



Snake Oil or Snake Medicine?

By Stephen Weiss, MD, Holistic Medical Doctor/Classical Homeopath



If you are human, and chances are pretty high if you are reading this, then the mere mention of the reptile which is the topic of this article may evoke strong emotions in you. Extrapolating from our own creation story in which the snake is maligned, it might come as a surprise that it has been a symbol of longevity, healing and knowledge to virtually all cultures and religions since the beginning of recorded history.

A few years ago, before I (consciously) knew all this, while working on a new brochure for my practice, a vision came to me of a multicolored snake which was to become my logo. Later, after drawing and coloring the image, its symbolism became apparent to me. Carl Jung refers to the spiral as an archetypal symbol representing the cosmic force. It is the shape of our galaxy and of the double helix, the macrocosm and the microcosm. It too can be found in the art of almost every culture. It is infinitely-expanding, just like our universe. From this sacred place, without beginning or end, a snake spirals

upward, which in yoga philosophy represents the awakening of Kundalini, or spiritual awakening. The single serpent staff is an image dating back to Sumeria, 2000 B.C., depicting the healing God Ningishzida (the Greeks later used the same image for the staff of Asclepius, the Greek God of Healing and Medicine).

Snake remedies play a prominent role in Classical Homeopathy. Most but not all remedies are derived from the venoms of poisonous snakes, and are rendered harmless by serially diluting and shaking the venom, a process known as potentization. These medicines are capable of deep and remarkable healing!

In December 2001, Mary, a woman in her mid-40s, consulted me. She was scheduled for a hysterectomy in a month's time for severe pelvic pain and intractable constipation of several years' duration due to endometriosis and fibroids. She was visibly frightened and had a strong intuitive sense she should not have the operation, but she scheduled it anyway. Mary cried for days after her GYN told her surgery was her only option, having failed various hormonal treatments. On a scale of 1 to 10, Mary rated her overall level of health a dismal 1. She also suffered from anxiety, fatigue, migraines, joint pain, acne, shortness of breath, and a host of other complaints. Although a highly accomplished chef, she was working in an unrelated field, which was unfulfilling. Mary responded immediately to a single dose of Lachesis 200C, made from the venom of the Bushmaster snake, *Lachesis mutus*. Her bowels began to move the same day she took the remedy. She cancelled her surgery. Mary later told me: *"Lachesis resolved every symptom I ever had my whole life. Things I didn't even mention to you cleared up. My whole system became regular again. The fibroids disappeared."* Less than a year later, she moved out of state to work as a food and beverage manager of a fine food restaurant. She was recognized for her culinary skills with feature articles in national magazines. After three years of excellent health, some of her symptoms recurred. I suspect that her 100 hour work-week and other major life stresses had something to do with it. I have used several other remedies over the years, which have clearly helped. She has only taken 1 course of antibiotics (prescribed by another physician) in the last 8 1/2 years, as compared to 1-2 courses a year for pneumonia/bronchitis most of her life prior to homeopathic care. None have created such a profound sense of well-being as Lachesis. Just last month, I prescribed a completely different potency of Lachesis, and she is making great strides again.

In July 2006, Raymond, a 67 year old patient of mine

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presented to the office with a one week history of pain, redness and swelling of his right calf. Suspecting a blood clot, I immediately referred him for a Doppler (ultrasound) of his right leg, which confirmed the presence of a deep vein thrombosis. Although less likely when below the knee, there is always a risk of the clot spreading to the lung (pulmonary embolus), which can be fatal. Raymond refused treatment with Lovenox followed by 3 months of Coumadin (blood thinners). As I was not aware of any double-blind studies of alternative therapies for treating DVTs, I had him sign an Against Medical Advice form explaining the risks of foregoing proven conventional therapy, and was frankly worried. I gave him daily doses of homeopathic Vipera, a remedy made from the German Viper, as well as Wobenzym and Nattokinase, enzymes which are reputed to thin the blood. Raymond quickly improved clinically, and the clot was gone within a few months.

Vipera plus enzymes, along with supplements prescribed by Dr. J. Dunn rapidly cured a 32 year old woman who also developed a blood clot in her calf when her ski got caught in a snow bank while riding a chairlift last winter. Another woman with a history of recurrent GI bleeds who was not a candidate for prescription anticoagulants developed a large blood clot in one of the superficial veins of her thigh. Crotalus cascavala, a remedy made from the venom of the South American rattlesnake, and Nattokinase took care of this one. Homeopathic medicine is extremely individualized—a different remedy was prescribed because it more closely matched this particular patient's symptoms.

Recently, I began studying a revolutionary form of Classical Homeopathy developed by world-renowned homeopath Rajan Sankaran. It theorizes that all disease is caused by the energetic imprint of something found in the natural world. The proper homeopathic remedy made from that particular substance will cancel out the imprint and restore health. One of the first patients I used this method on suffers from a severe case of muscle spasms and tightness from his shoulders to his ankles that he experiences as a tight band wrapped around his body. One month after starting the remedy Boa constrictor, the frequency of his attacks diminished by 50-60%.

Ten months ago Barbara, a 43 year old writer, consulted me after a traumatic injury to her neck. 12 hours later she awoke in the middle of the night feeling very lightheaded. Her right arm and leg were weak, and her right side was numb. The room was blue. Her neck hurt terribly. She then developed severe headaches, vertigo with nausea, trouble finding words, tachycardia and blurred vision. Her symptoms had persisted for 5 weeks, and had worsened 4 days prior to her first appointment with me. Although she experienced persistent low-level right sided weakness since the injury, she was having intermittent attacks of worsening weakness, headache and nausea, suggestive of possible TIAs or hemiplegic migraine, occurring on average twice a day. In the office, she became faint and nauseated during her consultation, and her heart rate shot up to 125 beats a minute. A prominent Albuquerque neurologist initially felt she had had a stroke, but the MRI and MRA were normal. Another neurologist suspected a tear in her left vertebral artery in the neck. Her father suffered from a brainstem aneurysm

and several strokes. "I'm very frightened that this isn't going to end well", she told me. After carefully studying her case, I prescribed the remedy Bothrops lanceolatus, the yellow viper, in low potency. I saw her back 6 days after she started the remedy, and here is what she shared: "Bothrops worked like a charm! I felt a difference after the very first dose—TIA episodes started to diminish. Before the remedy, I was waking up every 1-2 hours in pain and feeling awful. The night I took my first dose of remedy, I slept through the night for the first time in 6 weeks. Headaches which were virtually constant 24/7, 8 out of 10 intensity, are down to 2-3/10, with brief headache-free periods. Tingling is enormously better. A lot less difficulty finding words. No TIAs in 4 days! Tachycardia and palpitations resolved after 48 hours. Vertigo 95% better!"

Today, thanks to other well-indicated homeopathic remedies, and to the expert hands of Walter Cohen and Tairifa Soloway, two Santa Fe-based healers who see patients out of my office, she is feeling "the best I have in 10 years", as we are now making progress treating her stubborn, long-standing chronic health problems. *Barbara confessed to me that she was very skeptical of homeopathy before she came to me. Now she's convinced it saved her life.*

Exactly 24 hours after I decided to write this article, I met Morning Star, an Australian shaman and medicine woman who recently arrived in New Mexico to lead ceremony and workshops. She has written books on how to make sacred ceremonial objects from animal remains including one about snakes. The first thing she did after we met and exchanged a few hellos is hand me her most recent creation, a rattle she just made out of a Bull Snake that had been run over and was deep into the dying process. The snake was blessed before it died, and I am blessed by its offering and by its relatives who have given us powerful medicines which profoundly alleviate suffering.



Shaman Morning Star
in Ceremony



Dr. Weiss holding rattle recently
made by shaman Morning Star.