

THE RHUS GROUP OF DRUGS AS INDICATED IN DERMATOLOGY

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The Homœopathic Pharmacopœia of the United States lists in its sixth edition, published 1954, the following group of the *Rhus* family or natural order *Anacardiaceæ*:

Rhus diversiloba
Rhus radicans
Rhus toxicodendron
Rhus venenata
Anacardium orientale

There are many synonyms for each of the above drugs in Latin, English, French and German. In order to conserve time, a description of each drug and its habit, as well as history, can be read in the *Pharmacopœia*.

The *Rhus* family of drugs has been a great help to all physicians who treat dermatological cases. I'm sure you will be happy to again have a review of these drugs:

Rhus diversiloba

Lesions—Vesicles, papules, pustules and erythemata.

Locations—Face, hands and genitals.

Sensations—Itching (violent).

Associated Conditions—The skin is œdematous and very sensitive in acute conditions.

Modalities—Worse heat and scratching. Better water.

Rhus radicans

Lesions—Vesicles, papules, pustules and erythemata, of hard consistency and of a red color. The lesions, particularly the vesicles, are small and tend to pustulation and infiltration. Crust formation is very marked at times and has an offensive exudate.

Locations—Genitals, face, hands, wrists, neck and extremities.

Sensations—Itching, burning, tickling, tingling and pricking.

Modalities—Worse warmth, after rubbing and scratching. Better cold and, temporarily, from scratching.

Associated Conditions—May be some rheumatic, inflammatory, mental or constitutional trouble. The condition is acute. This remedy produces greater infiltration and more violent inflammatory subjective symptoms than *Rhus tox.*

Rhus toxicodendron—Poison Ivy

Lesions—Vesicular, erythematous, papular, pustular and squamous, with a tendency to pustulation and crust formation, of a thick character, having a putrid and exoriating exudate. There is a tendency for the vesicles to become pustular; the lesions are usually surrounded by a red areola; the eruption may be dry or moist according to the type of lesion predominating; the crusts are of a brownish or yellowish color; there is some infiltration of the skin; the vesicles are of small size and tend to scale very readily.

Locations—Inner sides of the thighs, the face, genitals, eyelids, arms, or any place on the body. The hairy parts are very often affected when loss of hair is usually associated.

Sensations—Itching, burning, smarting, stinging, stitching, tingling and tension.

Modalities—Worse morning; after bath in warm water; at night; damp; cold water; after scratching. Better temporarily from hot bathing; scratching; sweating; dry weather; local cold; pressure and motion.

Associated Conditions—May be restlessness, some rheumatic affection, œdematous, inflammatory, glandular enlargement, debilitated states, or some nervous condition. The condition runs an acute course.

Rhus venenata—Poison Sumach

Lesions—Vesicles, fissures and erythemata; the lesions are red and the affected parts are inflamed and swollen.

Locations—Face, forearms, wrists, back of the hands, genitals, and on the ankles. The ends of the fingers are the favorite sites for the fissured lesions.

Sensations—Itching and burning.

Modalities—Worse warmth and before rain storms. Better hot bathing.

Associated Conditions—May be gastroenteric or mental symptoms. The subjective symptoms of this remedy are intensely painful and severe. The condition is acute.

Anacardium—Marking Nut

Lesions—Papular, vesicular or papulo-pustular. There is a crust of a sulphur-yellow color.

Locations—Face, neck and chest in particular.

Sensations—Itching, stinging, burning, crawling, drawing and pressure.

Modalities—Worse evening and night, morning and day, motion, after rubbing and scratching. Better in open air and while eating.

Associated Conditions—Patients are neurotic, irritable and depressed, and suffer from constipation with characteristic "plug-like" sensation in the rectum.

The *Rhus* family of drugs is indicated in the following conditions: Acne, dermatitis solaris, dermatitis venenata, ecthyma, eczema erythematovesiculosa, eczema papulosa, eczema papulovesiculosa, eczema squamosa, eczema vesiculosa, erysipelas, erysipeloid, erythema, erythema multiforme, erythema nodosa, grain itch, herpes simple, herpes zoster, impetigo contagiosa, leucoplakia, lichen planus, pemphigus, pruritis, psoriasis, purpura, rosacea, urticaria, verruca and many other similar conditions.

You no doubt will be interested in the very unusual case of J. L. R., aged 37, who came to my office 8-6-57, saying he had been having a severe itching on his neck, face, arms and hands for the past five months. Several dermatologists had been unable to help him.

On examination, I found a very irritated condition of the skin on his neck extending up into the hair. The skin was red, hot and reminded me of an acute ivy poisoning. This condition was also found on forearms and hands. The eruption had watery blisters, weeping type, and a few crusted areas which seemed to follow the breaking of the watery blisters which later had become gluey.

After a little improvement, the original red, watery blisters would start all over again and the patient was never cured.

The sensation in the skin was that of severe itching and burning. Patient was very nervous and restless.

Some of the modalities were: worse at night, worse heat, but better holding arms and hand in hot running water which gave him so much relief from the itching that it made him want to cry.

He gave a history of duodenal ulcers, neurodermatitis, sensitiveness to detergents (although he had not used detergents for several months, the discontinuance of them had not helped him). He also had fungus in his ears which had been treated with x-ray therapy. In addition, he said he had suffered from migraine.

The remedy given was *Rhus toxicodendron* 1M. On June 15, 1957, he returned saying he had less weeping, but stating that hot running water gave wonderful relief, *Rhus tox.* 1M was continued.

When he again returned on June 30, 1957, I felt that *Rhus venenata* 200x would be the best drug of the *Rhus* family, because of the marked relief by hot running water. This remedy he was given. He was to report the next week. On July 7, 1957, he returned with decided improvement, saying he felt able to return to work, having been off the job for several months. Even though *Rhus toxicodendron* 1M had given some relief, he did not get a complete cure until he had taken *Rhus venenata* 200x.

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