

Homeopathic treatment of children

Many of us first experience the potential of homeopathy when treating ourselves or our families. We usually start with some simple remedies for minor problems such as bruises. However, as *Bob Leckridge* points out, the potential for homeopathy is much greater and it is a useful treatment for many of the more chronic and more serious problems that occur in childhood . . .



The problems I see frequently in the outpatients' department of the homeopathic hospital where I work include asthma, eczema, behavioural and sleep problems (including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Aspergers and Autism), epilepsy and bowel problems such as chronic constipation. Homeopathy can often provide answers to these problems where other approaches have failed. It is in the treatment of chronic children's diseases that I have experienced a greater potential for homeopathy. It can be used where there are no other even partial solutions available. It can also be used successfully in partnership with the necessary drugs such as inhalers, steroid creams or anti-convulsants and can lead to significant reductions in the need for these types of drugs.

In practising medicine with children, improvements in their symptoms can have consequences which go way beyond the relief of the suffering of the individual child. The impact of a child's daily sickness or disorder on a whole family and even on a whole class of schoolmates can be enormous. If a sleepless child begins to sleep through the night, the parents can be better rested and better able to deal with the day's problems. If a disturbed child settles and becomes calm then the learning experience of the whole class can be improved.

I once saw a three-year-old girl who was referred to me because of frequent infections. In fact she had already had two admissions to hospital for treatment of pneumonia. I always greet children with a smile but this little girl who looked very sulky only scowled back at me. I commented to mum, saying "She's not very happy, is she?"

Mum replied that she had actually never smiled. Never in her life. Not once. She also said that she was very clingy to mum but would never let dad hold her or cuddle her. Even as a little infant she would cry if dad held her. Dad was upset but couldn't do anything about it. Mum also told me that her daughter was

very lazy about walking. She would cry to be lifted up and carried after just a few steps. If left sitting in a room she would be in exactly the same position when mum returned, waiting to be picked up.

These observations and comments led me to consider the teaching of Jan Scholten of Holland whose approach to the mineral remedies has been invaluable in my practice. People who walk about permanently dissatisfied, are never happy, who walk around as if they have a bad smell under their nose, may need one of the ammonium salts. Children who have difficulties with their fathers, who are a bit slow or lazy and “just sit” may require one of the carbonate salts. Putting all this information together raises the idea of the remedy “ammonium carbonicum”. I gave this girl a 30c of ammonium carbonicum.

When she was brought back to see me two months later she came skipping into my room with a beautiful smile. Apparently she had been smiling since the day after the remedy and, what's more, she lets dad pick her up now and even goes to him for a cuddle. Happily, the presenting problem of recurrent infections was also resolved and she managed to get through the winter without any chest infections for the first time in her life.

Finding the best homeopathic medicine for any individual is a matter of seeing the clear distinguishing pattern in the individual. In adults this is often complex and difficult because they have learned to hide symptoms. In children, as in the case of the little girl who never smiled, the picture is often right in front of the doctor as the child demonstrates their pattern with vivid behaviour or speech.

Let me give you another example of this. At the Sick Children's Hospital in Glasgow I saw a little girl who was born with a brain defect. She had frequent full-blown fits, did not sleep through the night and her behaviour was extremely difficult. When her mother brought her into the consulting room she was already screaming and objecting

violently. In the first few minutes she thrashed around on the floor shrieking, kicking and trying to bite anyone who came near. As I watched, and as mum tried unsuccessfully to calm her down, the little girl actually bit a piece out of her own clothing. It was impossible at this stage to have any significant conversation with mum or to obtain a “homeopathic history”.

I turned to my repertory and looked up the rubrics “Shrieking”, “Kicking”, “Biting”, “Biting her clothes” and “Convulsions”. The only remedy to appear in all these rubrics was “Tarantula hispania”. I then asked mum what she normally did to try and settle her daughter when she was so upset and she said that sometimes she could hold her and the other thing which helped was music. This is in fact a strong feature of the remedy “Tarantula hispania”. I only managed to ask another few questions because of the little girl's distress but I had already seen all I needed to see. I gave her a dose of “Tarantula hispania” in a 30c potency and asked her mum to bring her back in a month.

The next visit was strikingly different. She came into the room happily and sat on a chair next to her mum, eating a packet of crisps throughout the whole consultation. Over the next few months not only did her behaviour settle, but she began sleeping right through the night with increasing frequency, her anti-convulsants were withdrawn by the paediatricians, and she eventually became fit-free.

There are more and more cases of hyperactive children these days. Homeopathy has an excellent role to play here. The spider remedies (like Tarantula hispania) are common in the restless hyperactive children. The other, “Belladonna”, is probably one of the most common families and includes remedies like Stramonium, hyoscyamus and Belladonna itself. Indeed, this latter group is more commonly indicated in those with more violent behaviour disturbance.

Acute conditions

Homeopathy is a safe and effective form of treatment for a wide range of childhood problems and illnesses which are difficult to treat with orthodox medicines.

Most parents would benefit from a knowledge of a small range of remedies which may be of use in common mild childhood ailments. Best known include the Colocynthis for infant colic. There is a simple test to predict whether or not Colocynthis will help. If the colic is relieved by firm pressure on the baby's tummy then it is more likely that Colocynthis will be effective. You can see this by noticing if the baby settles when held against the parent's chest, looking over the shoulder, or held facing the floor with the tummy supported by the parent's arm.

Chamomilla is the great remedy for teething and again it is more likely to be effective if you notice that child has one red cheek, is angry and fractious and settles when carried around.

Belladonna is great for the sudden fevers where the child gets a red face, dilated pupils, dry mouth and is agitated. It is particularly effective for the fevered child who is hallucinating.

Aconite, Spongia and then Hepar sulph is a well established sequence of treatment for croup. Aconite at the outset, especially if the croup comes on suddenly after exposure to dry cold winds. Spongia follows well if the croup progresses and there is redness and soreness of the throat. If the croupy cough becomes loose and moist sounding and the child is more irritable then Hepar sulph may settle the problem.

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