

## VITAMINS AND HOMOEOPATHY

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The concept of vitamin was developed long after the death of our master, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann. Actually speaking the roles of different vitamins were known satisfactorily only from the beginning of the twentieth century. Hence the reaction of our master in this field especially as to whether vitamins could be used as a dietary supplement in some cases along with homoeopathic treatment could not be known. However, it is a fact that there is an increasing tendency among a section of homoeopaths to use crude vitamins along with homoeopathic treatment as a dietary supplement. In the absence of any clear-cut guidelines from our master, it is high time to have a thorough discussion as to whether the homoeopaths can recommend the use of crude vitamins alone as a dietary supplement or in conjunction with homoeopathic treatment in disease conditions. Before discussing this matter in the light of the *Organon* I prefer to make a brief discussion about the concept and role of vitamins in human nutrition.

Vitamins are potent organic compounds and are vital for life to render specific physiological actions. The requirement of vitamins is not the same for everybody. It depends on the rate of metabolism and the body weight too. The roles of various types of vitamins, viz. A, B, B-Complex, etc. have been established beyond any doubt and their deficiencies also lead to certain types of pathological conditions. Almost all these vitamins are to be supplied either through foodstuff or through ready-made vitamins prepared synthetically. Besides vitamins, a normal diet must contain protein, fat, carbohydrate, salts and water. The quantity of food required is proportional to the total energy requirement of an individual. An adult man of average build doing moderate work requires about 2800 calories per day. Now these calories should come from food items selected in correct proportion of the aforesaid constituents, i.e. from a *balanced diet*. Furthermore in considering if a diet is balanced the factors of age, sex, body weight, digestive capacity and activity of the person concerned are also required to be taken into account.

The importance of a balanced diet is discussed a little bit elaborately with a view to emphasising the need of selecting food items in such a fashion that the requisite quantity of different types of important vitamins essential to life and physiological functions of our systems are properly and correctly made available. Now if our diet is not so well selected then there might be lack of certain types of foodstuff which could provide for certain types of vitamins to our systems. If this faulty diet pattern or rather if these dietetic errors continue for a pretty long time then certain symptoms of vitamin deficiency, e.g. xerophthalmia (for vitamin A deficiency), rickets and osteo-

malacia (for vitamin D deficiency), scurvy for vitamin C deficiency, polyneuritis for B<sub>1</sub> deficiency, cheilosis, stomatitis, glossitis for vitamin B<sub>2</sub> deficiency, burning hands and feet syndrome for calcium pantothenate deficiency, etc. may be manifested in the subject.

In certain special physiological conditions, e.g. pregnancy, lactation, etc. the system requires additional amount of vitamins too. Those who work under heavy stress and strain also require additional amount of vitamins.

In case of geriatrics and invalids, the system being under prolonged heavy wear and tear, the digestive process also cannot go on as efficiently as could be expected. In this connection too, somebody thinks that external supply of readymade vitamins in crude form may be advocated.

In disease conditions, whether acute or chronic, there occurs acute or chronic impairment of metabolism and under such condition the system cannot assimilate the required amount of vitamins from the foodstuff even though the food may not lack in quality or quantity. External supply of vitamins is also advocated in these conditions.

In the light of the foregoing discussions it will be found that there are several occasions where the question of supplying vitamins in crude form from outside might arise.

There is no doubt that vitamins have a definite role to play in human metabolism and nutrition and as such their deficiency leads to certain types of symptoms/nosological conditions. But can these conditions be termed 'disease' in the language of the *Organon*? According to the *Organon*, disease is the derangement of the vital force by some disease producing dynamic force. Now what is the dynamic influence in case of the symptoms/nosological conditions produced due to deficiency of vitamins? Are they not due to qualitative and quantitative deficiency in foodstuff? So long as our food is deficient (those occurrences are the result of the said deficiency) the deficiency symptoms will continue unless they are taken care of either by a balanced diet or crude vitamins from outside.

But it is also equally a fact that such deficiency syndrome may occur where the diet is not deficient in quality or quantity. In such cases, supply of vitamins from outside are of no help as the defect lies in imperfect metabolism/absorption due to some dynamic affection of the vital force and unless and until this affection of the vital force is removed by suitable anti-miasmatic treatment the condition would not improve in spite of supplying any amount of crude vitamins from outside. The allopathic school is utterly helpless in such cases and the failure of their treatment cannot be accounted for.

Hence, there must be certain clear-cut demarcation where vitamins may be necessary and where they are unnecessary and whether they should be prescribed separately or they may be continued alongwith homoeopathic treatment. Indiscriminate use of vitamins is not only undesirable but also useless and detrimental to the system (putting aside the question of hyper-

vitaminosis as is evidenced in case of fat-soluble vitamins). If vitamins are continued as a routine for a long period, the functioning of the digestive system may also be impaired because it is a common matter that if the system gets something without any extra effort it will try to inhibit its normal activities and will thereby lead to a partial inhibition in the normal working of the system. Further, the actual signs and symptoms manifested by the dynamically affected vital force may be temporarily and partially eclipsed or modified due to the indiscriminate use of vitamins in the subject and the disease will progress in the interior of the man and will be ultimately exposed at a later stage.

Now if vitamins and homoeopathic medicines are simultaneously used in the same individual will it stand in any way to interfere with the action of each other? Or will it go against the principle of Homoeopathy? Vitamins are potent organic compounds in crude form and homoeopathic medicines are dynamic medicines where the trace of any crude substance is absent from twelfth potency in the decimal scale and sixth potency in centesimal scale. Moreover, the vitamins are antigenic and are simply aimed at to take care of the dietary deficiency and hence the presence of crude vitamins in place of foodstuff is very unlikely to have any dynamic influence on the vital force because the vital force can only be affected/influenced by another dynamic force or influence. Hence, there should not be any reaction or impairment in the working of the homoeopathic medicines if the vitamins are administered along with it and therefore, it also does not stand against the fundamental principles of Homoeopathy *similia similibus curentur*. However, nowadays certain vitamins are being sold in the market in the potentised form to tackle or counteract the symptoms of vitamin deficiency or as a regular toning up of system. The use of such potentised vitamins is totally useless and is against the principle of Homoeopathy. They can neither take care of the symptoms caused by dietary deficiency because to tackle such deficiencies physiological doses of vitamins are necessary and hence these minute doses are of no help. The application of such potentised vitamins is also detrimental to the individual because due to its dynamic property it will pollute the system dynamically and due to its continued use may cause certain disease condition in the system. Moreover, these vitamins have not been proved on healthy individuals so as to ascertain its dynamic pathological symptoms so that on the basis of a similimum it could be applied homoeopathically. Hence, it is also against the principle of Homoeopathy.

Thus it may be concluded that crude vitamins, iron therapy etc. may be advised where the symptoms are the *direct manifestation of vitamin deficiencies*, i.e. where vitamin deficiency is the only cause for such conditions and is *not the effect* of any disease underlying it. In such cases, as also in some emergency cases, e.g. after severe haemorrhage etc. administration of vitamins, iron therapy, blood transfusion, etc. should be advised.

But vitamins and homoeopathic treatment should not be continued

simultaneously. Because if they are continued simultaneously in a disease condition especially having certain signs and symptoms resembling the signs and symptoms of vitamin deficiency then the change in the symptoms may represent the condition due to the effect of the medicine or due to the effect of the vitamins or both and as such the totality will not represent a clear-cut change due to the action of the remedy and hence a correct second prescription will be utterly impossible. In this light it is considered that if the vitamin deficiency is the cause then it should be tackled separately with vitamins alone and if after that any complaints or trouble continue the patient should be treated with homoeopathic medicine to correct the same. Vitamins should never be prescribed where it is the effect of some disease conditions e.g., pneumonia, measles, mumps, typhoid, etc. and in such cases at first the disease dyscrasia is to be removed and then with normal diet these deficiencies will also go even more quicker than crude vitamins. If the deficiency is due to the administration of some powerful so-called modern medicines, e.g. antibiotics, etc. then that drug dyscrasia has to be removed first and after that with normal diet alone the patient will make good the loss of vitamins very quickly without any external vitamins. This is the principle I think should be followed everywhere, i.e. where vitamin deficiency or protein deficiency or iron deficiency is the cause itself then it should be corrected by external supply of vitamins separately but if these conditions are the effects of certain other conditions prior to it, e.g. an acute or chronic illness, drug dyscrasia etc. then those effects will go automatically if the cause behind it is removed by suitable homoeopathic treatment. About diet and regimen, Hahnemann advocated simple and nutritious food. Hence, it will be enough if we advise the patient to take a more or less balanced diet. Thus, one will find that the scope of using crude vitamins is extremely limited and indiscriminate use of it will do more harm than doing any good.

**Editorial comment:** Author contradicts his own statement. Hahnemann could not live to guide us for ever. He gave us the principle and the philosophy. He never objected to any auxiliary mode of treatment; on the contrary he always supported it if it did not contradict the principle of similars.

It may not be correct to make a categorical refusal to administer vitamins. Vitamins are not potent, in fact they are easily assimilable compounds and are usually excreted out of the system in case of excess. Symptoms of avitaminosis or hypervitaminosis are very distinct and are easily detectable or differentiated from any disease picture. Indian diets are mostly deficient in vitamins. Since we do not know the exact mode of action of homoeopathic drugs, we cannot say that administration of vitamins would affect their action. At the most we may withdraw them in individual cases if any obstacle to cure is noticed. Before we reject the supplement of vitamins, we have to produce evidence against it.

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