

HOW TO TREAT OBSCURE CASES

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The vast majority of cases, important as well as insignificant, are obscure. The majority of diagnoses made with regard to important cases, even if made by a team of experts, are doubtful or faulty. Diagnoses are largely based on guesswork. Besides, it is not sufficient to diagnose quite obvious cases such as cancer, paralysis, tuberculosis, diabetes, etc. by labelling them correctly, which is quite easy in the four diseases mentioned. These diseases are, after all, only end results and the practitioner should try to diagnose, or ascertain, *why* the patient is tuberculous, cancerous, etc. After all, every patient and every patient's family asks this question and is entitled to an adequate reply. Besides even the apparently obvious major diseases may not be what they seem. A tuberculous or syphilitic swelling may be mistaken for cancer, diabetic coma may be mistaken for drunkenness. Some time ago a man was locked up in a police cell 'helplessly drunk', who had had an apoplectic stroke.

Conflagrations are occasionally due to a most insignificant cause, such as a spark, a lighted match thrown away, a smouldering cigarette end. Similarly many important diseases have very trifling beginnings, such as a cold, a chill, slight indigestion, etc. Hence even the smallest ailments should be given serious and adequate attention. Among the ordinary and insignificant complaints are indigestion, constipation, headache, colds, coughs, catarrh, rheumatism, anaemia, depression, irregular periods of women, etc. Let us look at some of these trivial, or at least apparently trivial complaints.

Indigestion: "Doctor, I have a pain in the stomach; I cannot digest my food." A careless or rushed practitioner may look at the patient's tongue and may prescribe the famous 'white mixture' of anti-acids which is dispensed by the bucketful in the out-patients' department of every hospital; or if he is a homoeopath he may prescribe *Nux vomica*. However busy the practitioner may be he should say to himself that indigestion may be due to constipation, a very frequent cause, which cannot be cured with the white mixture, or that it may be due to bad teeth, insufficient mastication, boiling hot liquid, too much tobacco, alcohol or condiments, emaciation causing the stomach to drop down, faulty food, copper or aluminium cooking utensils, etc. All these possible causative factors and many others ought to be enquired into. Very often there is serious disease at the back of apparently trifling indigestion. The patient may suffer from gastric or duodenal ulceration, latent appendicitis, colitis, cancer of the stomach, diseases of the liver, kidneys, spleen, etc. I have seen many cases of cancer of the stomach which had been treated for months as indigestion with the white mixture.

Headache: Aspirin is obtainable at every chemist and at almost every village shop. The public has learned that aspirin will 'cure' headache. Of

course it does nothing of the kind. It merely relieves the pain and it is dangerous to fly to aspirin and other pain killers. After all pain is our best friend. There are people who have taken aspirin and such like drugs for decades and who once a week or so are prostrated with the most violent migraine. Every skilled homoeopath has permanently cured such headaches, often after decades of useless allopathic treatment.

To treat headache efficiently one must search for the causative factor and tackle it. It may be due to indigestion, constipation, malfunctioning of the liver, eyestrain, bad teeth, infection of the cavities of the skull, the sinuses and antrums. It may be due to injury of head or spine, to syphilis, hardening of the arteries, a warning of a stroke, a clot or an abscess on the brain, etc. Aspirin may relieve but does not cure.

Constipation: This trouble is often dealt with with the usual pills and salts, oily seeds, liquid paraffin, etc. Constipation may be due to faulty food and may be cured by a vegetarian diet, roughage, bran, wholemeal bread, an adequate intake of liquid, various abdominal exercises, a surgical belt if the trouble is due to sagging of the abdominal organs, etc. However, the trouble may be exceedingly serious. It may be due to a chronic appendix inflammation, diverticulitis, narrowing of the bowel through an abscess or to cancer. It may be due to retroversion of the womb which presses upon the bowel, to an enlarged prostate which has the same effect, and to many causes too numerous to mention.

Coughs and colds: They are as a rule insignificant, but occasionally they mark the beginning of serious troubles and should be taken seriously. Many a consumptive will tell you, "I was a perfectly healthy man and I did not know what illness meant, but years ago I caught a cold which I neglected, then came a chronic cough which turned to tuberculosis." A chronic cough may be due to chronic indigestion, emphysema of the lungs, some serious non-tuberculous lung affection, heart disease, cancer of the lungs, etc.

Catarrh: It is almost as frequent as constipation. It may produce a discharge which benefits the system. On the other hand it may lead to disease of antrums and sinuses, to deafness, etc. If the discharge is very foul it may be due to toxicity of the system due to vaccination, suppressed skin disease, a children's disease upset of the body by vaccination, acquired or inherited syphilis, gonorrhoea, etc. So one cannot deal with catarrh successfully by giving the patient perfunctorily a nasal douche or prescribing Kali bichromicum, etc.

Rheumatism: It may be insignificant or serious. If insignificant, an appropriate diet, massage, manipulation, electricity, etc., may be helpful. However, as a cough may turn to tuberculosis, so rheumatism may turn to arthritis which often cripples patients completely and permanently. A very wealthy, vigorous and athletic friend of mine complained of backache. Harley Street treated him for rheumatism because of the pain. As I knew my friend well, as I knew how abstemiously he lived and how vigorously

he exercised his body, it was quite clear to me that he could not suffer from rheumatism. In reality he had cancer or sarcoma of the spine. I have seen similar mistakes in other cases of cancer. Rheumatism is often connected with heart disease. Rheumatic fever often leads to serious heart injury.

Anaemia: This trouble is widespread. Orthodox and homoeopathic prescribers treat it with iron in various combinations, such as sulphur, strychnine, hog's stomach, etc. It is frequently due to refined food and constipation and as iron produces constipation, the treatment with iron is often very harmful. Anaemia may be due to many causes. Innumerable diseases produce anaemia. It may be due to heavy menstruation in women, to rickets, kidney disease, liver disease, tropical fever and quinine poisoning, pernicious anaemia, etc. One must always try to discover the cause and to visualize possible consequences.

Depression: Countless complaints produce depression. In fact almost every disease and disorder leads to that deterioration in the spirit of the patient which ranges from slight depression to the deepest melancholia, which may end in insanity or in suicide. Every case of depression should be studied with care and its cause, or causes, be ascertained. Hence it is wrong to give mechanically a sedative, a laxative or a tonic unless the position is perfectly clear.

Irregular periods of women: This is a very frequent complaint and the skilled homoeopath can frequently righten matters with Pulsatilla, Cimicifuga, Thlaspi, or with tonics. However, irregular periods may be due to grave causes, tuberculosis, disease of womb or ovaries, internal cysts, moles, polypi, ulceration, prolapsus, retroversion, psychic causes, inherited disease, cancer. So one must treat such cases with the greatest attention.

I have shown that apparently trivial cases, such as indigestion, constipation, headache, etc. are fundamentally obscure and may have a very serious cause and still more serious consequence. If obscurity prevails in slight everyday disorders, it is clear that the obscurity is still greater in serious diseases. Every doctor sees every day cases which have been wrongly diagnosed and wrongly treated by doctors and specialists of the highest standing. Only too often a diagnosis made at sight, such as rheumatism, psoriasis, diabetes, is quite inadequate and misleading. The able practitioner must be patient and painstaking. He must have the gifts of the detective. He should not rely too much on laboratory findings, which are often misleading. A woman came to me who had spent three weeks at a famous diagnostic institution. Specialists had made every conceivable test and the final diagnosis was that the lady suffered from an extremely rare and incurable disease of the pancreas, not from anything so commonplace as pancreatic diabetes. She was in despair and put a bundle of documents before me to study. Her habitual diet had not been enquired into. I discovered that she took about 20 cups of tea "as black as ink and as hot as hell" with 5 or 6 lumps of sugar in each cup. I stopped her tea and in 3 weeks she was well and fit.

—Heal Thyself, October 1946