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**SELENIUM**

A. C. PUTNAM, M.D. MARSHALL, MO.

SELENIUM is rarely met with. This element shows much resemblance to sulphur. Selenium is polymorphous, and combines with hydrogen forming  $H_2S$ . This is a gaseous compound having an odour more disagreeable than hydrogen disulphide,  $H_2S$ . Like sulphur this forms a dioxide  $SeO_2$  which combined with water forms the acid  $H_2SeO_3$ . Analogous to  $H_2SO_3$  (Sulphurous acid), the acid  $H_2SeO_4$ , corresponds to  $H_2SO_4$  (Sulphuric acid). Selenium is isomorphous with sulphur and resembles it both chemically and medically. We find them both very little effective on the blood and lymph vessels, both act more on the nervous system. We often find selenium the remedy in some of our patients suffering from a general neuroses. It seems to produce weakness, or general debility, involving all parts of the body. This debility is expressed when patients become easily fatigued from the slightest exertion or labour. If the patient sits up a little late at night, past regular bed time or exerts his mind a little too much he is exhausted the whole of

the next day, and is thereby unfit for either mental or physical work. Heat or hot weather will affect the selenium patient, and he is very much weakened and feels tired and exhausted all the time, although not exerting himself to any great degree. It is evident that the hot weather weakens him, for the weakness increases with the heat of the body as the day advances and he becomes strong as the sun sinks and the temperature ceases with it. This patient is always sluggish on account of the debility, he wants to sleep and has complete exhaustion, and yet is always worse after sleep. In this connection we frequently find lachesis running a close second to selenium. In selenium the patient cannot bear any nervous exhaustion, and is made worse by seminal emissions, whether voluntary, or involuntary, as a result of this loss the patient is very irritable. Mental confusion, headaches, almost paralyzes. Weakness of the spine. Involuntary emission of the prostatic fluid, dribbling semen during sleep and after stool, and urination, and in this connection you will meet a very strong resemblance to the drug sulphur. Both remedies have bad effect on mental exhaustion, loss of sleep and involuntary emission and prostaticorrhœa. The distinction lies in the fact that selenium is worse in the relaxation, almost to the stage of physical exhaustion. When the patient begins to walk about following any severe or disturbing sickness which continues for a long period, we find a general debility of the spine, and he fears that he will be paralyzed. Again we find this condition in both selenium and sulphur, but of the two remedies,

selenium always leads sulphur in the severity of the symptoms, as flashes of heat in least motions. Sulphur has more of that gone feeling in the forenoon, but is not nearly that of selenium. Selenium is indicated in severe headaches of nervous origin. The pain is stinging in character and almost always situated over the left eye, and aggravated from the heat of the sun. Bright sun light always causes pain in the eye proper. These headaches nearly always return periodically every afternoon, and all headaches of selenium are aggravated by strong odours. When very offensive these odours cause the patient nervous headaches or profoundly melancholic with a profuse flow of clear urine. When you find a patient with this particular characteristic you may almost always diagnose this condition as a nervous headache or hysteria headache. The pains in the eye are nearly always of the twitching character and spasmodic.

One very prominent symptom of selenium is aphonia in which the patient gets hoarse as soon as they begin to talk or in singers, they lose their voice almost immediately on starting to sing. Frequently in this condition there is a necessity to clear the throat on account of the accumulation of clear starchy mucus. In this group of remedies we find spongia, causticum, carbo veg. and phosphorus. Other remedies which will be called in this connection would be arum triphyllum which produces a hoarseness that is characterized by a lack of control over the vocal cords. If the speaker attempts to raise his voice it suddenly becomes squeaky. This condition is generally called

clergyman's sore throat, but it is just as infrequent that the sore throat is absent and the speaker fails to control his voice. Another remedy which is thought of in this connection is graphites, and is prescribed with excellent results, with hoarseness and with uncertainty of voice. In which case the hoarseness comes early as the speaker starts to speak or the singer starts to sing. Hard to differentiate without other symptoms.

Selenium is useful in another field, namely skin diseases in which the itching begins in the folds of the skin, between the fingers and in the joints, where the itching may occur in small spots. This itching sensation on the skin which occurs in small spots creates a sensation of tingling. Here again showing involvement of the nervous system. The hair follicle is affected on the scalp, eyebrows, whiskers, and other parts of the body, and with this condition usually is accompanied by an eczematous eruption which oozes a serous fluid after scratching. Here again it bears a striking resemblance to sulphur, but is distinguished from that remedy if a patient is old enough to describe his sensation as tingling in spots.

Selenium is indicated in chronic affection of the liver, especially when we find enlargements of the liver with lack of appetite. The lack of appetite being especially before the morning meal, and has a heavy white coating on the tongue. We would differentiate very distinctly from the coating of sulphur. This condition exists with a lack of thirst when selenium is indicated, and has sharp stinging pains in the hepatic region, worse from any motion and aggravated

by pressure. When this sensation of the liver is found there is a peculiar fine rash over the hepatic region. In cases of this particular type selenium is the first remedy thought of and most usually the last. Antidotes for selenium are pulsatilla and ignatia.

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### EXCERPTS FROM "CLINICAL EXPERIENCES"\*

TH. J. RUECKERT, M.D.

#### CHRONIC LIVER DISEASES AND ICTERUS

##### ACONITUM

1. A florid girl of eighteen suffered for many months from pains sometimes in epigastrium, sometimes in right hypochondrium, and again in umbilical region.

Symptoms: when the pain was located in the stomach region, then there was distension and pressure in the pit of the stomach with bitter taste. Pressure increased the pain. Tongue slightly coated, or red with much thirst. Gums were scorbutic, swollen, at times bleeding. Vomiting of food. Constipation or diarrhoea. Menses regular, but profuse. At other times pains in left liver lobe worse from pressure. Conjunctiva and sclerotica yellowish. In between rheumatic inflammation of right eye with photophobia. Vertigo when bending down, or moving head.

\*Translated by S. W. S.