

A STUDY OF LACHESIS

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PHARMACOLOGICAL TEST

The physician, Constantine Hering (1800-1880) during his visit to Surinam, S.A. extracted the venom from the most poisonous snake there, *Lachesis muta*, from which he prepared the first trituration with lactose on July 28, 1828. He suddenly fell into a violent delirium, probably because he had absorbed particles of the *Lachesis* toxin through the nasal mucous membrane, and then into a deep sleep from which he awoke after several hours with a completely clear mind but without exact recall of what had transpired. In 1837, he published the tests. This article remains our principal source to the present day.

THE FUNCTION OF SNAKE VENOM IN THE SNAKE

Simultaneously with the closing of the jaws of the snake, the salivary glands are compressed by muscular contraction and discharge their contents into two fangs. This process occurs very rapidly as with an injection. Biologically regarded, snake venoms are salivary gland secretions. They serve the snake not only as combat poisons, but also primarily for the digestion of animal tissue. Usually, snakes devour their prey, often rodents with skin and hair, without first diminishing the size of the animals which are not exactly small. The neurotoxically acting substances are combat poisons which serve to paralyze or kill the prey (compare Hering's experience). In the case of *Lachesis*, greater significance is attached to the powerful digestive enzymes because of their poisonous effect. They are referred to as hemolysins.

COMPOSITION OF THE SNAKE VENOM

Snake venoms represent one of nature's outstanding products. It is now known that snake venom is not a protein; however, snake venoms are held together by a protein connecting link. All of the 40-50 chemical substances identified to date are never contained in a single snake venom; in the great number of kinds of snake venom, sometimes one type of substances occurs in combination and sometimes another. Snake venoms can be divided into three groups:

- (1) The group with primarily local toxins affecting blood clotting (hemolysins).
- (2) The group of toxins affecting blood circulation.
- (3) The group of venoms with neurotoxic effect.

The protein connecting links are protein substances with a high molecular count, which shield the individual substances against each other so that no

reactions are released in the living organism of the snake. Hering's experiences with the first pharmacological test had already disproved the thesis that orally administered snake venoms are ineffective.

THE NAME

The hexameter:

"Clótho colúm retinét,

Lachesis net, Atropos occút."

comes from classical Latin literature. The names of the three Fates are Greek:

Clothos (= Spinner) holds the distaff;

Lachesis (from lanchanein = allocate) spins;

Atropos (= inflexible) cuts off the threads of life.

Now that modern consciousness has gained access to the subconscious, it must be stated that with the institution of Lachesis we are in the realm of the goddesses determining our lives. The Romans called them the Parcae, while the Teutons named them Norns (Urd, Werdandi and Skuld). Lachesis corresponds to Werdandi, that is the unfolding of developing life in the realm of the goddesses of Fate. Reference must here be made to the secret concurrence between the realm of the gods and the realm of the goddesses such as occurs in the case of Zeus and the Fates or with Odin and the Norns.

THE LACHESIS TYPE

137 years have elapsed since Hering's first publication. Generations of homoeopathic physicians have concerned themselves with Lachesis. A type has crystallized out of this. Hering noticed that the characteristic and for its application the most valuable symptoms for Lachesis developed particularly in investigators who were depressively inclined. For my friends and me, Lachesis has proved its value for people who perhaps were less characterized by physical than by psychic factors. These are often people with pale skin, flabby tissue and slender bone structure, not muscular. Physically they are susceptible to colds, psychically they are very sensitive. They have no great physical capability. Recognizing their limited ability to endure and suffer, they attempt to avoid everything which would be able to disturb their physical and psychic balance. Thus they sometimes create the impression of being inclined to take the easy way out. In general, they tend to be pessimists. However, when violent reactions do occur, they do not subside so rapidly as with choleric persons; a sting remains.

BEHAVIOR OF LACHESIS TYPES

They are alert, intellectually interested and have a lively imagination. They are active, particularly in the evening. Often they are night-workers, inclined to every mental activity, full of ideas and associations. But after a usually restless sleep, another person is revealed upon awakening, who does

not feel quite well either physically or emotionally: sad, depressed, tired of living, often even tormented with thoughts of suicide. He sees the bad side of everything; disappointments, anger, sorrow, long past, trouble him over and over again. They then frequently react with nervous overirritability. In the long run, a neurotic reaction of the character can set in: distrust, pathological jealousy, quarrelsomeness, disputatiousness and nagging with the tendency to criticize everything and everyone. Women of the Lachesis type can then become unpleasant, arrogant and conceited, with a kind of maliciousness, and not infrequently phases of difference intervene. An exaggerated concern about their health as well as the fear of being poisoned can also occur. All this can be accompanied by a veritable torrent of words.

CLINICAL EMPLOYMENT OF LACHESIS

Since we have a day available for dealing with the pharmacological status of Lachesis, I will perhaps be permitted to contribute only a few basic principles on clinical employment of Lachesis:

- (1) Blood clotting and vascular lesion.
- (2) Circulatory disorders, in particular in connection with menstruation.
- (3) Sleep and dream.

(1) *Blood clotting and vascular lesion:*

On 26th May 1972, Mrs. I. Sch., born on 21st September 1939, came for a consultation. She reported that she had observed for over a year hemorrhages on pressure sores of the body after gymnastics or after a hot bath. She had been sent by her family physician initially to a nearby clinic and then later to a renowned university hospital for a determination of the blood clotting. She was initially observed and treated there on an outpatient and later on an inpatient basis. The diagnosis caused great difficulties. Vasculitis on a toxic-allergic or hyperergic basis was mentioned. Accordingly, she was treated with cortisone and when this brought no improvement she had been later treated with it in combination with immunosuppressive medicaments. Unfortunately, no success was achieved.

The cause of the condition in this 33-year old woman with two children who worked in the family dairy could probably be found in the use of numerous sleeping tablets, analgesic tablets and oral contraceptives. She herself assumed that the death of her father (in 1971 from a heart attack followed by the death of her mother in 1972 out of grief at her husband's death) had provoked or aggravated the illness.

The homoeopathic symptoms spoke clearly in favour of Lachesis. Permit me for the sake of brevity to omit these symptoms. She received Lachesis 12 LM, 5 drops every evening.

When she returned on 26th June 1972, approximately 4 weeks later, she stated that the entire thrombopenic purpura had disappeared. The patient was

quite astonished at this, as was her family physician, who in the meantime has resorted to homoeopathy. The disturbance has made no subsequent appearance. The post-observation has lasted for over two years.

It should also be reported that during the illness, the menstrual period became weaker and weaker. The libido decreased more and more and finally disappeared. Around two months after administration of Lachesis, the menstrual period again set in strongly. The libido became quite normal. The existing sleep disturbance gradually disappeared. Likewise, a chronically recurring pyelitis with lumbago and urinary bladder deficiency improved almost completely.

Her migraine has not improved. It existed prior to the illness and continued afterwards. 1½ years after the Lachesis treatment, the findings were clinically checked. The severe diminution of the capillary resistance was still present to only a minor degree, plasmatic coagulation had become normal (the diminution of factors II, V and VII had disappeared). Prior to the treatment, the thrombocytic phase had been normal, afterwards there was a marked deficiency of blood-platelet (thrombocyte) factor 1, 3, 7 and 9. Lachesis had thus decisively improved the vascular factors and the plasmatic phase and aggravated the thrombocytic phase.

(2) *Circulatory disorders in particular in connection with the menstrual cycle:*

Mrs. M.W., born on 20th August 1940, schoolteacher, married, 2 children, came for a consultation on 9th November 1971. She reported heart complaints which had first occurred with puberty and had increased after the second pregnancy. The heart complaints were connected with the time of the menstruation. She described the heart complaints to the effect that the heart was being churned up. It stopped and then heavy beats came. The whole thing lasted half a minute but was accompanied by indescribable anxiety.

Objectively, blood pressure of 114/80 was present, signs of vegetative lability were revealed by the ECG. All of the blood findings were nonpathologic. First of all, a toxicosis due to foci was eliminated. This achieved such an improvement that it was not necessary to employ the Lachesis which had been planned. She continued to come back for consultation but did not receive Lachesis until the end of 1973.

This was occasioned by a severe agitation before the period accompanied by troubled sleep. She flew rapidly into an explosive condition under which her husband and children had to suffer. She felt best on the 1st day after her period. This was true both for her mood and her performance. Following the period, her sleep was good for 14 days and then it became increasingly poor and was at its worst immediately before the period.

She received Lachesis 6 LM to be taken in 5-drop doses in the evening on the last three days before the expected period. She noticed the penetrating effect of these drops upon the first administration. She then took Lachesis for a quarter of a year before each period. She has now been completely

relieved from this disturbance. This was a great help for this woman who had a great amount of work to do in the school and for her family. She suffered no decrease in libido as is the case with many women who have an aversion to coitus despite strong sexual desire, which particularly during menstruation becomes unpleasantly evident.

(3) *Sleep and dream:*

15 years ago, a 50-year old widow appeared for consultation because of various complaints. When she had gained some confidence, a painful experience finally came to the fore. During the last war, her husband, a government official, had been denounced as a Nazi opponent and thereupon called into military service. He did not return from the Russian campaign. On the other hand, the denunciators continue to live in good health in the immediate neighborhood of the widow. She is deeply embittered by this fact. A mania, combined from distrust and suspicion, has developed.

Physically, she complained of cardiac pains, intestinal cramps, constipation and above all of stubborn sleep disturbances. She constantly has the same dream. She is in a butcher shop, as was the case when she was young. She must chop meat. The meat is somehow or other identical with her husband. During the dream, her husband appears and then leaves her. The dream was so constant that on the basis of this symptom I gave her Lachesis which is indicated for such dreams.

Lachesis 6 LM, taken 5 drops every evening for a month, permanently released the patient from her dream, made her more relaxed in her mental situation and eliminated most of the physical complaints. Characteristic for the Lachesis type in addition to the dream were remaining in the presence of negative sensations without moving away—which should have been the evident solution—the aggravation through the sleep with the dream and the awakening in the characteristic mood for Lachesis.

DISCUSSION

(1) *Blood clotting:*

Upon being bitten by the snake, the victim is injected with the secretions of the salivary gland. The cells, in particular the blood cells, are dissolved by the highly effective digestive enzymes. As the result of the anticoagulant effect of the snake venom no suppuration develops in the wound, but instead dark conglomerate blood or even thick dark blood seeps out. There is, in addition, the action of a further enzyme, hyaluronidase. This enzyme is able to eliminate the obstructions preventing the dissemination of a material in the tissue. This accounts for the rapid edema after a snakebite.

(2) *Circulatory disorders, in particular in connection with the menstrual cycle:*

In the choice of Lachesis, the general modalities assume foremost place.

I mention the improvement on commencement of the period, the aggravation through sleep, the aggravation through contact, the aggravation through sun, the aggravation through fasting or even the aggravation affecting the left half of the body. In the case of the illness described in connection with circulatory disorders, the effect of Lachesis works on the entire human structure at all levels.

(3) *Sleep and dream:*

Here we have been able to study the effect of Lachesis on sleep and dreaming. The woman affected by a hard fate adheres in a curious fashion to this almost unbearable situation in which Lachesis can relax her considerably. In cases of jealousy and suspicion, such as, for example, the typical distrust of young girls displayed to their girl friends, or in the case of the distrust of many older people or the ideas of sin held by pious old ladies, Lachesis can provide good help.

I should like to close with the first sentence from Kent's Pharmacology concerning Lachesis:

"Lachesis is frequently indicated and for this reason this agent should be particularly well studied. Lachesis appears to be suitable for all mankind, for human nature in its disposition and character corresponds to that of the snake, and snake venom only brings forth that which is already present in a human being."

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