

Classical Homeopathy

A New Renaissance

The historical roots of homeopathy were discussed in the previous issues. Following, Dr. Schachter describes some practical applications of homeopathic medicine. His article will be presented in two parts. Next Issue. PART II: What To Expect At A Homeopathic Interview And Course Of Therapy.

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Classical Homeopathy is a system of medical treatment that offers a safe and effective approach to a wide variety of health problems. It involves giving very tiny doses (microdoses) of natural substances to a patient to stimulate his or her own internal healing mechanisms including, but not limited to, the immune system. A good example of the difference between this approach and that of conventional medicine is how each would approach the treatment of a child with an ear infection.

An ear infection is the result of an overgrowth of a bacteria in the ear due to a failure of the body's immune system to stop the growth. Treatment can be approached by attacking or killing the bacteria with an appropriate antibiotic – the approach of the conventional pediatrician. Or, the treatment can be aimed at strengthening the child's immune system so that it overcomes and kills the bacteria.

The disadvantages of conventional treatment include possible serious side effects from antibiotics, including Candida. Allergic reactions to antibiotics are fairly common and can be life threatening. Furthermore, there is some evidence that the use of antibiotics for the treatment of ear infections may actually predispose the child to future ear infections, which will then necessitate more antibiotics.

If the homeopathic treatment works it has none of these disadvantages. There are virtually no adverse side effects, no destruction of normal bacterial flora and if anything a reduced chance of future ear infections, as the child's immune system is strengthened with the treatment. Also, other homeopathic medications can be used to treat the tendency to *develop* ear infections.

Whereas the particular antibiotic medication used on the child is dependent on *the kind of bacterial infection* in the ear, the kind of homeopathic medication used is dependent upon the state and symptoms of the child, not the particular kind of bacteria causing the infection. For example, if the child is screaming in pain, biting, kicking, homeopathic chamomillia is likely to give almost instantaneous relief. If on the other hand, the child is weepy and clinging and seems better in fresh air, he or she will most often be helped by pulsatilla.

The success of homeopathy in treating ear infection in a child is often dramatic and clear-cut, as it is in a variety of other acute conditions. But, indications for the homeopathic approach is much wider than merely for acute conditions.

Homeopathy may be used for many physical and mental disorders or illnesses, both acute and chronic, in people of all ages.

The major advantages and disadvantages include the avoidance of side effects from conventional drugs, the ability of homeopathic medications to successfully treat a variety of health problems simultaneously when the correct medication is given, and the ability of homeopathic medications to strengthen the person's internal defenses, thus helping to prevent future illnesses.

HOW HAHNEMANN FORMULATED THE PRINCIPLES OF HOMEOPATHY

Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843), German physician and physicist, became increasingly disillusioned with the prevailing forms of medical care during the early years of his medical career. He decided to stop practicing medicine and instead began to translate medical works.

Dissatisfied with the explanation of how the medication Peruvian Cinchona bark (quinine) worked on Malaria, he decided to conduct an experiment on himself by ingesting small amounts of Cinchona. Much to his surprise, he found that the symptoms he developed were similar to the ones found in Malaria. It occurred to him that medications which produced symptoms in a healthy person might remove these same symptoms in a sick person. Thus, he formulated the major principle of homeopathy, the Law of Similars, like cures like.

Over the next several years Hahnemann and his followers tested a variety of plants, minerals and animal based substances in small quantities and wrote down all symptoms experienced. This activity was called "proving". As more and more provings were done, these collections of symptoms associated with specific remedies were written down in books called material medica. Some of the remedies first studied were pulsatilla sulphur, chamomillia, Calcarea carbonica (calcium carbonate), bryonia, arnica, arsenicum album, aconite and belladonna.

As more and more remedies were proven and the homeopathic pharmacopeia and material medica grew, it became more and more complicated and difficult for a physician to memorize all of the characteristics including symptoms, causal factors and states of the patient associated with the remedy. A new tool was necessary to help organize all this information. The tool that was developed was a book which catalogued the various symptoms, signs and other characteristics that might be found in a person, and listed the various remedies that were associated with each of these. This type of book is called a homeopathic repertory. The one used most by students of homeopathy in the United States was written by the late Dr. James Tyler Kent, America's best known homeopath, and is called Kent's Repertory.

As one might imagine, this type of categorization lends itself beautifully to computerization. Several excellent computer programs to help with reperatorization and other aspects of homeopathic practice have been developed. In the United States, the most popular one is McRepertory, developed by David Warkenton of California, and is available for use on Apple's MacIntosh hardware.

POTENTIATION: HOW ONE MAKES HOMEOPATHIC MEDICATIONS

One of Hahnemann's most important discoveries was the power of potentiating medications. In an attempt to produce as little side effects as possible, Hahnemann and his followers began to dilute the medications and shake or succuss them. He was able to reduce side effects, but more importantly, he found that the more dilute a remedy became, the more potent and profound its therapeutic effects.

This process of potentization involves taking the substance one wishes to potentize and dissolving it in a combination of water and alcohol—in a ratio of one part substance to either 9 parts of diluents or 99 parts of diluents, and then shaking it with impact. This results in a 1x potency in the case of the 9:1 dilution and 1c potency in the case of the 99:1 dilution. The same process is repeated again with 1 part of this mixture to either 9 parts of diluents to make a 2x potency or 99 parts to make 2c potency. This process can be repeated indefinitely. Some of the most used potencies are 6x or 12x or 6c, 12c, 30c, or 200c. However, other potencies may be used including higher potencies, such as 1m (1:1,000) or 10m (1:10,000).

One confusing point for people first trying to understand homeopathy is that more diluted solutions are considered the higher potencies. Thus, a 3x solution, which has more molecules than a 6x solution is considered the lower potency. What is more surprising is that once you go beyond original solution left in the remedy. And yet it works. How could this be? We don't know for sure, but the hypothesis is that in the process of potentization, information from the original substance is somehow encoded into the water/alcohol molecules and then is conveyed to the person receiving the treatment, resulting in the therapeutic effect. But, regardless of how it works, there is overwhelming evidence indicating that it does work.

WHAT KIND OF HEALTH PROBLEMS CAN BE TREATED WITH HOMEOPATHY?

Homeopathy is comprehensive medical treatment system that can be applied to virtually all kinds of health problems including: 1) first aid 2) acute illnesses and 3) chronic diseases. First aid conditions treated successfully with homeopathy include: injuries such as sprains, whiplash and contusions; burns; insect or small bites; bleeding or hemorrhages from the nose, vagina, and other locations; and heat stroke.

Acute conditions that frequently respond rapidly to homeopathy include: earaches; sore throats; coughs; urinary tract infections; nausea; vomiting and diarrhea; headaches; painful periods and many others.

Chronic conditions that may respond to vary degrees with homeopathy include: asthma; arthritis; peptic ulcers; hemorrhoids, neurological conditions and psychiatric conditions such as depression, anxiety, agitation and panic attacks. There are even cases of cancer in the classical homeopathic literature that have responded to homeopathic treatment.

The homeopathic literature is filled with cases involving all of the above named conditions. However, modern science medicine tends to look down upon case reports of successful cures and accepts only controlled studies with groups of patients who receive either the active medication or an inert substance (placebo), with neither the patient's nor the doctor's knowing which group received which. (Double-blind placebo controlled studies.) Although it is difficult to do because the homeopathic treatment is so highly individualized, there have been a number of cleverly designed studies, which have shown the effectiveness of homeopathy.

Some recent popular articles on homeopathy suggest that it should be used to treat only minor problems. But, the history of medicine teaches the performance of homeopathic treatment was compared to that of conventional medical treatment, the homeopathic death rates were lower and successful therapeutic results were always greater. Although the relatively recent widespread use of antibiotics for bacterial infections may have changed the situation somewhat bacterial infections, homeopathy would undoubtedly have the advantage in most viral infections today, since conventional treatment for viral infections is lacking.