

CASE TAKING

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Case taking is the most important element in a successful homœopathic prescription. It is the ability of the prescriber to obtain a complete and accurate history of the sick patient, personal and family, together with all the symptoms present in the case. Dr. H. C. Allen remarked that a case well taken insured accuracy and efficiency in the selection of the similimum. When the symptom picture by means of the case history is completed, it is ready for analytical study.

It is common knowledge that all symptoms are not of equal value for the selection of the curative remedy. Hahnemann and all the master prescribers and teachers who followed him have stressed the value and importance of the mental and emotional symptoms as being of highest rank in any given case in the search for the curative remedy. Dr. James Tyler Kent, a strict follower of Hahnemann's concepts, formulated a system of symptom analysis, logical and consistent with the homœopathic philosophy established through clinical observation for over one hundred years by the best scholars and prescribers of the homœopathic science and art.

In every case of sickness and in all provings of remedies, there are two distinct groups of symptoms. These are classified as *generals* and *particulars*. The general symptoms are those that pertain to the patient as a whole. These include such findings as the type of hemorrhage, discharge and excretions from the patient; they are generals because the economy as a whole is involved in their elaboration. Mental and emotional states, the body's reaction to environment, the food desires and aversions, the sex functions, desires and aversions of any kind, anything or any condition affecting the patient's entire economy are included in the list of generals.

Particular symptoms are those pertaining to organs or parts of the body.

The highest grade general symptoms are those relating to the mind and emotions, such as the fears and impaired intellectual functioning.

The physical generals are next in order of value. The effects on the patient from the extremes of temperature, heat and cold in general, storms, rains, snows, electric and wind storms, and the extent of their sick-producing effects on the patient. All these things affect the patient as a whole. Where the personal pronoun "I" is used to describe the symptom, a general symptom is indicated. Where the possessive pronoun "my" is used to describe the part of the body affected, a particular symptom is inferred.

Throughout the whole symptom picture of both generals and particulars, there are two distinct groups known as common symptoms and characteristic symptoms, the latter containing the unusual and rare symptoms. These are

highly valuable for prescribing purposes. The common, however, are of little value, being those common to the provings of many drugs and common to the symptoms of many diseases (diagnostic). The characteristic symptoms are those peculiar to each individual remedy or to the individual patient under study. A symptom found only in the provings of few drugs is rare and, if a mental or a high grade physical general, may be very valuable for the selection of the similimum. A symptom unrelated to any anatomical or physiological condition is unusual and may be listed under the rare and peculiar, hence valuable for remedy selection.

The mental symptoms may be classed into several groups relative to their value, as follows: symptoms pertaining to the will which include the loves and hates (perverted loves) with resentments, frustrations, jealousies and inhibitions. These constitute the deepest and most central symptoms of the being. Here is included the love of life. When that is disturbed to the point of suicide, we see a most profound inharmony in the center of being representing a symptom of first value. This is typified by the remedy, gold, which takes away all desire to exist and be.

Another group pertains to the rational mind and to the perversions of the intellectual and reasoning processes. Here are noted symptoms expressing irrational concepts of living, with faulty reasoning that may end in harmful results. Insane statements and actions, irresponsible conclusions and acts belong to this second group. *Argentum metallicum* is typical of this group. In *Dictionary of Homœopathic Materia Medica*, Clarke lists silver as a remedy for brain fog and states that it affects the mental processes more than the affections. Kent also mentions its effects on the rational mind.

The method of questioning the patient is an important procedure in order to avoid error and to obtain the true facts in every case of sickness. Remember that every question answered by the patient with "yes" or "no" has been wrongly put by the physician and is of little, if any value for prescribing purposes. Every symptom obtained from the patient to be valid must come in answer to indirect questioning or be spontaneously expressed. A direct question permits the patient to answer without adequate thought; it also may suggest to an impressionable person conditions that do not exist. For instance, the physician wishing to know the patient's temperature reactions may need to ask several indirect questions, such as "How does the heat of summer affect you and your symptoms?" "What effect does the cold of winter have on you?" "How much covering or clothing do you require in cold weather?" "How does rain or snow affect you?" Thus a number of indirect questions may be needed to establish one important general fact or symptom which can place the patient, beyond all doubt, either into the hot or cold group of patients or into that smaller group who are sensitive to both extremes of temperature. When the sum total of symptoms of the case are procured in this way, the prescriber has an array of established facts to compare with the established facts of the materia medica for study.

By this procedure the chance for error is reduced, with greater certainty of an accurate and successful prescription.

The successful homœopathic prescriber must take on the role of an astute detective in his search for symptoms and facts that are accurate and true. Again, he must be an impartial judge of these facts and harmonize them with the facts of the materia medica. He must be free of prejudice and develop the art of logical thinking. His task is far from easy but his reward is great in satisfaction, for every successful prescription is fraught with good to the patient and delight to the doctor. The physician who treats his patient by means of the art and science of Homœopathy is a medical idealist recognizing the deeper and more subtle aspects of human sickness and its cure. He accepts the fact that the patient is sick mentally and emotionally as well as physically. He also sees his patient as an individual unit, requiring special individual study for the one individual remedy needed for his special case of sickness no matter what the diagnostic name of his illness may be.

The homœopathic physician avoids suppressing local manifestations of disease especially those of mucous membranes and skin, knowing that great harm and suffering can come to the patient from such suppressions. He is a philosopher, noting the ill effects of disturbed emotions and faulty thinking on the physiological processes of the body, producing functional disorder that in time may ultimate in pathologic changes in the tissues and organs of the body. Hahnemann's recognition of the important relationship of the mental and emotional states to disease has in more recent times been verified and substantiated by the observations and claims of the psychosomatic branch of medicine.

If we would attain the highest skill in homœopathic prescribing, we must perfect ourselves in a knowledge of the language of symptoms which expresses the sufferings and therapeutic needs of our patients. Homœopathy more completely meets these needs than the cruder forms of healing. To the new born infant and growing child, as well as to the mature adult and the aged, the homœopathic remedy can be a God-sent boon of healing and comfort, if skillfully selected and applied.

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