

Endometriosis

Anne Coates talks to Sarah Bagnall about how homeopathy helped relieve her painful periods and *Sara Eames* describes the treatment she gave her for the condition

Sarah had been suffering from endometriosis and had been warned that she might have trouble conceiving naturally. Ever since her periods had started at 15, Sarah had had problems. “The first one was agonising. We got the doctor out in the middle of the night because we thought I had appendicitis. I was vomiting and I had diarrhoea. The doctor also thought it was appendicitis and it was only when the bleeding began the next day that we realised it wasn’t.”

The menstrual difficulties continued into her 20s. “My periods were investigated a lot. Eventually I had a laparoscopy in 1994 and was diagnosed with endometriosis throughout the abdomen. They said it might cause me fertility problems, as it was quite severe.

“Over a course of about four to five years I tried quite a few different hormone treatments that induce menopause and stop your periods. This wasn’t very nice

– the side-effects were obviously quite nasty with night sweats and general hot flushes, excessive thirst, no periods, enlarged breasts and weight gain. My sleep was



interrupted – I’d probably drink about two litres of water during the night and then have to get up for the toilet all the time!

“I had no periods for about eight months. This was followed by six months of periods that were bearable – not pain free – and then they gradually got worse until they were very painful. Then I had pain in between, pain on

ovulation and I always had diarrhoea and vomiting – never very pleasant! My husband had only ever known me on some kind of hormone treatment – I was always a bit of a hormonal mess. Eventually, I said to the doctor that I didn’t want any more hormone treatment. The gynaecologist then talked about surgical intervention, which I didn’t particularly fancy and warned me that the quality of my eggs might be quite poor. He suggested that I should try for a child immediately.

“It was a bit of a shock to my husband Matthew and me because we didn’t really want to be pushed into starting a family when the gynaecologist told us we should. We wanted to do it in our own time. We actually made a decision then after a long hard talk about it that it wasn’t the right time for us.”

It was at about this time in 1998, that Sarah’s father, Ashley Reynolds, a BHA Trustee, suggested going to the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital. Sarah’s GP was supportive and after some initial difficulties she was given an NHS referral. Sarah, a nurse in the

oncology department of a London hospital was very sceptical of homeopathy at first.

“I didn’t really think it was going to do anything but I was also quite desperate to control my symptoms without further hormone treatment. So I thought I’d give it a go and see. I certainly didn’t think it could help relieve the pain. To start

with it actually got worse – they say it often can – and for the first two or three months I thought I don't want to carry on with this. But I did persevere and it did start to help.

“The first doctor at the RLHH suggested remedies to control the symptoms. At first they didn't do much for the pain and then I went back and we tried to get on top of the bleeding, making it less heavy, and that seemed to help much more. The bleeding was a lot lighter and the pain was better. It continued to improve gradually over a six to eight month period to a point when I now only needed to take paracetamol. Prior to that I'd been taking ponstan, codeine and paracetamol. It was the homeopathic remedies that enabled me to reduce the painkillers. And I also wasn't suffering with the diarrhoea or vomiting.”

Sarah was advised to start trying for a baby about a year later and this fell in with Matthew and Sarah's plans. “We had made a decision to start trying in 2000 because I wanted to be pregnant by the

time I was 30 so that if we did need extra assistance there was still plenty of time. I spoke to the homeopathic doctor about my problems with conception and she suggested monitoring ovulation which I did for about seven months. It was then that I realised I was only ovulating once every three or four months which was naturally not helping the situation. So the doctor then started me on something to stimulate ovulation and that seemed to do the trick. Within four months I was ovulating most months and then I fell pregnant about two months after that.”

Sarah had a normal pregnancy and although she had been told her baby was small for dates, Emily weighed in at 7lb 8oz on 6 August, 2001. During her pregnancy Sarah had taken homeopathic iron with great success. When she went into labour she did not use homeopathy but had gas and air and the use of a tens machine to control the pain.

So would she now consider homeopathy for Emily? “She's already had



Photos: Island Studios

At first sceptical about homeopathy, Sarah is now convinced of its efficacy and has already given baby Emily homeopathic granules for colic

homeopathic granules for colic when she was really little and I shall be trying the homeopathic teething granules. As I said I was sceptical about homeopathy but I'm so very glad that I tried it and I tell everyone about it. I know it doesn't help everybody but it certainly benefited me. I've just had my first period after having Emily – it was totally pain free with no diarrhoea or vomiting. I couldn't believe I was actually menstruating.”

“I am delighted both with my new grand-daughter and with the general improvement in Sarah's well-being. Before I was appointed as a trustee of the BHA, I had little personal experience of homeopathy. Now I have seen with my own eyes what an effective form of treatment it can be. I am very pleased that my involvement and recommendation has helped Sarah and her husband Matthew achieve such spectacular results.” Ashley Reynolds



Sara Eames outlines Sarah's treatment

Sarah first attended the homeopathic hospital in 1999. She had already been diagnosed as suffering from endometriosis and had tried a variety of painkillers and hormonal treatments. These had controlled some of the symptoms but had also produced unwanted side-effects. When surgery was suggested Sarah decided it was time to consider other ways of treating her problems.

As a senior nurse in charge of a large chemotherapy unit in London, Sarah was fairly new to the ideas of homeopathy but was willing to have a go. This is typical of many patients we see in the women's clinic at the RLHH. Most have been down the route of conventional treatments first and then start to look for other forms of help when the therapies fail or have unacceptably large side-effects.

When Sarah first attended the hospital she met Dr Anne Bowden who took a full homeopathic history and prescribed an overall constitutional remedy. On review this treatment had reduced the terrible pain that Sarah had suffered each month. I took over her care and recommended an increased strength of the remedy, *Lycopodium*, which she had taken. This continued to be effective and I also prescribed a local remedy, *Colocynthus*, which helped further with the pain and heavy bleeding.

Early last year, although not completely "cured", Sarah was suffering far less each month but was concerned as she was

beginning to think that the time was right to start a family but knew that she was not ovulating regularly and had already been warned that conception could well be difficult because of her endometriosis. Many women are aware from the physical changes in their body when they ovulate and it is also easy to use home test kits for ovulation, which can be bought over the counter.

I suggested to Sarah a combination of *Oophorinum* and *Folliculinum* to be taken at specific times of the menstrual cycle in order to stimulate the ovaries' function and encourage ovulation. Sarah began to ovulate each month and was delighted when she came back to the hospital to tell me that she was pregnant.

If a pregnancy goes well as Sarah's did, I usually suggest an appointment about a month before the baby is due in order to discuss plans for the birth. Sarah had mild anaemia in her late pregnancy and I prescribed her *Ferrum phos* daily to help with this. I also suggested *Bellis perennis* which I use routinely to help with healing after childbirth.

I have recently seen Sarah and her baby and they are both well. I was especially interested when Sarah told me that her haemoglobin level had risen noticeably after she had taken *Ferrum phos* regularly. What is so fascinating about Sarah's story is not only that her periods are less of a problem and that she was able to conceive naturally but also that we have an objective measure of some of the

changes which occurred. So often homeopathy is said to be "only a placebo" but here we have a patient who was not expecting miracles from homeopathy and in whom we were able to measure that ovulation had been regularly established after the ovarian remedies and that the haemoglobin level in the blood rose after taking *Ferrum phos*.

Endometriosis is a strange condition. It occurs when the cells, which normally only form the lining of the womb, spread to other parts of the body, particularly the pelvis. These cells are hormonally sensitive and change each month with the natural variations in hormones. It is these changes in the cells outside their usual position which give rise to the severe pain of endometriosis.

This condition is extremely common but it is not clear if the incidence is rising or if it is simply being diagnosed more often now. It can be helped by homeopathy in many different ways. As in Sarah's case the best approach is to try to prescribe the constitutional remedy – that is the remedy which suits her best as an overall person rather than being a specific cure for endometriosis. There are also local remedies which can be used for specific problems such as pain and heavy periods or to support a patient before and after the surgery which is so often necessary. Endometriosis is a common but complicated condition and it is important that anyone seeking homeopathic help is treated by a fully qualified homeopath.



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