

Dr Ronald Livingston

discusses the homeopath's
approach to **Pain**

Pain is perhaps the most widespread and arresting symptom of which patients complain. This makes it particularly suitable to illustrate the action of individual homeopathic medicines.

Defined in the *Oxford Dictionary* as “suffering or distress”, it could be described as awareness of disturbance of equilibrium, ranging from slight discomfort or unpleasantness, soreness, tenderness and aching to agony.

Much attention is given nowadays in pain clinics to the underlying source and explanation of pain and its function. The central nervous system contains nerve paths concerned predominantly either with muscular activity or sensation. It is the sensory part of the nervous system with which we are concerned. Physiologists sub-divide the two types of pain into protopathic or crude pain and epicritic or more subtle forms of pain which are conveyed through different pathways in the nervous system.

The ordinary approach to this is highly material, even when concerned with matters of the emotions and the mind. We are all accustomed to describe everything in terms of weights, measures and calibrations, to fragment and analyse events and problems into ever smaller parts, rather than consider

them as different parts of a whole within which all aspects combine, building up into a harmonised totality.

It is in the latter manner that the homeopathic physician considers pain and other subjective, emotional and psychological states of indisposition or illness.

Instinctive

Pain, we consider, is protective in character – one of the ways in which nature expresses the patient's needs. Without pain we would not survive very long. Our vulnerability to all sorts of influences adverse to our well-being, especially physical dangers like burns, cuts and other injuries would be vastly increased. Our instinctive reaction to anything unpleasant, whether physical or mental, is to withdraw from it.

In practice we describe pain – emotional or physical – under a variety of headings, each of which suggests to us the probable need for a particular homeopathic remedy best suited to that particular kind of pain within the overall range of the patient's temperament and character. For instance, an aching pain is almost certain to respond to Arnica. A sharp cutting pain like that inflicted by a clean razor edge responds to Staphisagria. The pain of a sting or stab with a small point of entry, as for instance from stepping on a rusty nail, responds to Ledum especially if the pain is relieved by cold.

Pain resulting from a blow to the soft tissues of the eye is enormously relieved by Bellis perennis. Grazes and superficial wounds and those injuries or conditions in which pain shoots along a limb respond to Hypericum.

Cantharis relieves the pain of a burn or scald, Apis or Urtica urens that of stings and allergic lumps and bumps which itch intolerably. Apis patients are made worse by heat.

The pain and aching in varicose veins respond very well to Hamamelis and Placenta. The pain of ulcers in the mouth and elsewhere in cases where the patient is aware of discomfort only when food or some other object is passing over the area concerned reacts well to Nitric acid.

All these guides to the selection of a particular medicine with its own special relationship to a corresponding type of sensitivity should always be considered within the overall mentality or character of the patient; although, in the acute type of pain encountered in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life, these particular indications nearly always lead to the correct medicine.

Perhaps the most generally effective medicine useful in emergencies of all sorts is provided by Dr Edward Bach's rescue remedy. It is a combination of five of the Bach remedies, all but one of which are prepared from spring water essence of certain wild flowers discovered by Dr Bach to have a special affinity to certain moods.

Pain related to more chronic conditions is much more likely to respond to the constitutional medicine of the patient than is the case of most of the acute states referred to earlier. Chronic cases involving pain must be handled by an experienced homeopathic physician who is competent to probe into the deeper realms of the patient's nature and condition. The medicines which fit the whole personality may be one of the enormous

materia medica available to us through the genius of Samuel Hahnemann and his disciples and successors in the remarkable art and science of homeopathy.

Rhus tox is useful for the type of aching pain often associated with muscular stiffness (or myalgia), which is worse for first movement, better for continued movement and much better for a hot bath. Ruta grav is not dissimilar in its action but is better suited to treatment of ligaments and tendons.

lights or restricted fields of vision, is likely to respond to Sepia, Natrum mur, Phosphorus or other medicine depending on the other characteristics linked to the medicine picture most similar to the patient's personality.

Characteristics

Generalised toothache will very often respond to Plantago, muscular spasm of every sort to Mag phos. Abdominal pain due to dyspeptic problems which doubles the patient up

cycle) often responds well to a number of different medicines, particularly Sulphur, Liliun tigrinum, Lachesis, Silica and Sepia, each with its own characteristic features associated with the overall nature of the medicine as it compares with the symptoms of the patient. For instance, the first two of these remedies feel the heat, while the last two feel the cold.

Liliun tigrinum rushes about in furious haste believing herself unable to finish all her chores; Lachesis is very loquacious; Silica timid, gloomy and withdrawn; Sepia morose, temperamentally unpredictable, sometimes joyous, sometimes miserable, feeling the cold and hating fat.

Opium

Causalgia, or the pain experienced at the site corresponding to that of an amputated limb, is often helped by Chamomilla. This remedy is, in general, best suited to the type of pain – found anywhere in the body – which combines intolerable pain with annoyance, as for instance in the teething of infants.

A discussion of pain should not omit reference to Opium which is used homeopathically for the absence of pain and reaction to stimuli where these would not be expected – a most peculiar and extraordinary aberration of the usual responses. Opium is also useful for the physical pain we understand as fear – as in nightmares when the terror returns again and again, night after night, often for years.

From the foregoing it will be seen that we can take virtually any symptom or any medicine as a launching pad and use it to illustrate the basic principles of homeopathic therapy.



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Joint pains and aches are sometimes referred to as arthralgia; nerve pains as neuralgia. The number of parts of the body which may experience pain is of course legion.

Headaches and toothaches are often encountered. Many subdivisions of these pains are described mainly according to their position or character. A migraine, the one-sided headache classically associated with nausea or sickness, blindness and/or various visual disturbances involving sparks, flashing

responds well to Mag phos or Colocynth and to Arsenicum album where the pain is of a burning character and relieved by heat.

Cardiac pain, characterised by a feeling of constriction and/or pressure like a tight band round the chest or a heavy weight pressing on it – often accompanied by pain transmitted down the left arm or upward to the neck – responds to Cactus grandiflorus and Latrodeatus mactans.

Dysmenorrhea (pain associated with the menstrual

**First published
in *Homeopathy
Today*,
Winter 1985/86**