

HOMEOPATHIC PRACTICE

DRUG PROVING: WHY AND HOW SHOULD HOMEOPATHISTS PROVE DRUGS*

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First. Why should we prove drugs?

To perpetuate Homeopathy; not homeopathic organizations, but Homeopathy. Every homeopathist should know, and most of us do know that drug proving is essential to the development and perpetuation of Homeopathy. Our system of medicine is founded upon the law of *similia*, and the chief corner stone of the structure is the proving of drugs upon the healthy human being. By proving of drugs upon the healthy, we understand the administering of a drug of known strength to a person of known condition and noting the effect upon all the tissues and organs of that person, i. e., noting whether the result be an irritation, an inflammation, a functional or a structural change,—one, any or all of the four conditions named. According to this law we must administer to our patients the drug which is capable of producing upon the healthy human being such change in tissue or organ of our patient, if we expect to restore that patient to his normal condition. Therefore, if we expect to build up a system of therapeutics which will dominate the medical world, by meeting and satisfying the demands of suffering humanity, we must have as many authentic, reliable, complete and clearly understood drug provings as we have authentic, definite and clearly demonstrated clinical manifestations. I use “clinical manifestations” rather than “diseases” because typhoid fever or smallpox may present twenty very different pictures in twenty different persons suffering from typhoid or smallpox. In other words, we should have a thoroughly proven remedy for every curable patient, making allowance for idiosyncrasy, complication, sequelæ, etc. So important do I consider this requirement that I am prepared to make the statement that, if we cannot and do not meet it, homeopathy is doomed. Let me repeat that statement. If we cannot and do not prove

*Bureau of Materia Medica, A. I. H., at Detroit, 1918.

drugs enough, and thoroughly enough, so that we may have a remedy for every curable patient, then homeopathy will, in the end, be a failure.

That Hahnemann fully realized this fact, witness the time devoted to and the suffering endured by him in the proving of drugs. This statement may naturally raise the question as to whether Hahnemann did not do all that was necessary along this line, not only to place homeopathy upon a sure foundation, but to assure its growth and final triumph? To such a question I answer most emphatically, "No." A proving conducted by Hahnemann and his early disciples, so far as completeness and accuracy are concerned, would bear about the same relation to a proving which Hahnemann and his followers would make today, as an old flintlock bears to the modern gun. You ask, "Do I not consider the provings of Hahnemann complete, accurate and scientific?" I do not. Marvels of perfection are they, considering the means he had at his command, but neither complete, accurate nor scientific when viewed through the microscope of modern research. "Did not Hahnemann and his followers prove drugs enough?" Again, "No." Could Hahnemann have lived till today, notice I said *till today*, he probably would have increased the number of our remedies 50 per cent and their curative effects 100 per cent, but there would still be need for drug proving. A student to whom I made the above statement said, "Professor Royal, I don't see why. Do the effects of remedies change? Do the symptoms of diseases change from century to century, from decade to decade or from one epidemic to another?" I replied that barring idiosyncrasy, change in climate, habits of living, etc., a staple substance like morphine or atropine given to a healthy or diseased human being would have the same effect today that it had one hundred years ago or will have one hundred years from now. Again the student asked, "Must we ever keep proving drugs in order to achieve universal success?" To my positive, "Yes, sir," he retorted with an impatient, irritated, "Why?" My answer to him will be my answer to you. The first and most important reason for proving new drugs and re-proving old ones is to meet the new conditions or the now better understood old conditions. To illustrate, I repeated to the student the conversation I had had with a ranking medical officer of one of our base hospitals on the subject of pneumonia in the cantonments of the country the past winter. The officer was dis-

cussing the frightful mortality rate, the violence of the onset, the rapid formation and vicious character of the serum which poured into the thorax during the first 48 to 72 hours of the disease, the changing of this serum to pus, the profound prostration not only of the nervous system but of every vital force of the body. This officer, who was formerly a neighbor of mine in Des Moines, closed his remarks as follows: "Royal, you don't have any such pneumonia in private practice; it is simply fearful. And what is true out in my camp is true in every camp in the country." I put to him the suggestive question, "Do you believe the inoculation of the soldiers had anything to do with the difference in the death rate between the soldiers and the civilians who had not been inoculated?" His reply was, "I wish the blood of the soldiers could be tested after the seven vaccinations, so as to determine what changes had been wrought in it." Could our friend have his wish would we be prepared to meet the condition he would find? I am not sure. I studied the symptoms he gave me very carefully. I then searched for a simillimum. I could find none. The nearest similia I could find were three compounds of arsenicum, viz., arsenide of antimony, chininum arsenicosum and the arsenide of mercury. But the provings of these, especially the first, are very meager and incomplete. Judging, however, from the characteristics of the few symptoms we have, I believe a complete proving of these three drugs would put into our hands the means of greatly reducing the mortality rate should pneumonia again appear in the form it did last winter. This is only one of the many, many conditions which the war has brought about. The different symptoms and groups of symptoms caused by the deadly gases are among the others. Who knows from what they have read or seen or heard of the effect of each of these gases what the antidote is, or what the remedy for the after effects of each is? And then the changes in diet caused by the war; what about them? Some for the better, some for the worse. But the war is not the only cause of new conditions. Our work, our recreation, our football, our housing conditions, our mode of dressing, all are changing from what they were one hundred, seventy-five or even twenty-five years ago; and new remedies are needed for the new conditions.

Another reason why we should prove drugs is to make staunch, loyal homeopathic practitioners of our students of homeopathy. Practitioners who have the courage of their

convictions, men who after taking the case will not waver between two remedies and finally give them both in alternation or combination, or even add a third and rotate; yes, or, even worse than that, give somebody's combination tablet or specific instead of the single indicated remedy.

I have been teaching materia medica for over a quarter of a century. During that time I have tried many experiments as to methods, and have carefully observed the results of the different methods of other teachers of homeopathic materia medica until I am fully convinced that for the purpose of making successful homeopathic prescribers, staunch and loyal homeopaths, men whose success and influence have advanced the confines of homeopathy, there is no one method equal to that of having the student prove some remedy upon himself. The second best is to have him study the effects of drugs upon other human provers and animals. I have by every possible variation of intonation, by every possible change of facial expression tried to portray the cutting, twisting, grinding, excruciating pains of the enteralgia or enteritis of colocynth. I have tried to forever fix upon their brain the modality of colocynth, "relief from pressure," by bending over my two fists. Yes, I have done better than that, I always describe the sight which my good old friend and teacher, St. Clair Smith, witnessed one night when he was called to the room of two of my classmates. In the room was an old-fashioned four-posted bedstead. On the top of one of the bedposts was one of my classmates, umbilicus on the pinnacle and his roommate rotating him upon it. While the roommate assisted the patient from the post to the bed, St. Clair heated some water, put five drops of the colocynth 3x into half a pint of hot water and gave the student. In ten minutes the pain was gone. In ten minutes more St. Clair was gone. The next morning both student and professor were in class, the one relating, the other testifying to the truth of the report; neither the worse for either. Now, notwithstanding the impression the relating of this case made upon me, and notwithstanding the effect of my repeating it to my students, I am ready to say to you in all seriousness and with all earnestness that it was as nothing compared to the impression made upon me by taking ten drops of the tincture of colocynth, or upon my student to whom I gave fifteen drops.

You have watched a teething baby roll his head, you have heard the spluttering of the watery stool and smelled the horrible odor therefrom, you have seen the babe vomit and just before

he vomited you have seen an indescribable expression on the face, expressing suffering which you would think would take the combined ingenuity of his Satanic majesty and the Kaiser to produce. Did you understand that expression? Did you know its origin, its awful, deathly qualmishness? Not unless you had taken podophyllin 1x in ten or fifteen grain doses. As I have said, next to taking a drug yourself and noting the effect, the best thing is to observe the effect on some one else. If Dr. Wesselhoeft had observed the effect of belladonna on the skin of the provers as some of us have done he never would have written the article he did on belladonna and scarlet fever. I would suggest to you teachers of materia medica that you have every student try some one drug on himself in order that he may get some idea of what you are saying when you are studying symptomatology with him.

Second. How should we prove drugs?

The answer to this question could be stated in one sentence. We should so prove our drugs as to ascertain every change which they can produce on any and every tissue or every organ of the body. That is our objective. To reach it requires many hard drives over many different and difficult routes. To some of you perhaps what I have said is all that is necessary. You know what these drives mean as well as I do. Others may ask for details, for landmarks, to assist them. Let us take the blood as an illustration. It was my good fortune to attend the Minnesota State meeting last month. One of the papers read by my old friend and former fellow teacher of homeopathic materia medica in the University of Minnesota was on "The Anemias." He made use of all the known methods of blood analysis in taking the case of each patient. You can count on the fingers of your two hands the remedies whose provings show even a fair analysis of the blood of the provers, before, during and after the taking of the drug. How much better Dr. W. E. Leonard might have done had he had blood records of provers to compare with blood records of his patients! I mean in addition to the symptoms which he already used for the selection of the indicated remedy. A blood analysis of today made by a trained laboratory man has a far different significance than a blood analysis made in the days of Hahnemann. But a blood analysis is just as much a part of the totality of symptoms as is the rate and quality of the pulse, the heart sounds or the temperature. Let us take another organ, the liver, to bring out another point for illustration later on. It

is not so easy to get at the liver of a human being as at the blood of the same for the purpose of studying the effect of your drug. But remember that the highest knowledge of every change in any and every tissue of the liver which your drug is capable of producing, whether the slightest irritation of its nerve supply or the most pronounced fatty degeneration of its cells is what we are demanding in our provings. We must not be satisfied with anything less. Again comes the question: How are we to secure such symptoms to perfect our totality? Are we to take a perfectly healthy human being, our ideal for a prover and give him picrate of iron or picric acid till his blood resembles that of a patient suffering from profound pernicious anemia? Or, shall we take a prover, and give him phosphorus till we have turned the tissues of his liver or kidneys into fat globules? I think we should be permitted to do it to the Kaiser and his ilk. I also think some of our murderers who are electrocuted or hanged should be compelled to do a little for the humanity they have outraged, and be turned over to our conductors of provings for scientific purposes. But, though not as good as the above might be, there is another way. This brings me to the real object of my paper, viz., the use of animals for completing our provings.

Work in the laboratories has demonstrated that much can be done along this line. One of our sophomores came to me last winter with a specimen of the liver of a dog. His professor of pathology had been talking to him about fatty degeneration. I had been talking to him about the structural changes produced by phosphorus. In the pharmacological laboratory a dog had been fed with phosphorus in gradually increasing doses till he had died. The student having viewed the subject from three standpoints could clearly see and believe that phosphorus could produce fatty degeneration and was prepared to accept my statement that phosphorus given to a patient suffering from this condition in the early stage might have checked the process. I know that there are those who object upon the ground that a proving upon an animal is not the same as a proving upon a human being. In one sense the statement is true. Subjective symptoms can never be obtained from a proving upon a dog or rabbit. And yet there is not one of you but knows that in many patients under certain conditions the objective symptoms are of higher rank than the subjective. Please note that I said, "In many patients under certain conditions" this is true; because I teach that as a rule the mental symptoms, those symptoms which express the individual-

ity of our patients should be given the highest rank in the totality, and the modality the second place. Therefore, as we are not permitted to produce such changes as fatty degeneration in our provings upon the human being, we deem it absolutely necessary, in order to perfect any drug proving, that the symptoms produced upon animals be added to the symptoms produced upon human beings. We must have both the subjective and the objective symptoms in our totality. Our friends of the old school are doing a large amount of excellent work along the line of animal pharmacology, but they have not and they cannot make any successful use of their experiments because they do not combine them with experiments on human beings.

There are many other *hows* which I would like to speak about, but time forbids and I will conclude by speaking of one, viz., how to care for our subjects, both man and animal. As little change as possible should be made in their diet, housing, clothing, amusements, etc. We all take advantage of such changes to produce desired results, and results are sure to follow such changes in our process. Any prover, man or animal, kept in unhealthy surroundings or under changed conditions cannot give us a pure proving. No supervisor of provings can say whether the symptoms are the result of the drug given or the changes in the conditions. Let the provers continue as nearly as possible their usual habits.

To Recapitulate

1. We must continue our proving of drugs in order to perpetuate Homeopathy.
2. Our methods must keep pace with our increased knowledge and facilities.
3. We must have a well proven *similar*, if possible a *simillimum* for every curable condition.
4. Every college of homeopathic medicine must make its department of materia medica and therapeutics, its central department and every other department or chair must support it earnestly and actively.
5. Every student must either prove a drug upon himself or supervise a proving both upon man and animal.