

Homeopathic remedies work best when all of the patient's symptoms are covered by one remedy. *Julie Geraghty* describes how one patient presented diverse symptoms which led to...



## ... a constitutional case of Carbo veg

**P**aul was 35 when he initially consulted me for recurrent chest infections. Every time he got a cold or sore throat, it would go straight to his chest. If he woke up with a sore throat, by that evening he would feel shivery, and then sweat during the night. He then knew he would have to spend the next two days in

bed. He described spasms of a deep rasping cough, worse in the late evening, worse when he was lying down. He would cough up phlegm in the mornings, and felt wheezy and congested. These episodes would occur every couple of months, lasting four to five days and leaving him feeling washed out. He had been given antibiotics on

several occasions, but with no benefit.

Generally he was feeling tired and unfit. He had always been a very active man, playing sport and sailing. Over the last six months he had been able to do very little exercise as he felt so lethargic. He was now even feeling breathless walking up the hill to his

home, which prompted him to seek help. He said there were two things health-wise that had really knocked him over the previous 15 years: glandular fever and then pneumonia. He had been extremely fit until age 20, when he developed glandular fever at university. For the next five years he had recurring bouts of fatigue, associated with swelling of the glands in his neck. "These attacks would floor me. I'd have to lie low for a few weeks." Gradually these episodes became less frequent, and he was OK for a couple of years, until he had a severe pneumonia six years ago.

The pneumonia had developed just at the time his son was born. He remembers a bad cold coming on two days before, with the cough worsening when his wife was admitted to hospital. "The adrenaline kept me going until I brought my wife and son home," he recalls, "then I collapsed."

The cough got progressively worse over the next week, culminating with a high fever and profuse cold sweats during the night. At this stage he was admitted to hospital, and a left lobar pneumonia was diagnosed. This means that one lobe of his left lung was infected by bacteria. He was given antibiotics via a drip for five days, and discharged after a week. Since then, the chest infections following colds have been a real problem.

His other chronic problem is indigestion. As it's such a longstanding problem, he just accepts it and didn't even mention it until I asked him. He describes this as constant, every day, but worse when he is lying down. He has heartburn from his solar

plexus, burping up acid and wind. He feels bloated particularly in his upper abdomen, even after a light meal. Foods like shortbread,

has had an endoscopy which just showed mild reflux from the stomach into the gullet.

He mentions a couple of other problems too. The

*Carbo veg is also known as "vegetable charcoal". It is prepared by igniting a pile of dry beech or birch wood which is then covered by a thick layer of soil. This slows the burning process down, and increases the intensity of the heat. The combustion process takes place with very little oxygen present, and the wood is converted into volatile compounds and the remaining charcoal, which consists mainly of carbon.*

*From this process, we can already see many of the themes of the remedy Carbo veg presented. In the "acute stage", there is a lack of oxygen when the wood is burning, and people who need Carbo veg have inadequate oxygenation of their lungs, as occurs in severe pneumonia or asthma. At this stage, patients feel the need for fresh air, even asking to be fanned. Their vitality is very low, they feel "burnt out". However, consider what the charcoal that is produced by this process represents: it stores a lot of potential energy and can produce heat for a long period when burned. This is more representative of the "chronic state" of Carbo veg, people who have a lot of vitality. They can keep going, working long hours, and enjoy socialising too. They appear to be strong and resilient, until they are struck by a virus or other infection that knocks them completely. They then quickly become very weak, cold, sluggish, everything slows down. They can alternate between these two states. If the remedy is administered, they can respond quickly and become less likely to suffer these debilitating slumps.*

*Carbo veg is often used as an acute remedy for indigestion, flatulence or venous congestion.*

remedy profile

developed itchy varicose eczema around his right ankle. He feels his eyesight has deteriorated more rapidly than it should have, going down two points in two years. His eyes feel tired and dry, and he has recurrent twitching of his left lower eyelid especially when he is exhausted.

Asked about his general symptoms, he tells me that he loves fresh air, and always sleeps with the windows open. He hates to be stuffy. He is generally more prone to chest infections in the winter months, and feels more energetic in warm, dry weather. He socialises a lot and drinks a fair amount of alcohol, but is not prone to hangovers. He works long hours as an engineer, and eats erratically. His cholesterol is raised and he is on a drug to lower this.

The whole story is very typical of Carbo veg. People who need this remedy are usually very vital, until they have an acute illness which knocks their whole system out of balance. They then become sluggish and exhausted, and seem unable to recover fully. The whole system seems to slow down, well illustrated by the tendency to develop varicose veins. They become bloated, particularly in the upper abdomen, constipated, and can develop piles. They need fresh air, often wanting to be fanned, to try to counteract this state of stasis and stagnation. Sometimes people who need Carbo veg are even near to collapse, with a weak pulse, shallow breathing and cold sweat if they have become very debilitated by a sudden illness. However, they can recover quickly, even from such a severe state of

weakness, if the remedy is administered.

I gave Paul Carbo veg in ascending potencies, a single dose each of 30c, 200c and 1M over two days. I also gave him a low potency, 12c, to use as required for the indigestion, instead of using the frequent antacid tablets he had been chewing.

Two months later, I saw him again. He reported that he had started to feel better within 24 hours of starting the Carbo veg. His energy levels had increased significantly, despite working long hours. He was able to walk briskly up the hill to his home without feeling breathless, which he found very reassuring. His indigestion had not been bothering him much, and he had only taken the odd antacid tablet. He described his varicose veins as feeling much more comfortable, not so itchy or achy. The surrounding eczema had virtually disappeared. He had been really surprised that the veins had improved, as he had not believed that the same remedy could help all his symptoms, and he had been told by his doctor that there was absolutely nothing that could be done for varicose veins apart from surgery. I gave him a couple of spare sets of the combined potencies of Carbo veg to keep in reserve to use when he felt he needed them.

I did not see him again for eight months. At that appointment, he said he had remained overall much better, he had not had any further chest infections and he had never experienced the severe fatigue again. However, he felt he needed another booster dose of the remedy. He had finished the previous

doses, repeating them very three months or so. He had been doing a lot of sailing and had some muscular pains in the left side of his chest. He felt he'd been overdoing things, working and playing too hard. The indigestion wasn't so good again either.

Having checked his blood pressure and listened to his heart and lungs, I reassured him that I thought another dose of Carbo veg would do him good. I have not heard from him again in the six months since that consultation. His wife, who is also a patient of mine, tells me that he is doing very well.

I think Paul's case illustrates well how multiple different symptoms can all be helped by the same remedy. All his various complaints form part of the same picture, even though they go back many years and involve several different body systems. However all are well recognised for Carbo veg.



**Dr Julie Geraghty ChB DCH MFHom** trained as a GP but now practises homeopathy full time, one day per week at the Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital outpatients department and two days per week each in private practice in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

