



Bam

An exciting new remedy for rheumatic disorders and men

In 1997 Berndt Schuster conducted a proving of a species of bamboo, *Bambusa arundinacea*, which is emerging as an important homeopathic remedy for a wide variety of clinical conditions. This is a large bamboo whose shoots grow rapidly to eight metres. It is a tender plant and needs heat to survive – it will die if the temperature falls to 50°C. It lives many years (often over a century), flowers only once but for many years and after flowering it dies. The remedy is made from a tincture of bamboo shoots and contains phyto-oestrogens and is high in silica. Bamboo has been used medicinally since ancient times in cancer, leprosy, tuberculosis, menstrual problems and disorders of the spine.

Bamboo has great significance in Chinese medicine and culture – symbol of laughter, old age, elasticity and endurance – the stems bend in the wind but never break, the leaves move in the wind but never fall – bend and yield but never be uprooted, emerge from the storm unbroken. These themes are brought to life in the symptoms of the proving.

The proving

A view of the complex heart of this fascinating remedy is seen in the proving, rich in “sensations as if”:

- deserted, forsaken, alone in the world;
- she is poor and helpless in the world;
- everything is insecure, meaningless, wrong and everything will fail;
- held captive by a life situation;
- desires change and support.

The sensation as if deserted, forsaken and alone in the world is similar to the sensation at the heart of the *Pulsatilla* state. The sensation that body parts are weak and cannot support the body is reminiscent of the *Silica* state. The sensation of insecurity is similar to *Arsen-*

icum album. Bamboo seems to be related to several well-known polycryst remedies.

The theme of support appears to be central to the Bamboo remedy state. The patient desires support from others. They feel responsible for everything and no one helps them. They desire change and freedom but feel helpless and stuck in their life situation and become irritable, jealous, restless and sad. After prolonged anxiety and suffering they eventually become overwhelmed by despair.

The mind symptoms of Bamboo give other insights into the remedy state and highlight similarities to other more well-known remedies. There are ailments from wounded honour and suppressed anger (like *Staphisagria*), and ailments from anticipation and foreboding. There is great irritability towards husband and children worse before menses and worse from reproaches (like *Sepia*). There is anxiety of conscience and anxiety about the future which is felt within the chest. The fears are of: her condition being observed by others (like *Calcarea carbonica*), of poverty (again like *Sepia*), of impending disease, of cancer, of misfortune and a fear of losing self-control.

The key physical “sensation as if” is of stiffness and Bamboo is emerging as a major new remedy for rheumatic disorders where stiffness is the main complaint of the patient. The stiffness is painful, profound and prolonged – like wood or a heavy weight – felt in the bones, in the joints and in the muscles. This painful wooden stiffness is very much worse after a night in bed and eased by applied heat – a hot shower or bath, a heat pad. The stiffness is much worse from becoming cold, cold weather, before and during menstrual periods and during a headache. In Bamboo the stiffness mainly affects the spine and joints near the axis of the body

– shoulders and hips. Bamboo is emerging as a major remedy in ankylosing spondylitis (Case 1) – an auto-immune destructive inflammatory condition of the spine with excessive stiffening and calcification of the spine (the common name of the disease is bamboo spine!). With painful neck stiffness the patient often wants to support the neck by resting the chin on their hands.

This kind of aggravation from rest and cold and helped by heat is similar to *Rhus tox*. The *Rhus tox* patient is usually physically restless – they want to move and are better for it even though the first movements hurt – and they are much worse from cold, wet weather, while the patient in the Bamboo state is not restless and is worse from changes in weather.

This careful differentiation between similar patterns of symptoms is important to differentiate between similar medicines in the homeopathic treatment of significant rheumatic disorders.

Other physical “sensations as if” are: of looseness and weakness and cannot support the body (the opposite of stiffness) and of pulsation. The Bamboo patient is usually very chilly – a cold felt deep in the bones – and made less painful with heat. They desire open air and feel better in the open air but are worse from a draft of air on a sore stiff part. There is a desire for: chocolate, cheese, spices, sweets, sour, alcohol and warm drinks before menses.

Bamboo is also emerging as an important remedy for disorders of the menstrual periods including endometriosis (Case 2). The menses can be: painful, heavy, bright red and gushing, late and clotted. There can be pain in the ovaries before the periods and pain in the womb before.

Bamboo has similarities to several well-known remedies: *Silica*, *Pulsatilla*,

boo



strual problems is profiled by *Raymond Sevar*

Rhus tox, Sepia, Carcinosis, Calcarea carbonica, Belladonna, Phosphorus and Tuberculinum.

Case 1 – ankylosing spondylitis

I began treating Jane, a 26 year-old who had suffered with ankylosing spondylitis for ten years, in 1999. She walked in a very stiff, waddling way and was almost weeping from the severe pain she was in despite taking eight co-codamol and three ibuprofen daily. Her description of the nature of her suffering illustrates the Bamboo state very clearly.

“The worst thing is the tremendous stiffness in my back – it’s so stiff all the time... I try to put a brave face on it... my back gets hot... the pain is worse in the morning and last thing at night... my left hip is very painful. I get very angry with myself because I can’t do things. I am worse in winter but so much better in a hot jacuzzi from the heat and the bubbling massage, much better in a hot bath and better with a hot water bottle or in a hot room or close to a hot fire. I am much more stiff when it is cold and wet and raining and a bit worse when it snows.

“The stiffness and pain wake me between 3 and 4am and I have to get up and put on the heated pad and that helps. I turn a lot in bed but I don’t feel restless... sitting is OK, I don’t get stiff but I am so very stiff in the morning and have to have a hot bath or shower to loosen up enough to go to work... even then the stiffness lasts for one and a half hours after waking in the morning.”

Even after such a clear description I was distracted away from Bamboo by what she said next.

“I get very irritable and snappy when I am stiff and sore... I just snap at my husband if he touches me... I say something to really hurt him so that he will



Photo: istockphoto.com/Emil Marjisek and above: istockphoto.com/Hans Slegers

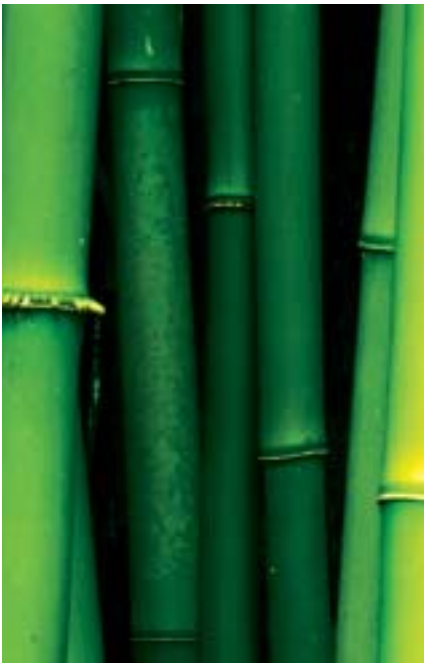


Photo: istockphoto.com/Gerald Weingart

There are many different species of bamboo that vary in shape, structure and properties

stop... no, I have no interest in sex.” She begins to weep.

“I feel so sorry after I snap at him and I feel guilty for not wanting him to touch me... yes, I can apologise afterwards.”

This is very similar to the Sepia state – both Sepia and Bamboo females are irritable with their husbands, the difference seems to be that a patient in Bamboo state can apologise more easily afterwards. She also had a great desire for exercise and became a fitness freak in her late teens to lose her puppy fat and got a great buzz from exercise, like Sepia.

I began her treatment with Sepia in ascending LM potencies which for six months produced a good improvement in her mood and energy, irritability and loss of libido but only a little improvement in her stiffness and pain. Then she had a bad flare up of her ankylosing spondylitis and terrible pain in her left hip. The awful stiffness came back worse than ever and the pain in her hip was almost unbearable despite much stronger painkillers and anti-inflammatories. I then prescribed Bamboo – 30c drops for three days and on bad days and 6c pills twice a day for OK days. The improvement was so dramatic I will let her describe it in her own words.

“The relief from the drops was very fast, I felt much better two hours after the drops and the pain in my hip began to be relieved after two hours. I feel so much better. I can cope much better. I have more energy.

“I am much less stiff... I am still a bit stiff in the morning but only till after my shower, then it is fine... I still have the same range of movement in my lumbar spine, but my neck moves much easier and further than it used to. I can turn it further to the sides and put my head back further... I still get the odd twinge of pain in my hips and lower back, but much less than before – sometimes I don’t even realise that I’ve got a sore back at all.

“I have not taken any co-codamol for six weeks and have no stomach problems... I can whizz fast around the house and make a meal for six friends, instead of panicking and crying and just not being able to do anything... I have stopped worrying about the ankylosing spondylitis... I have just stopped the pill, and am not afraid to become pregnant now, if I do it is fine.”

She continued well for a year – “the quality of my life was transformed” – her stiffness resolved and she developed more movement of her whole spine. Then she had a relapse affecting only her left hip, not her spine. The MRI scan showed the damage already done by her disease – severe destructive joint damage – and she required a total hip replacement operation (there is a limit to what the body can heal).

Case 2 – endometriosis and depression

I began treating Tina, a 29 year-old who’d had endometriosis for six years, in 2003. Her description of the nature of her suffering also illustrates the Bamboo state very clearly.

“The pain in my pelvis is terrible and it feels as if the whole of my inside is falling out. I have no control over it – I can’t stop the pain. I get massive contractions and have to lie down. The cramps are excruciating, they take my breath away and I must sit or lie down. The bleeding is very heavy and thick and lasts seven or eight days. I have lots of flooding and it’s frightening. I feel as if my whole inside is leaving me.

“The cramps begin before my period and carry on through the bleeding. When I was 13 my periods began and they were always heavy and very painful.

I was prescribed some tablets which gave me a terrible rash on my face and then later I was given the contraceptive pill to try and control my periods. I stopped the pill six years ago. When I was on the pill I was very irritable with everyone before my periods. I still am a little but much less than before. I have no patience and I snap at people especially my mother and my husband but even at my grandmother and she is only being kind.”

Like the first patient, Tina also snaps irritably at those she loves in a similar way to Sepia. Next she describes a key symptom of Bamboo arising from the “sensation as if” of looseness and cannot support the body, which in Tina manifests as a desire for support in her life.

“I have had such a lot of worry in the last few years and I have had no support. My husband has been ill and not worked for three years – he has never given any support to me even though he expects my support. I have been trying to look after my grandmother who is very old. I was brought up by my grandmother – from age of two to 12 – to be strong, to keep going whatever happens and I have always given support to others. She always looked after me and supported me and never complained.” At this point she is weeping openly and is very distressed.

“There is no support for me... I feel so uncared for. My grandmother needs help and support from me because no one else will support her.”

Her father is obsessive/compulsive and has ankylosing spondylitis; her mother is a “control freak”. Her husband is repeatedly unfaithful and has given her chlamydia infection and genital warts. Tina is overwhelmed by cares and has reached a state of desperation. She feels deserted, forsaken and her honour has been wounded but most of all she desires support.

I treated her with Bamboo 30c drops as required for a year and then 200c. All her pelvic pain and excessive bleeding resolved. She left her husband, moved to a different town and enjoys dancing salsa and tango.



Raymond Sevar BSc MBChB DCH MRCP FFHom is Dean of the Faculty of Homeopathy and a homeopathic physician in private practice in Carlisle, Cumbria. He also teaches homeopathy to doctors and other health professionals in the UK and abroad.