

# Pathway to recovery

*Elaine Hamilton* charts one patient's journey to health

In September 2003 Mary, 51, was referred to my clinic at the Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). This is a diagnosis given to a series of symptoms, which can arise from a variety of underlying causes. The immune system is complex and in CFS it is not working efficiently. This affects many systems in the body resulting in common symptoms of fatigue, digestive problems, glandular swellings, muscle and joint pains, memory and concentration problems and mood swings, hormonal imbalance and decreased resistance to fighting infections. This condition responds very well to homeopathic treatment which addresses the whole person and the possible individual underlying reasons for developing CFS in a safe and gentle manner.

Just prior to her first consultation Mary had come off both the Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) taken for ten years since an early hysterectomy and the anti-depressants which had been prescribed for the previous eight years for her CFS. Stopping the HRT was a GP practice policy decision but it was Mary's choice to do without the anti-depressants. "I decided to try and prove that I could go it alone after all this time of using this stuff as a crutch."

Mary had requested a referral for homeopathic treatment as she was concerned about the amount of antibiotics she had been prescribed due to her susceptibility to infection. "It seemed every time I came in contact with nieces and nephews I came down with something or other. Initially I consulted a naturo-

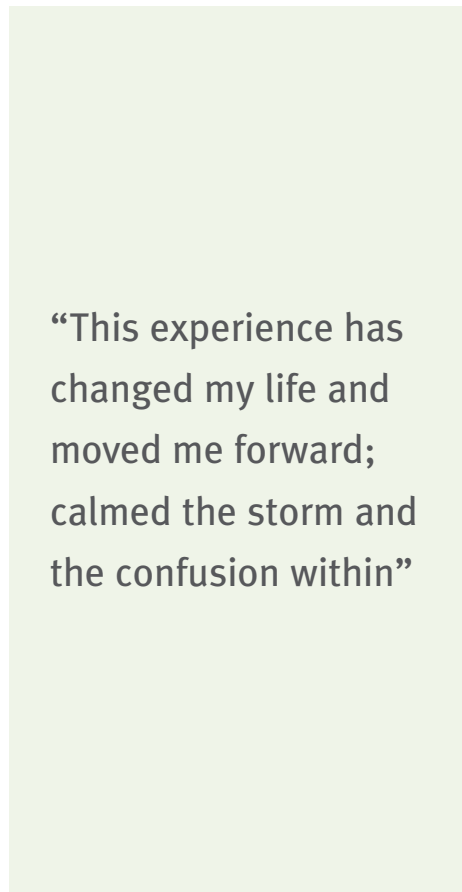


Photo courtesy of Mary

"This experience has changed my life and moved me forward; calmed the storm and the confusion within"

path privately who suggested echinacea and ginko biloba, which did not make much of a difference. My GP knew I was seeking alternative forms of treatment and suggested that I would be a prime candidate for homeopathy."

At her first appointment as I took her detailed history, Mary described herself as feeling "highly emotional,

irrational, anxious and depressed". Her early marriage at 17 ended in divorce when she was 24. She regarded this as a "relief" and has had no contact with her ex-husband since. However, she found it tough bringing up her young son on her own. When he became rebellious in his teens, they drifted apart and that caused her "great emotional pain". Her

hysterectomy at 38 was a relief from the constant pain and discomfort of endometriosis. But emotionally, she felt very sad that “there was no chance now of ever having another baby and I felt grieved to some extent over the finality of it. I also had difficulty in coping with some of the physical symptoms of vaginal dryness, facial hair, increased weight and reduced feeling of femininity.”

At the time Mary seemed only concerned with the physical menopausal symptoms especially the sweats. “I had no prior experience of using homeopathy. I assumed it was along the lines of the naturopath’s remedies and I expected a specific tincture or pill to work like magic on my sweats. It is only with hindsight that I realise that there was an immense emotional turmoil going on inside me, which was contributing to my feelings of agitation.

“I was desperate to appear ‘normal’ and cope on my own but I was in a constant personal crisis of not being able to deal with various elements of my life.”

Mary attributed her CFS as being a consequence of never being well since having glandular fever in 1994. However she had been unwell in her mid to late teens and as a child she said she was very tearful, scared of the dark and loud voices and any display of aggression made her stomach ache.

The homeopathic consultation was unfamiliar to Mary but it was one that gave her hope of recovery. “I was truly interested in someone looking at the ‘whole of me’ and at the initial consultation I found the physical surroundings very healing and tranquil and I felt safe. I also did not expect to feel understood so easily. I had a great feeling of ‘I’ve landed in the right place’ and although I cried throughout the interview, I never felt silly or pathetic. The sweats that I thought were important did not get too much attention as I realised that Elaine was more interested in my emotional responses to things.”

Mary told me that she had always been apologetic for responding emotionally to just about every situation in her life and considered it a failing.

### The treatment

I prescribed Pulsatilla for Mary as it suited the totality of the case plus constitutional indications. This means it suited Mary’s mental, emotional and physical characteristics and her presenting symptoms. An attractive, sensual woman, fashionably dressed and young looking for her age, Mary’s character

Photo courtesy: Bob Leckridge



was soft and gentle and during the initial consultation she was very tearful. The feeling of having been forsaken ran through her life experiences; she lacked confidence and was dependent on support from various sources.

Relating to Mary’s past and present history Pulsatilla is very useful in gynaecological and hormonal related symptoms, mild depression, and fatigue. I gave her Silicea – termed the chronic remedy of Pulsatilla – for her acne.

I chose the LM potency initially as Mary’s energy levels were low and I wanted to avoid the possible risk of aggravation occurring. As more mental/emotional symptoms were displayed in subsequent consultations the potency was increased to 200c and then 1M strength.

### Mary’s road to recovery

“The process from initial consultation until now has been as much about counselling as homeopathic treatment. It was a luxury to explore how I felt about things and this was something I had never previously been allowed in all my life. I realised I had exposed the very core of me throughout the sessions and felt a bit vulnerable but I can still remember how desperate I was at that time and if I had not thought I could trust Elaine with what seemed my secrets then I hate to think where I would be today.

“The counselling played an important part in my recovery. It was also a personal test after discussions to keep myself together until the next meeting. It was interesting going back to previous events in my life and exploring them further. The homeopathic remedy took the anxiety out of my stomach. Whether the positive effect was psychological or

due to the remedy was not really important to me. I found it reassuring that they were not harmful chemicals but totally safe.

“Negative aspects in the healing process were that the consultations had to operate to time, which was more difficult in the initial stages.

“Now I feel energised in comparison with what I felt like in the first couple of years of my post-viral state, particularly in the mornings when I used to suffer from headaches, muscle and joint stiffness and constipation. I can perform morning tasks with speed and previously would have put my head under the duvet and cried at the thought of having to do anything in a hurry. I am not affected now by night sweats but do suffer occasionally during the day. Mood-wise I am more stable generally and no longer tearful and have now cultivated an attitude of only worrying about something when it is a problem. I have worked out that it is not my job to fix everything nor am I responsible for anyone else’s behaviour. I work with whatever energy levels I have on a given day and, ever mindful of my GP’s advice in the early days to pace myself, I listen to my body and rest if I must.

“This experience has changed my life and moved me forward; calmed the storm and the confusion within. The homeopathic remedy has healed me from within and allowed me to cope outwardly. I am more aware and able to cope with the reality of everyday living. My relationship with my son has improved dramatically. I realise being over-sensitive can be a bit of a drawback but I have learned not to allow things to get on top of me. The less I am trying to fix things the happier I become. Previously I let other people dictate what I should do. The support and encouragement I have received helped me to believe in myself and I have been able to motivate myself into studying as a mature student with the aim of eventually attaining a university qualification and new career. I view health in a different way now and realise that various stresses in life can break down your immune system.”



Elaine Hamilton RGN BSc MFHom (Nurse) was the first nurse to run a homeopathic clinic at Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital. She was appointed Nursing Dean of the Faculty of Homeopathy in October 2003 and is a steering committee member on the RCN Complementary Therapies Nursing Forum.