

HOMOEOPATHY AND CHILD HEALTH

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Sometime ago, in the course of discussion with some colleagues I was asked how I would go about treating children and also about the health care of children.

I observed that the health care of the child began even before it was born into this world. Where the mother has not, during the pregnancy, been subjected to much antibiotics or exposed to x-rays or suffered from infectious diseases or alcohol, tobacco etc., the child born to her can be considered as untainted biologically. If the mother has been subjected to any of these, I would bear that in mind while examining the case of the child. Even where the mother has not been subjected to these, to clear away the possible inheritance of miasms, I would put the mother on the plan of preventive medication recommended by Dr. Leon Vannier of France: during the pregnancy, viz. first month: Tuberculinum; second month: Luesin; third month: Cancerin; fourth month: Sulphur; fifth month: Calc.; sixth and seventh months: Calc. fluor. or Calc. phos. as may be. This plan would give the child to be born immunity from various ailments and we may not have any need to inject vaccines later which pollute the biology of the child. I suggest that this plan of preventive medication may be tried by the profession and results reviewed.

As to the child itself, I would lay greater stress on the maintenance of its health rather than treating it only when badly ill. In other words I would watch its growth and development. I would bear in mind:

(a) that a new born baby weighs around 3 to 3.5 kg. and that a one-year-old baby weighs around 10 kg.;

(b) that a healthy baby gains weight about half a kilo a month during the first six months of its life;

(c) that the milestones in the child's growth are: smiles at 6 months, sits without help at 9 months, walks at 18 months, speaks single words at 21 months, speaks short sentences at 36 months.

I would watch whether the child crossed/has crossed these milestones.

The commonest causes of sicknesses among children are mal-nutrition and infection. These, mal-nutrition and infection, make each other worse and become a vicious circle.

The diseases occurring in children in our country have been classified, in the following order, from the most-common to the not-so-common:

- (i) Mal-nutrition (not getting the right type of food to eat),
- (ii) Infectious (insects, worms, fungi, protozoa, bacteria and viruses),
- (iii) Accidents (injuries and poisonings),
- (iv) Behavioural diseases (bed-wetting, nail-biting, behaving in the wrong way),

(v) Hereditary diseases (inherited diseases),

(vi) Congenital diseases (physical deformities etc. during its growth in the womb),

(vii) Abnormal growths like tumors.

I would recognise clearly acute diseases and chronic diseases. The *Organon* teaches how to recognise them and also treat them.

I would also bear in mind that out of the two ways to fight diseases, viz. prevention and cure, prevention is better than cure.

Forewarnings of impending diseases would be recognised and prevented or aborted.

The child which falls sick frequently has low immunity. Since good nutrition gives better immunity, much attention should be paid to this and easily available cheap foods should be suggested which should also be palatable to the child. Much work has been done in this field by nutrition scientists and they should be taken advantage of. The temptation to prescribe costly baby foods even at request of the parents of the child themselves should be strongly resisted, and inexpensive and easily available nutrition should be suggested. Even the poor in the urban areas have had so much dinned into their ears through the radio and such other media about the 'qualities' of the tinned and bottled products that they look down upon a physician who would suggest to them cheap but more nourishing foods like *ragi*, green gram, drumstick leaves etc. This trend should be discouraged and it is the duty of the physician to educate his patients and their people properly; otherwise he is abetting the hoodwinking of the poor people, knowingly.

The mother would be encouraged to the maximum extent possible in this 'modern' and 'civilised' world to breast-feed the child upto 18 months. The advantages are too well-known to all physicians and need no repetition. The mother should be told convincingly that notwithstanding the tall claims of the baby-food industries, breast milk is the best that nourishes *her* child and gives it the much-needed immunity during its early years. Good nutrition which need not necessarily be costly and simple hygiene would prevent mal-nutrition and infections. I would recall paragraph 4 of the *Organon*: "He is likewise a preserver of health if he knows the things that derange health and cause diseases and how to remove them from persons in health". The tendency to learn more and more about curative medicines only and ignore the preventive aspect should be examined and a proper balance arrived at. I would read and re-read Dunham's excellent article on the 'Role of Therapeutics' (*Homoeopathy, the Science of Therapeutics*).

While taking the case of the child I would further enquire:

- (i) The mother's health condition during the pregnancy,
- (ii) birth: whether normal, pre-mature, born early, did the child cry quickly, etc.,
- (iii) past illnesses,

- (vi) whether it has been given immunisation injections, etc. and if so what were the reactions.
- (iv) nutrition history (whether breast-fed or bottle-fed),
- (v) whether the child crossed the milestones,
- (vi) whether it has been given immunisation injections, etc. and if so what were the reactions.

In the clinic I would allow the child to be free and observe its behaviour: whether of the shy and timid type who hides behind the mother or covers its face with hands but watches through fingers (Baryta. c.); or whether it responds to petting and foudling (Puls., Phos.); whether it is watchful for every gesture I make (Phos.); one that urinates or defaecates everywhere (Sep., Sulph., Sil.); a very dirty child (Sulph., Ammon. carb.); lively, curious and wanders about (Tuber); jumps up to even least noise (Borax) etc. Did the mother say that the child shows signs of anxiety when being lowered into the cradle (Borax, Gels.) or when being picked up from the cradle (Calc.). Observation and then taking the mental disposition would help much selection of the remedy which would surely bring about a metamorphosis to the great advantage of the child. Quite often a nosode for the condition 'never-well-since-such and such-a-disease' would be required.

The child would be examined by taking off all its clothes. How is its skin? Elasticity? Rough or smooth, oily or dry? Is it wrinkled or in folds? Warm or cool or moist? Any peculiarity of temperature of any particular part, to touch? Is the child averse to being looked at or to touch or being handled (handling and examination of tender spots especially should be gentle of course, and without causing discomfort or fear of pain to the child) or does it mildly submit to all these examinations without any signs of emotion? Warts, moles and/or any eruptions? Any emaciation of parts about the clavicle (Lyc., Nat. m.) or about the shoulder (Plumbum); or about neck, arms, thighs, legs or buttocks etc. (Nat. m., Abrotanum, Sanicula, Sarsaparilla); any particular part oversensitive or tender; head or abdomen large; like inverted saucer (Calc.); undescended testes, phimosis; any of the outlets—ear, nose, lips, urethra, anus appear too red (Sulph.).

How are the teeth—do they decay soon as they come (Kreos.)? Gums? Tonsils? Tongue? How are the nails?

Peculiar cravings and aversions to food articles?

Urine and stool tests may be necessary in many cases.

All these observations would be *noted down in writing in all cases* and also of course, the present illness as revealed by the mother/parent etc. *The differentiating factor in selection of the appropriate remedy may exist in any of the rubrics and hence a complete examination is necessary.* Though it appears to be a too long process, in reality it is not; when practised, it becomes quick with some experience and gets to be routine and a practised eye would in due course notice abnormalities very quickly. Initially it takes sometime but persistence would definitely reward well.

We have to combine the rubrics available in Kent, Clarke, Boger & Knerr's repertories. What is missing in one would be found in another. If we recall the wonderful and miraculous cures of Burnett, of puny, stunted children with physical deformities, we would be encouraged to cure many more children through Homoeopathy.

After giving the remedy, the changes can be watched and even physically measured: the increase in weight, in circumference of the arm, etc. and the healthy teeth and nails and hair, the smile on the face and of course the joy of the parents. The results of the treatment should be recorded—whether success or failure—and discussed amongst the profession and much can be gained by all.

To deal with acute conditions I would have at my fingertips the indications of 'leaders' in otitis, colic, cold and catarrh, diarrhoea and dysentery etc. for quick prescribing in such cases when they come at odd hours. Clear perception of the rattling chest of Antim. tart., the fan-like motion of wings of the nose (Lyc.), would have to be cultivated. I would also recognise a severely dehydrated child (which needs 20 ml/kg of intravenous fluid fast) and refer it to hospital or nursing home where facility for it would be available. If condition is not so severe salt and sugar water can be prepared with eight level teaspoonful of sugar and one level teaspoon of salt in one litre of water. I would keep in mind that a quiet child which breathes more than sixty times a minute probably has pneumonia and if the wings of nose is seen flapping would not hesitate to prescribe for it Lyco. in high potency.

In case of gastro-intestinal ailments, the colour, consistency and smell of the stool would be looked into. The cries of the child: pitiful whine, loud cries, shriek etc. would be recognised and taken into consideration for prescription.

Since accidents are very common with children whether the child had a fall, injury etc. would be enquired into.

As far as possible efforts would be made to follow-up every case for fairly long period and records maintained for each child for discussion with other homoeopaths.

All these are not new or of my own but only a recollection of what the teachers have told. These are recalled so that nothing is overlooked when actually cases are handled. Most of the failures attributed to the medicine are actually due to the physician's failure to follow the guidelines given by the masters.

Dr. Borland has divided the life of the child into different periods and suggested homoeopathic treatment for different conditions as follows:

I. THE PERIOD IN UTERUS:

The mother should be cared for since maternal disabilities will affect the child. These maternal disabilities are:

A. Physical:

- (i) Excessive vomiting (Ipec. early; later will be difficult).
- (ii) Albuminuria: Apis, Plb., Phos. ac., Tereb.
- (iii) Constipation with toxic absorption: Nux. v., Op., Alumina.
- (iv) Diarrhoea: Aloe, Podo., Merc.

B. Mental:

- (i) Undue depression: Puls., Aurum., Sep.
- (ii) Morbid fears: Acon., Ars., Arg. nit., Ign.
- (iii) Sleeplessness: Acon., Bell., Coff., Nux.
- (iv) Frights: Acon., Ign. Op., Phos., Puls.

II. PERIOD OF BIRTH:

A. Avoiding necessity of serious manipulation and operative measures:
Treat mother during pregnancy with her chronic remedy. Caulo., for a time before delivery, has power of regulating process of labour.

B. Child in poor condition due to difficult labour:

- (i) Blue asphyxia: Laur.
- (ii) Pallid asphyxia: Carbo v.
- (iii) Intra-cranial haemorrhage: Arn.

III. ESTABLISHMENT OF BREAST-FEEDING:

- A. Scanty milk: Bell., Phyto., Puls.
- B. Poor quality milk: Calc., Lac-d.
- C. Milk poison to child: Nat-c., Sil.

IV. FIRST FEW MONTHS OF LIFE:

A. Digestive disturbances:

- (i) Milk upsets them: Aeth., Sil., Nat-c., Calc.
- (ii) Acute infantile diarrhoeas: Ars., Merc., Aloe., Podo., Crof-t., Calc.

B. Later months of life:

- (i) Teething: Cham.
- (ii) Croup: Acon., Spong., Hep.

V. LACK OF PROPER DEVELOPMENT:

- A. Lack of physical development.
- B. The backward child, slow to walk and talk.
- C. The mentally defective.

VI. THE NERVOUS CHILD, FULL OF FEARS:

VII. THE CHRONIC CHILD WHO DEVELOPS ALL SORTS OF CONDITIONS:

Difficult teething, digestive upsets, bronchitis, frequent colds, enlarged tonsils and adenoids, middle ear abscesses, enlarged cervical glands, etc.

Because of various immunisation injections etc. that are given to all children as a routine and other suppressive medications, most of the cases that come to the homoeopathic physicians are of the last category, viz. "the chronic child who develops all sorts of conditions".

Hahnemann wrote, "Probably, if with the first pregnancy, during the time of pregnancy the antipsoric treatment were properly carried out, one might succeed in freeing mankind from the evil of hereditary psora, a success of far greater value than the eradication of small pox by vaccination".

Every child which comes to the homoeopath for health care (which means both preventive and curative) should be treated with the same care as though it is his own child. It should be stressed here that Hahnemann was very clear and particular in preventive medicine and hygiene.

We see every day many, many children who are living but are sick. Every child saved from death, or cured of illness, is a source of joy and happiness to its mother. The happiness of the mother or parents should be also ours and therefore our quality of service, which means doing everything we can do as well as possible, should always be done.

The anxiety of the mother who brings the child should be appreciated and she should be dealt with kindly. Whatever questions she may ask should be answered kindly, even if illiterate mothers (sometimes even the educated) ask questions which may appear silly. If answers to some of her questions are not known it should be said so.

Whatever be the time of day or night if the child is brought for any serious condition, one should be ready to see it.

And the most important of all, the children of the poor and the poorest—those who need our care the most, should be given the same amount of attention as given to the children of the richer strata of society. No physician will be the poorer because of it.

These are some of what I have learnt from elders and available in various literature.

I have attempted to give a brief paper on the health care of children. To sum up:

(1) Health care of children begins with the onset of pregnancy; and the mother may require anti-psoric medication to clear away possible miasmatic taints.

(2) Labour should be made as free from complications and difficulties as possible.

(3) Breast feeding should be encouraged and even insisted upon.

(4) Good nutrition gives better immunity; cheap and easily available foods should be suggested and not costly bottled or tinned stuff and thus malnutrition and consequent illnesses could be much reduced.

(5) Hygiene should be stressed so that infections are minimised.

(6) Preventive medicine should have the major role.

(7) Examination of the sick child—subjective and objective exam.—the behaviour of the child, its expression, physical conditions etc.

(8) The illnesses which the children generally suffer from: malnutrition and infections to congenital diseases.

(9) Use of repertories and materia medicas to the best advantage and keeping complete records and also follow-up.

(10) Above all, kindness and understanding of the patient and its mother/parents and handling the case with all kindness, care and attention especially to those who need it the most.

It has been said that child is the father of man. By caring for the health of the child, right from its conception and removing hereditary taints and carrying it through a period of as good health as may be possible by us by use of the homoeopathic system of medicine, we can build up a new generation of comparatively less 'sick' people; a healthy mind can also be developed which may not be affected by stresses and strains. *This is not something which cannot be achieved. Sapere aude.*
