

IS THERE A ROLE FOR PSYCHOLOGY, NUTRITION AND BOTANICALS IN THE PRACTICE OF HOMEOPATHY?

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A new full-time homeopathic college is in the wind, a very exciting prospect. It brings with it the opportunity to consider other aspects of therapeutic training that could be appropriate to the modern profession.

Henny Heudens-Mast, in her outstanding new book, *The Foundation of the Chronic Miasms in the Practice of Homeopathy*, says that miasms in a latent “sleeping” state, may awake due to stressors of one sort or another and go on to create chronic health disturbances. In considering the stressors that stimulate miasmatic activity, Herbert Roberts, in his popular textbook, *The Principles and Art of Cure by Homeopathy* (1936), proposed that deficiency states are one of the foremost initiators of psora. He writes, “Psora and deficiency in properly balanced essentials (nutritional elements), are one and the same...or if not...we must admit that here lies a significant key to the problem of psora...” He mentions the many metabolites that are among the anti-psorics. He further adds, “...we find that emotional or other stress develops the psoric symptomatology even in constitutions that have been sound and healthy.”

These comments by both respected authors, suggest that miasmatic expression can be limited by good care for the body and also the mind, which can lessen the susceptibility of the organism to the arousal of latent miasmatic (core, inherited) influences. In some small measure, it is these themes that we will address.

We may surmise that the inability to assimilate, as with calcium, the overabundance of certain elements that are otherwise necessary in minute amounts, as with, copper, arsenic, and aluminum, or a lack of basic elements as with deficiency states, are all important factors in health. Homeopathy, in the first two instances, may play a critical role. Just as we see the improved assimilation that Calcarea can bring to a young child, we may also see, as I have on four or five occasions, patients report green bowel movements for several days, following high potency Cuprum. I assume this indicates the body was releasing oxidized copper, as if the potentised Cuprum functioned as a kind of chelating agent acting from the dynamic plane.

These examples suggest that indicated homeopathic remedies balance essential elements, by initiating more efficient assimilation or excretion. However, in the case of assimilation, we must assume that the elements are at least present in the diet. Calcium is one thing, more or less abundant in

many common articles of diet, but what about selenium, chromium, or any number of other essential nutrients, known or unknown, some of which may be poorly represented or altogether deficient?

While a complete homeopathic process (not always easy to achieve) can weaken and sometimes cure miasmatic influences, it is also likely that carefully applied nutritional supplementation and even botanicals can, by strengthening particular systems, making up deficiencies, supporting some activities and redirecting others, lessen the likelihood of a chronic process developing under stress. Though not homeopathy in any way shape or form, nutrition and even botanicals can, in some cases, play a valuable supporting role.

Where once, and too often still, nutritional supplements and botanicals were prescribed on reputation, historic usage, supposition, rumor, and sales promotion - they can now be rationally applied, within the terms of modern experimental science; according to the knowledge of their chemistry, their relationship with our biochemistry, and the experimental evidence for their capacity to support health. They can aid in the healing of damaged or inflamed tissues, protect, nourish, refresh and invigorate specific organs, restore or enhance cognitive ability and memory, as well as lessen the effects of aging. In contrast to allopathic medicines, they generally work with, rather than against the organism and produce far less side effects.

In terms of botanicals, there is a continuum from botanical medicine to homeopathy. A large number of homeopathic remedies had their origin and early indicators of value rooted in European and American Native herbalism. Offering his Book of Herbal Wisdom, to "practicing homeopaths and herbalists", Matthew Wood writes, "The approach I take in my writings and my practice, does not differentiate between these two schools. I see them as divided by an artificial, man made gulf." The inherent holism, depth and subtlety within the homeopathic view can easily blind us to these words, but they are worthy of consideration.

We are not saying that homeopathy should become naturopathy. However, we are suggesting that a modern and practical homeopathic education should include training in nutritional and perhaps botanical therapeutics, as part of a holistic and practical approach to patient care. In itself, naturopathic medicine is missing a point of view that goes beyond the physiological into an overarching consideration of the relationship of the parts to the whole and the whole to the parts. Homeopathy provides to natural medicine a missing integral view and a miasmatic view. However, from that integral perspective, homeopathic remedies alone may not provide a completely adequate approach to the patient, and the entire treatment

of the patient may be benefited by the inclusion of naturopathic advice or counseling.

Roger Morrison, MD, offers many nutritional and supplemental suggestions in his Desktop Companion. In the Introduction he writes:

“Some may feel that these naturopathic ideas have no place in a homeopathic text. I have included these ideas for several reasons: First, as options to use when the patient requires some treatment but we do not want to use a remedy. Second, when we have treated with a remedy that is not acting or at least not acting upon the specific problem. Third, there are many conditions where homeopathic treatment is greatly aided by naturopathic techniques. The tradition to offer such advice began with Hahnemann.”

Note the defense in Morrison's opening sentence. Sometimes, the homeopathic profession seems to suppress discussion on the integration of other useful therapies. Some homeopathic teachers abjure the use of supplements and take no special care for nutrition. Yet it is likely that if you were to look into the cupboards of a vast majority of homeopaths, you would find nutritional supplements and botanicals used personally as part of their health regimen. It is also extremely common in the real world of practice, to find well-trained homeopaths integrating their homeopathy with other modalities in which they have proficiency. Many of our patients are intensely interested in diet and nutrition and expect this to be addressed. Other patients, apparently ignorant of the well-publicized nutritional reality, or lacking firm guidance to push them beyond habit or self-indulgence, still prefer a hefty dose of apparently edible substances essentially unsuited to the human body.

A few dietary changes or nutritional modifications can have a valuable effect on health and have proven effective in so many cases. Smoking, coffee, junk food, and food sensitivities do produce symptoms, not on everyone, of course, but on more than a few. These symptoms are artificial, just as drug side effects are artificial, and are not necessarily part of the homeopathic case. It is not a matter of whether coffee antidotes remedies or not. It is a matter of health.

In his article, The Medicine of Experience, Hahnemann says, “As food is requisite for the healthy body, so medicines have been found efficacious in diseases: medicines, however, are never in themselves and unconditionally wholesome, but only relatively so. The pure aliments of food and drink taken until hunger and thirst abate, support our strength, by replacing the parts lost in the vital processes, without disturbing the functions of our

organs or impairing the health".

Medicines on the other hand, Hahnemann says, "are of a completely opposite nature. They afford no nourishment. They are abnormal irritants, only fitted for altering our healthy body, disturbing the vitality and functions of the organs, and exciting disagreeable sensations, in a word, making the healthy ill."

As mentioned, homeopathy is very closely tied, through its remedies and through its history to plant medicines. Personally, I've grown very respectful of the nourishing character of herbs, often the source of their therapeutic value. Many plants used in western and eastern herbal medicine are nutritive in nature. Essentially, a fairly significant amount of herbal medicine may be viewed as a form of nutritional therapy – sometimes for the good of overall function, as with alteratives and immune modulators, (including many mushroom species), but often for a particular organ system or function. These do not readily fit Hahnemann's definition of medicines, as "abnormal irritants", "disturbing vitality and function".

On the other hand, there are a range of substances, both chemical and dietary, that are taken as foods or in foods on a regular basis, that may well be considered metabolic irritants and certainly fit Hahnemann's definition of medicines. If an individual is uniquely sensitive to a certain food, they will find that it disturbs vitality and produces symptoms. Avoidance for a period of time and homeopathic therapy can often change this relationship.

Let's go back to Hahneman's definition of food as edible substances which support our strength, by replacing the parts lost in the vital processes, without disturbing the functions of our organs or impairing health. This would mean that our food should be natural, digestible and above all related to our inherent chemistry (i.e., excluding pesticides, preservatives, additives, colorings, highly refined or artificial sweeteners, hormones, antibiotics, hydrogenated fats, etc.) Food should also be taken in a way that supports digestion. In other words, not in a hurried, distracted manner. The ancient dictum, "let food be your medicine" remains a primary principle, often forgotten in the rush for more elaborate therapeutics.

All that said, diet, nutritional and botanical medicines are unable to dissipate the underlying currents, the fundamental movements of pattern and information that Hahnemann termed miasms. This requires resonance across the broadest possible spectrum, and this is something that molecular entities, with their molecular affinities, cannot provide. Yet as suggested at the start, they may go far in preventing miasmatic expression, which is a great value in itself.

In terms of homeopathic training, there is more to be said regarding the psychological aspect. Many of our clients are anxious, stressed, overwrought and out of touch with themselves. Displaced or suppressed emotion centers in the body and ultimately appears as physical symptoms, whether yet accompanied by pathological changes or not. (One of the great advantages of homeopathy, of course, is its willingness and capacity to receive and value symptoms at the earliest stages of development.) Often the patient has not given adequate consideration of the roots of distress and may be benefited by learning tools for reflection and introspection. Helping patients on the path to greater self-awareness can be a valuable part of their experience with a homeopath.

Some homeopathic teachers affirm that homeopathy and the practice of homeopathy as such, is quite different from psychology. Yet modern case taking methodology can have much in common with a psychotherapeutic process, and often has psychotherapeutic consequences. We may expose ourselves to unnecessary misinterpretation and even danger by ignoring the fact that critical therapeutic issues, such as placebo, transference and counter-transference, are bound to the inherent psychological relationship of physician and patient. Furthermore, in the process of case taking, patterns of behavior and their internal roots are often revealed. Should we leave them here without comment, when our long experience, personal development and professional training indicates where wise mirroring can provide potentially liberating insights to the patient? On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that counseling intervention can ruin the pure reception of the homeopathic case by disturbing its flow and currents. For all these reasons, training in this arena, in my view, is an important part of a complete homeopathic education.

It might also be added that in Dr. Jurj's exploration of the origins of Hahnemann's miasm concept, later in this issue of Simillimum, he notes an analogy between certain fundamental homeopathic concepts and ideas advanced by Freud regarding psychological development, pathology and healing.

In paragraph 224, Hahnemann, long before the great developments of psychology, refers to the general use of counsel in the interaction with the patient.

"If the mental disease be not quite developed, and if it be still somewhat doubtful whether it really arose from a corporeal affection, or did not rather result from faults of education, bad practices, corrupt morals, neglect of the mind, superstition or ignorance; the mode of deciding this point will be,

that if it proceed from one or other of the latter causes it will diminish and be improved by sensible friendly exhortations, consolatory arguments, serious representations and sensible advice, whereas a real moral or mental malady, depending on bodily disease, would be speedily aggravated by such a course, the melancholic would become still more dejected, querulous, inconsolable and reserved, the spiteful maniac would thereby become still more exasperated, and the chattering fool would become manifestly more foolish."

So, just as it is important to give dietary advice, where dietary choice may be an obstruction to health, it is also appropriate to give kind and wise counsel when called for, as far as possible without disturbing the course of the case taking process.

Doing a summation of the case at the end, reviewing your understanding with your client, may be a way to introduce some reflection and develop conversation along these lines when appropriate. Right counsel can be of tremendous value to the client, whether we are effective or not in our homeopathic prescribing.

Now all that said, when we are speaking of homeopathy in combination with other therapies, there must be a bit of philosophy to guide us. A very few thoughts:

In terms of medicines, it is perhaps helpful to think of each substance and each remedy as a packet of information. Too much information may not be well assimilated and may disturb rather than heal. We should always be circumspect in our prescribing, seeing to the best interests of the patient without overwhelming their system or complicating either case taking or assessment.

In our assessment we are looking to every symptom expression, as well as to the overall state of the client. Overall, this is broad enough to see through the generally subtler effects of mild natural remedies/supplements, except perhaps in exceptionally sensitive individuals.

As progress is made towards the first full time college of homeopathic medicine in the United States, I hope that these issues are given close consideration towards a practical and well-rounded homeopathic education.

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