removed from his mere animal 'grunt' maybe that word was one of the very first to be translated into language. In Scots a cough is a 'hoast' another imitative word and so also the word hoarse all including cough, derived from good old Anglo-Saxon ancestors.

But, when one has a cough, one is rarely interested in the origin of the word but most definitely in the origin of the cough itself. Now all coughs do not begin with a nasal cold, at least, not necessarily, and the importance of this will be seen when one discusses treatment, but, in the majority of cases, it is so and this again would emphasise the value of the advice, 'Take care of the cold and the cough will take care of itself.' Now strangely enough the very mention of the word cough immediately suggests 'coughing in church' and so we shall deal firstly with the annoying coughs not only to the 'dealer' but to the recipient. Tickling coughs suggest to the homoeopathic physician quite a number of remedies.

But probably one should begin with "Jack in the Pulpit" before one deals with the congregation! This is Arum triph. celebrated remedy for clergyman's sore throat, hoarse, constantly changing, worse from talking or singing. Arum may begin like Arsenicum and Allium cepa with a sneezing running cold the discharge from which makes the nose and lips raw. In children with this type of cold (and even with more serious conditions) the guide to Arum is often 'picking at the nose and lips till they bleed' a very useful and not at all uncommon symptom. One wonders why the child can endure the pain of picking at a raw surface but, it does and it is often the inexplicable which is the guide to the homoeopathic drug so don't miss it when you get it. But for hoarseness with or without cough the two drugs which immediately come to mind are Phosphorus and Causticum. Both have dry painful coughs but the rawness of Causticum covers a wider area than Phosphorus. One is a 'streak' of rawness Causticum will be covered by the width of one's hand. The phosphorus cough is excited by change of air either from cold to warm or warm to cold. *This is one of the most useful symptoms in all the Materia Medica for coughs.* Rumex has the same symptom but less marked and the guide to Rumex is *worse from* cold air, and a tickling in the little hollow above the breast bone (the throat pit). Incidentally the throat

pit is another favourite spot for Lachesis and, if there is a lump feeling there then the position and the sensation are sure symptoms for Lachesis.

The phosphorus cough often begins as a cough and not so much as a sequel to a cold in the head. Bryonia which has a similar dry cough more often begins as a cold in the head and the cough follows. Bryonia one thinks of at once when the patient says, "Oh, doctor, the cough shakes my head to pieces" or "hurts my tummy" or "my side so that I have to hold myself tight." Causticum is the first choice when the patient passes urine with each cough though one must be careful in one's choice if there is already some bladder weakness present. The cough which is worse in a warm room is often Coccus cacti for the patient who gags easily, so easily that he cannot brush his teeth without heaving, or gags when the doctor holds his tongue down with a spoon when he is looking at the throat (one knows all these peculiar people!). Pulsatilla is another cough worse in a warm room but then Puls. is generally worse in any close atmosphere. Puls. has thick yellow sputum (like a thick nasal discharge) and another very valuable tip has "a loose cough in the morning and a dry cough at night." Causticum is the opposite "loose day time and dry at night."

But Kali carb. (with Phosphorus) is perhaps the most useful cough remedy of all. It is dry, makes the patient heave and retch until he brings a little phlegm up then he is better. Has to sit up in bed to cough, not only sit up but, *bend forward*. That is the guide to Kali carb. You need not ask him any questions, you can see him sitting up and forward. Then if you do ask him when his breathing is worst you can take a safe bet that he will say, "Oh, round about 3 o'clock!" or, if summer time is still about, 2 a.m.! Ipecac. is for the cough which causes vomiting at the beginning of a bad chest. The doctor says it is a bubbly bronchitis, the child is feverish but doesn't want to drink. That is Ipecac. At this stage it will wipe out an infection which looks as if it might become more serious. For those who know the rattling and bubbling of Ant. tart. then Ipecac. sounds like Ant. tart. but, the illness is just begun. When it is Ant. tart. it is much later and usually more serious, and, though there may be attempts at heaving, nothing comes up. One has reached the stage of paralysis of the lungs. There is no sputum because the patient is too weak to bring it up.

The kali carb. cough is worse after eating and drinking (useful guides in whooping cough if present) and there is the guide of the stringy sputum. Spongia has already been described with croup but another useful tip is that the spongia cough (like Arsenicum, Rhus and Silicea) is *better for a warm drink*.

The taste of the sputum is another useful guide. *Sweet* sputum is Phosphorus, Calcarea and Stannum. Stannum has a weak feeling in the chest. *Salty* sputum, Arsenicum, Lycopodium, Phosphorus und Sepia. And when one has a condition which doesn't clear up with a remedy then, if the sputum

is sweet think of *Pneumococcin* for the germ which seems to give rise to the sweet tasting sputum is the pneumococcus.

Of course, the number of remedies for cough is legion. Many will be considered under more serious conditions of which they are only one symptom pneumonia, e.g. but there are others which are chosen for some very particular or peculiar reason.

One writer described what her husband (who was the patient) called 'a hell of a cough' but this could not be found in any repertory, though it is a very good description of such coughs. Belladonna is one of these and the hard barking cough 'like a dog' a pharyngeal cough to the doctors is frequently Belladonna. The original 'hell of a cough' responded to Kali bi. because the prescriber was led to consider that drug by the patient's liking for beer, but Kali fitted the cough and cured it.

The painless loss of voice without even a cough is more likely to be Gels. or Opium or even Ignatia. The cough which sounds like whooping cough may be Drosera or even Pertussin (the nosode of whooping cough), so, listen to the cough and get the 'sound of it' the 'sawing wood' sound of Spongia the 'hem hem' cough of Alumina, the cough which is so painful that the child will cry before it coughs because it knows how painful it can be that is Arnica; and Arnica has the cough which is set off by 'running about' another useful guide in whooping cough. He or she only coughs when he or she runs about. Zinc. has a cough which is worse from eating sweet things 'candy' the Americans call it.

The coughs which are *worse for laughing* are Arg. mct., Arg. nit., Chin., Petr., Phos. and Stannum; those *worse for talking*: Dros., Phos., Rumex and Sanicula with many others; but, as for throats, when there are good symptoms, either subjective or what you have heard or seen or what the patient says it is like, e.g. the taste of the sputum or the effects of smells (Phos. has a cough from strong odours, Euphrasia from smoke and sulphur fumes and from tobacco smoke); put the symptoms through the repertory and you will be surprised what good results you will get *on the symptoms* and not on guessing! And if you know the predominant organism is the pneumococcus don't forget *Pneumococcin* particularly if the sputum tastes sweet and, if there is a T.B. family history and the cough simply won't go, don't forget *Tuberculinum* especially for the little coughs which persist. It is the weak members of the family who will require Tub. It is the vigorous ones who react violently and give you Aconite, Spongia, Hepar sulph., Belladonna and Cuprum! Violent symptoms are often evidence of a cold reaction.

So for sudden infections quickly acting remedies. For slowly developing infections more slowly acting maybe deeper remedies. For the quick result the highest potencies. For the weaker members the lower lest you aggravate.

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