

Dental homeopathy

~ an accidental introduction

Peter Darby explains how a tumble from his bike had dramatic repercussions in his professional life



Photo courtesy of Colgate

It was a fine autumnal Sunday morning when we set off on our mountain bikes for an off-road sojourn on Cannock Chase. I could never have visualised that this ride would change my dental practice and dental prescribing so dramatically and explosively. Explosive was how it felt when I parted company from my trusted bike! I was admitted to hospital where it was found that I had a severely fractured right shoulder; two hours later I was in emergency surgery. A week later, on anti-coagulant treatment, I was sent home.

The acute care I received was second to none but it was after that phase that my aches and pains really started. I remember a patient saying that the pain from a broken bone is like the throbbing pain of a dental abscess – I think he was right. Pain killers had relatively little effect and due to the prescribed anticoagulants the choice of analgesics was limited. I tried a tens machine

to reduce my aches and pains but this had a minimal effect.

It was during a session with my physio that the chance remark was made: “why don’t you try homeopathic Arnica and Ruta?” I had nothing to lose so I took his advice. The difference was marked. The sore, bruised feeling and the ache in the joints was less. Something was making a big difference. Could it be the homeopathic medicine?

After this very personal experience I wanted to find out more and decided to pursue a course in homeopathy. There is a clear, concise career pathway to learning dental homeopathy in the UK to a recognised high standard. The Faculty of Homeopathy in London found the venue and I enrolled on a basic course in dental homeopathy at the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital, Great Ormond Street. This led to the Faculty’s LFHom qualification.

I now had the basic

understanding of homeopathy, treating my own patients who had simple problems using either conventional allopathic medicine or taking a homeopathic approach. Patients were more than happy to “try” this homeopathic medicine – much to my delight. Patients’ acceptance and willingness to use homeopathic remedies outstripped my personal expectations. I used it only on well-defined pathological conditions for example pericoronitis, ulceration, herpes, trauma where I was able to use a homeopathic prescription which is specific in these particular cases.

There are some dental problems which cannot be treated by allopathic means, such as teething and dental anxiety. The ability to treat such cases homeopathically can only be a positive step forward both for the profession and patient alike. Dentists must remember that patients are actively seeking out more complementary

treatments and that the media is rife with articles on all forms of complementary medicine – dental homeopathy being only one of many. In many dental cases homeopathy can be used alongside conventional allopathic medicines, as an adjunct to or instead of conventional treatment.

Homeopathy in the UK is growing. The medical profession has had homeopathy in the NHS since its inception in 1948. In private practice it is a bona fide treatment recognised by both BUPA and PPP. Dentists should not allow themselves to lag behind in promoting a growing complementary therapy. Dental homeopathy is a viable therapeutic tool and should be recognised as such.

Homeopathy in dental practice

Both the general public and the profession are becoming increasingly sceptical about some forms of conventional treatments and drugs. They are looking towards homeopathic treatment as an alternative or as an adjunct to conventional therapies. For example, with our awareness of the misuse or use of antibiotics should we not look at other forms of potential therapeutics? Many infections and conditions can be treated homeopathically when the correct medicine is selected.

When using homeopathy in the dental practice setting, many of the complex prescribing techniques are simplified by observing the pathology of the problem. For example, if the patient has problems after an operation, be it pain, swelling or bruising, then it is due to direct tissue trauma from the

extraction. If pain occurs after 72 hours it is likely to be the beginnings of an infected socket. These two cases would, of course, be treated differently. This is termed as treating with a “pathological prescription”. In both cases the symptoms are similar, but they would indicate different homeopathic remedies because the origins of the pain are different in each case.

Dental problems and some simple remedies

Let us look at such examples found in everyday practice, and give a brief outline on the prescription that I would use for each individual condition or pathology.

When post-operative complications are directly due to trauma, eg swelling and pain where medicines which were relevant to that specific problem would be used. Most post-operative complications can be alleviated by the routine use of Arnica. Taken immediately after surgery Arnica reduces pain, trauma, bleeding and swelling. Several clinical trials and observational studies have demonstrated the therapeutic effects of Arnica in the reduction of post-extraction complications.

Excessive post-extraction bleeding

In cases of post-traumatic haemorrhage I would use homeopathic Phosphorus if the bleeding is profuse and of a bright red colour. If the bleeding is slow and venous the remedy Lachesis is called for.

Puncture wounds

Some patients complain about pain after local

anaesthesia in the area of the needle puncture. In this case a homeopathic preparation called Ledum is useful.

Wisdom tooth pain (pericoronitis)

Pericoronitis around partially erupted third molars is a relatively common condition seen in practice and is often relieved by antibiotic prescription.

However, homeopathically, a medicine called Hepar sulphate promotes drainage and reduces swelling so reducing the size of the operculum. If there is a marked trismus – spasm in the jaw muscles which prevents the mouth opening properly – I would use another remedy called Cheiranthus. Once the acute phase is over the tooth can be treated accordingly.

Homeopathic dentist Peter Varley treats a patient



Photo: Chris Kelly

Infection in a tooth socket after extraction (acute oestitis)

Patients often present with varying symptoms, some have a throbbing, pounding pain, a "pain with every heartbeat", and the socket looks red and angry indicating homeopathic Belladonna. If the patient complains of a low grade gnawing pain and yet the socket looks reasonably healthy, I would consider Ruta. (Ruta is particularly good in patients who have damage to the ligament covering the bone, be it surgical or as a consequence of any accidental trauma.)

Again there is no real indication for antibiotics unless there is a very marked toxic state or swollen lymph glands.

Apthous ulcers

Care has to be taken when treating any type of ulcer in that a positive diagnosis that it is neither pre-malignant nor malignant is essential. When I am happy with the diagnosis, I consider which homeopathic remedies can be used. Ulceration can be complex to treat and the question why the patient is getting recurrent apthous ulcers needs to be considered.

The reason could be hormone imbalance, stress or dietary deficiency or an underlying pathology, for example diabetes. For simple relief of apthous ulceration I often use Feverfew. (It was noted that when the herbal form of Feverfew was used to treat migraine it often produced ulcers in the mouth). A topical application of Propolis painted on the ulcer gives the patient immediate symptom relief.

The choice of homeopathic remedy for apthous

ulceration will depend on specific symptoms and their appearance. Do the ulcers tingle? Are they sore? What colour is the base? For instance if the patient has a poorly kept mouth, increased salivation with a metallic taste, and a grey base to the ulcer then I would consider homeopathic Mercury. Alternatively if the base of the ulcer looked greeny-yellow a remedy called Kali bichromium would be appropriate. Observation and noting symptoms is paramount in remedy selection.

Cold sores around the lips (Herpes labialis)

If treatment is started at the onset the results are generally good, as with most viral conditions. The patient symptoms and prescription are very important in remedy selection. If the patient complains of a prickling, itchy sensation I'd choose Rhus tox. (Rhus tox is poison ivy; when the skin is rubbed against the plant the same prickly, itchy sensation is felt.) We use it homeopathically in the treatment of herpes in its initial stages. Rhus tox cream can also be applied. If the sun aggravates the herpes then a remedy called Natrum mur should be used.

The more complex dental problem

The importance of listening to and assessing the patient is paramount as patients may present with the same problem but may need a different remedy. This is where homeopathic dentists are looking for a totality of symptoms which paint a picture of the disease process. At this point we are moving towards a more holistic

approach to dental homeopathy.

At the basic level we are introduced to the more holistic approach in our treatment of dental anxiety. Patients with dental phobias have different mental and physical ways of expressing their fears. Some are quiet when they enter the surgery, shaking at the knees, some are argumentative, red faced, some are pale, quiet and fidgety – all presenting with different symptoms for the same problem.

It is with these patients that great satisfaction as a practitioner can be attained. To be able to help a patient with such deep-seated problems is very rewarding. This can be done with an accurate homeopathic history and the correct homeopathic medicine. Beyond this level, dentists need to have undergone further training in homeopathy in order to gain a deeper understanding of both homeopathic principles and the medicines used, and to enable them to treat more complex dental problems which have a limited success when treated conventionally, but will respond to homeopathic treatment in many instances.

Homeopathy when used in the dental setting is a safe and effective form of treatment which is often requested and sought by the general public. However it is worth questioning the individual practitioner's background and homeopathic qualifications to ensure that the care given is appropriate and to the highest possible standards, patients deserve and should expect no less.

For a list of homeopathic dentists ring 020 7566 7800



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