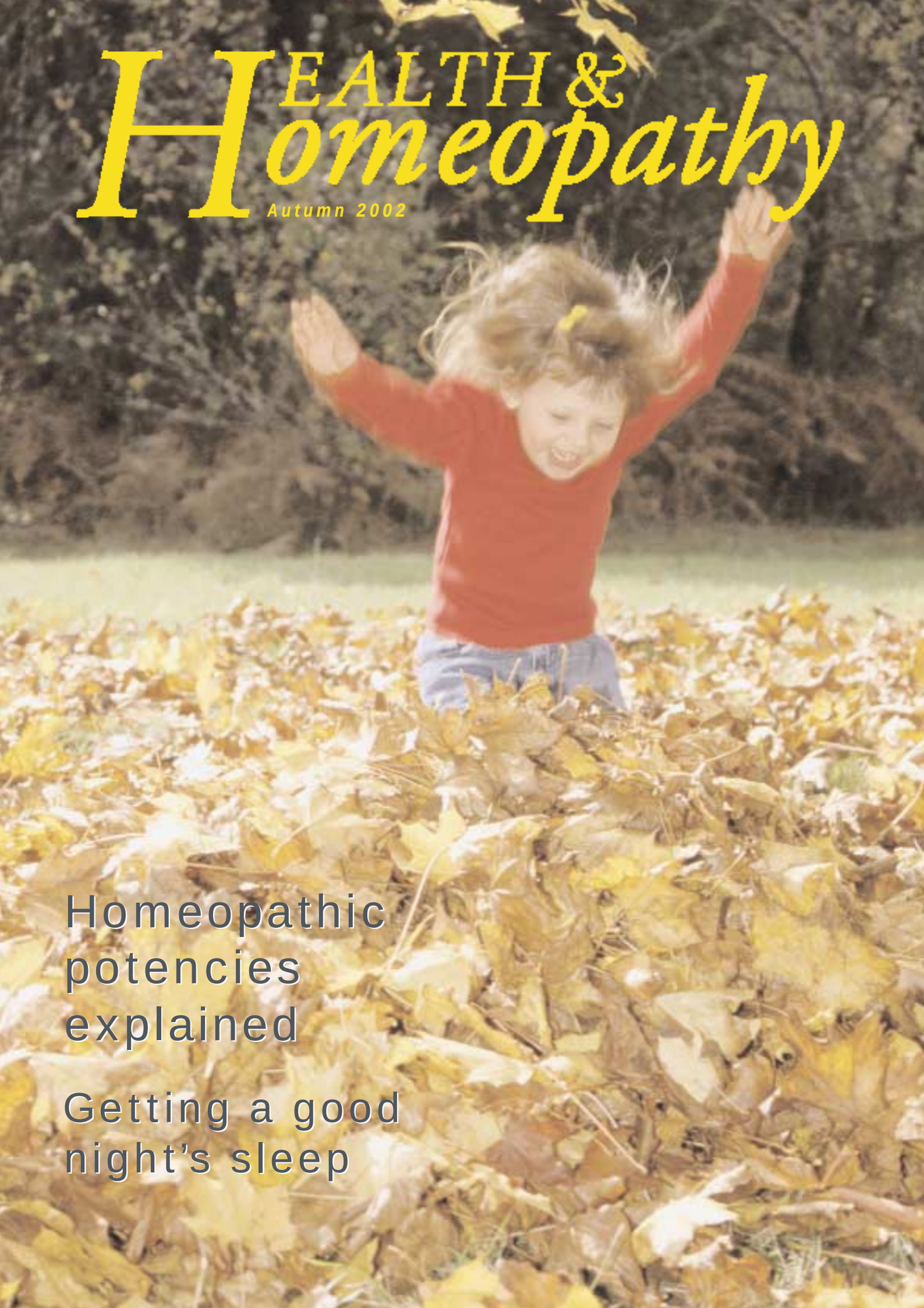
Health & Homeopathy

Autumn 2002



Homeopathic potencies explained

Getting a good night's sleep

The menopause

Hot flushes, irritability, tearfulness – all problems that can be helped homeopathically, writes *Anne Clover*

Many patients speak enthusiastically of the help they have received from homeopathic treatment for menopausal symptoms as various as hot flushes, profuse sweating, mood swings, irritability and sleep disturbance. These reports are now supported by careful follow-up studies from NHS outpatient units in the UK of the benefits homeopathic treatment has afforded for such problems. A study conducted at the Tunbridge Wells Homeopathic Hospital in 1997 showed that around 300 consultations that year were for patients whose main complaints were focused on the menopause. The same study indicated that just over 70 per cent of the patients seeking this help reported an improvement.

A homeopathic pharmacy can offer a wide range of medicines that could be appropriate for patients with menopausal reactions. This is because of the emphasis placed in homeopathic practice on selecting a medicine suited to the overall profile of the individual patient. This means that we do not have a homeopathic HRT equivalent, or a single medicine that might apply for a lot of women with menopausal symptoms. Instead a prescription is chosen that relates to the individual profile of the patient seeking help.

A consultation for homeopathic treatment of menopausal symptoms may refer first to details of relatively focal symptoms such as excess sweating, flushes or sleep disturbance. The next stage of the review may then involve discussion of more generalised reactions such as mood changes, thought patterns and energy levels. For further clarification of the patient's profile, questions are often asked about any particular circumstances that trigger the relatively focal or more generalised symptoms, and about her general health. All such data contribute to the review of her personal profile.

We do not have a homeopathic HRT – a prescription is chosen that relates to the individual profile of the patient

For instance, a patient with hot flushes may be asked if these occur mainly at a specific time of day or night; are worse in company or solitude; or seem to be made worse by particular food or drink. Similarly for more generalised effects such as mood swings, information about factors that seem to make them better or worse can be very helpful for homeopathic prescribing. Such questions help clarify what we might term the individual patient's reaction pattern. They are part of the individual's profile and are an important aid for the selection of a homeopathic prescription.

To illustrate how such ideals can be applied in practice here are four summaries of reports from patients with the sort of detail that would be very useful for homeopathic prescribing. I admit there is a degree of "poetic licence" here as few patients would give their reports with as much detail, but they are offered to indicate the range of information needed for homeopathic prescribing. After each of them I summarise some of the further information that can assist the selection of a homeopathic medicine.

A 54 year-old woman

"Sorry to bother you, but these hot sweats are such a nuisance and I am fed up with them. I hate being a nuisance and having to take an appointment but I am near

the end of my tether. These sweats have been bothering me for about eight years, they started just before my periods stopped and seem to have got steadily worse. They are especially bad in the evening and night, it is as if they well up from my feet. The sweat rolls off me. I feel so embarrassed. I just want to hide. Between these blasts of heat and sweat I get cold and shivery so I am opening and closing the window like a yo-yo. The family try to help or humour me but that makes it worse. I really wish they would leave me alone. They used to pacify me with a nice plate of cheese and pickle but even that annoys me now. I can still enjoy a good evening out dancing - that has always been my escape. But at other times I am just fed up and irritable - hardly surprising since I sleep badly. I often wake at 2 or 3am and cannot sleep again because I cannot stop thinking about everything. The family seem to avoid me in the mornings. That suits me, I am tired and worn out."

Additional information
- Despite tiredness, feels better for exercise, such as a session in the gym or a good long run. Often prone to restless fidgeting.
- Other mood changes include, impatience; lack of enjoyment of most things, "even the grandchildren are a drag".
- Concerning sexual activity, definitely not enjoyed, can be averse to it.
- Strong food or drink likes or dislikes – averse to fats, loves vinegar and enjoys a cold glass of really dry wine.

Prescription: consider Sepia 30c

A 46 year-old woman

"Thank you for seeing me. I especially like talking to a woman about these problems, I am a bit scared of the men. My problem now is hot flushes. I so easily get hot and flustered. My periods are a bit irregular, and I still get PMT but I phone my mum and she listens and helps me. It is the hot surges that bother me. Then I get shivery after it. It makes me feel really weepy. My female friends try and help, I like that. But sometimes I upset them because I get a bit moody or sulky. I don't want to be like this, it really upsets me. I can't seem to make my mind up about anything. I have never been confident, but now even the bit of confidence I had is gone. My friends say I cry easily, one of them called me a leaky tap. I felt really hurt. My moods seem to change so quickly. I try and hide it because I want my friends to stay with me, but I cannot help crying when I am really fed up. That makes some of them leave me and I really don't want to be alone. I get frightened, especially in the dark evenings."

Additional information
- Usually a conscientious, timid, yielding person but if pushed can be very angry.
- Enjoys a stroll in a light breeze. Gentle exercise helps, not too vigorous.
- Highly sensitive, easily hurt and inclined to show her feelings.
- Concerning food and drink preferences, hates fats, loves sweet things and is well known for her lack of thirst. Has a particular intolerance of pork.

Prescription: consider Pulsatilla 30c



Some effects of the menopause – like tiredness and irritability – can mar the joys of becoming a grandmother

A 58 year-old woman

"Thank you for seeing me today. I apologise for bothering you with something so trivial but these menopausal effects are a nuisance. I tried to keep it to myself, but I broke down in the Well Woman clinic last week when I was having the routine checks and the sister, who knows I am not supposed to have HRT, suggested homeopathy might help. So here I am. Sorry, I really should be able to contain my feelings. The flushes are a bit of a problem, but I am more bothered by the vaginal dryness and irritability. It has made it even more difficult for me to oblige my husband.

"Sorry, I don't find it easy

to talk about this. It all got much worse when Mother died a year ago. I have tried to keep going, but just do not enjoy life as I used to. The family said I coped well when Mum died, but I know I hid my feelings. It was, and still is, easier to cry alone. I cope okay at home but it is getting more difficult. I know I am snappy, then I regret it and feel worse. Sometimes I feel so anxious, I have no idea why, it just comes over me. One definite problem is noise, I really can't stand it, so the grandchildren leave me feeling quite exhausted. I am sorry to have to admit all of this, it really is not me to talk about it, but it has all got too much for me."

Additional information
- A particularly low patch occurs about mid-morning, needs elevenses.
- Does not want sympathy and is prone to suppress emotions but if pushed can show anger.
- Reacts strongly to sea air, usually feels better for it, occasionally worse.
- Concerning food and drink preferences, again, a strong reaction to salt, usually craves it but occasionally averse. Hates fat or slippery food, dislikes and feels worse for coffee, and usually shows a poor tolerance of alcohol

Prescription: consider Natrum mur 30c

A 54 year-old woman

"I saw your partner last week. He said he had tried everything he could think of for my hot flushes and nothing has worked, so he suggested I try homeopathy. So here I am. He looked a bit tired, I don't think he had enough patience to listen to me anymore. But then I suppose I can be a chatterbox. My family have always told me so. Anyway, about these flushes. They are terrible. They are especially a problem whenever I wake up. Even if I have a catnap, which is rare, I feel awful when I wake up. I have slept badly at night for ages, but this has been much worse since these flushes got going in the last five years. So I feel exhausted and sleepy in the afternoon, but if I nod off I feel even worse.

"Excuse me while I loosen this blouse collar. I always choose loose ones, but this is not quite loose enough for me. I hate tight things anywhere, especially near my neck. I really envy people who can wear nice necklaces or scarves. Anyway, these flushes, they seem to surge up from my feet and leave my head feeling as if it will burst. And they always seem worse on the left side of my head. I have no idea why. Sometimes I feel a bit better if I have a really good sweat. It is as if I get something out of my system. But it does not last and these flushes soon come back again. I can't even enjoy a nice sunny day, the sun soon makes me feel much worse. It really is not surprising that I easily get down in the dumps about it all and feel quite envious of friends who sail through the menopause without these problems."

Additional information
- Tends to be talkative, but ambivalent attitude to company.
- Can be easily offended, critical or suspicious.
- Generally feels better in the open air.
- In earlier years, PMT cleared as soon as her period started.
- A marked tendency to laterality in that any symptoms she experiences are likely to be worse on the left side of her body.
- After sleep, prone to wake feeling unrefreshed and generally worse for it.
- Food and drink preferences – particularly enjoys oysters. Enjoys alcohol but is prone to feel worse after taking it. Likes sharp, acidic drinks.

Prescription: consider Lachesis 30c.

Dose

Patients should take a single tablet of the appropriate prescription three times in the first day then watch for a response. If symptoms improve, no repeat is needed while that improvement lasts. If similar symptoms recur later, the dose could be repeated. If there is no benefit, it is wiser to seek further advice from a homeopathic practitioner.

Many menopausal women find they feel better for some exercise like walking, swimming or cycling



Anne Clover MB BS LRCP DRCOG DPM FFHom was a consultant at the homeopathic hospitals in London and Tunbridge Wells until her retirement from these posts in 1998 and 2001. She is now living in Cornwall and participates in homeopathic teaching based in Bristol.

Perchance to dream…

Richard Robinson discusses the homeopathic treatment of sleeping problems

A couple of months ago I saw a 29 year-old woman who had been having sleeping problems for 12 months as a result of a lot of stresses in her life, including business and financial worries which had eventually involved a court case with the Inland Revenue. She had become depressed and wanted to sleep for hours on end; she was not sleeping at night and then felt very tired in the daytime and could happily go back to bed for several hours.

She went to her GP who prescribed her the sleeping tablet, Zimovane, and when I saw her she had been on them for six months. They had helped her but when she tried to come off them her sleeping was terrible again; she would go to bed at 11pm and would get to sleep quite easily but would wake up at 3.30am and lie awake for two hours before she could get back to sleep. She didn't feel too bad when she woke up but by one o'clock in the afternoon, she said that she has absolutely had it and could quite happily go to sleep. She felt like this for the rest of the day and when she got home from work in the evening, if she sat down on the sofa she could quite easily go to sleep. She even felt like this at weekends.

Her confident, extrovert, high energy but impulsive nature, with liking a lot of stimulation and a lot going on around her was very suggestive of Medorrhinum and I prescribed three doses of this in high potency. When I saw her again three weeks later, she announced that she had "been great on those tablets". Apparently her sleeping had returned to normal, and has been normal ever since.



Reading in bed for a while before trying to get to sleep helps take the mind off the stresses of the day

Having problems sleeping, whether it is difficulty in getting off to sleep, waking up through the night, or early in the morning, is an extremely common complaint these days. If we go to our GP we will almost certainly be prescribed some type of minor tranquilliser, which often can be helpful, but if used for anything more than a very short period of time can, as in this woman's case, create dependence, with a resulting rebound effect when the patient tries to stop the tablets, with their sleeping getting a lot worse; they have to be weaned off the tablets over a prolonged period of time.

Lifestyle changes

Simple measures to help

insomnia that patients often find helpful include not drinking tea or coffee in the evenings or stopping tea and coffee completely and changing over to one of the coffee substitutes made from cereals available from health food shops. Certain herbal teas such as lemon balm have a relaxing effect and can be helpful.

Going to bed on a full stomach is not conducive to a good night's rest and it is always best to have the evening meal at least three hours before going to bed. Eating chocolate after the evening meal can slow digestion by as much as twelve hours, but going for a walk after the meal instead helps digestion, and makes getting off to sleep easily more likely.

Some people find that reading in bed for a while before trying to get to sleep helps take the mind off the stresses of the day and helps them unwind and feel more relaxed, and if a lot of mental stress through the day has led to tension in the neck and shoulders, massaging the aching area can help.

Constitutional remedies

If these simple measures do not help, then, as always, the constitutional remedy tends to be the most effective approach. I saw a three year-old girl a while back who had had sleeping problems since birth, and her parents were at their wits' end – she would go to bed at 8.00pm and go to sleep pretty quickly, but then would wake up at 3.00am and be hysterical, crying for her mother and shouting herself hoarse – she would be wide awake and would get up and play, talk, and go into her parents' bed where she would moan and cry, fidget and kick. This would go on for about three hours, until she eventually went back off to sleep. She would then wake up and be ready to get up at 7.30am. Not surprisingly, she would often be tired and irritable during the day, and her parents were absolutely exhausted! Her mother was a GP and had tried every possible form of treatment both behavioural and medicinal, but nothing really helped.

After taking her homeopathic history, I prescribed Pulsatilla 200c, three doses to be taken in 24 hours, and when I saw her again after two weeks she apparently has been much happier, calmer and content – she had slept well the next night after the remedy and was now sleeping through the night and waking up refreshed. Her parents said that this was the best two-week period she had had for eight months. A few weeks and another dose of the remedy later, her parents felt that both her sleeping and her general well-being were now 100 per cent.

Another patient, a 36 year-old secretary, had suffered sleeplessness since she had changed jobs one year previously. She had been working for a small family business, but was now working at the head office of a major company in a fast and furious "I want it now" atmosphere. She described the changes in working environment as "like being hit by a fast-moving train".

As a result of the stress she was having difficulty sleeping. She would go to bed at 10.30pm, but usually wouldn't get to sleep until 2.00am, and then would sometimes wake up in the night as well, and then be fully awake at 6.00am.

I took a full homeopathic history as a result of which I gave her Ignatia 1M. When I saw her again, after three months she said that she was much, much better. After the Ignatia she had felt very emotional for a few days as is often the case as a constitutional remedy begins to get to work, and then her sleeping had been getting steadily better – she was able to get off to sleep much easier, if she did wake up in the night she would rapidly turn over and go back to sleep, and she would wake up in the morning feeling refreshed.

She was still feeling very tense and finding it difficult to relax as it was very stressful at work because her boss was about to leave – Dys co (one of the bowel nosodes) got her feeling totally back to normal, and the best she had felt since she had changed jobs one year previously.

Local remedies

These patients obviously had very severe insomnia, but often in milder cases a more locally acting remedy can be sufficient. I once had a patient from Brazil who told me that when she was growing up, her family would use local, traditional herbal remedies for many different conditions, and that the one they always used for sleeplessness was the passion-flower. As she was suffering from mild insomnia at the time, I prescribed her the passion-flower in potency – Passiflora incarta 30c, one to be taken one hour before going to bed, and to be repeated half-hourly if necessary if she was having trouble getting off to be sleep. Her insomnia cleared up completely.

While one doesn't have to come from Brazil to benefit from Passiflora incarta, most patients appear to do very well on the less exotic, but just as effective Valeriana 30c in the same dosage regime.

Richard Robinson MB BCh BaO DRCOG MFHom has been practising homeopathy for 12 years. He works at the Nature Cure Clinic in Central London, at Boots in Milton Keynes and in private practice in Amersham.

12c 6X LM1 30K

Potency and potencies...

Caroline Giuntoli explains potency scales and how to choose the correct one for you

Wouldn't homeopathy be easy if once the right remedy was chosen the potency came along as said? However nothing is so simple. It could not be more confusing to ascertain whether a 12c, a 6X, a LM1 or even a 30K is going to have the desired effect!

The different scales of potentisation need a little explanation. Hahnemann is responsible for the two more commonly used potency scales – the decimal or X scale and the centesimal or c scale. The centesimal scale is the more popular and is the potency scale used in most remedies available for self-diagnosis in pharmacies and health food shops. These potencies are prepared by adding one drop of mother tincture to ninety-nine drops of diluent. This mixture, after succussion, is termed a 1c potency. Diluting 1 in 99 of the 1c followed by succussion will give a 2c potency and so on until potencies of 6c, 30c and 200c are reached. Even in the centesimal scale another letter appears as the higher potencies of 1000c and 10,000c are more often referred to as 1M and 10M.



In a similar way the decimal scale is produced using one drop of mother tincture to nine drops of diluent giving rise to 1X, 2X, and so on. Of course most people realise that by diluting anything it becomes weaker but the homeopathic effect comes from the procedure involved in each dilution stage. Each dilution is performed in a controlled manner and involves the process of succussion – or shaking – at each dilution. It is this process of succussion which gives the remedy its homeopathic strength. It also gives sceptics a field day! It is very difficult to explain that a remedy that is progressively becoming more dilute is at the same time becoming stronger acting. In theory a potency of 12c has no molecules of the original remedy present. However, a 12c potency is homeopathically active. Theories abound about why the dilution stages increase the potency of the remedy but no explanation has been proved. Suffice to say that homeopathy works and succussion is an essential part of the preparation of any remedy.



Two scales of potencies should be enough to contend with but by using different methods of diluting the mother tinctures different potencies are produced. The traditional Hahnemann method involves using a new silica glass vial for each dilution but in the 1830s a Russian homeopath developed a different method of preparing the potencies. Perhaps in an effort to be eco-friendly, Korsakoff used only one vial to prepare the required potency. He drained the liquid from the vial leaving only a few droplets of liquid adhering to the sides, added the diluent, succussed the mixture and repeated the process to the required

potency. This range of potency is given the letter K, for example 6K 30K but is not comparable in strength to either the decimal or centesimal scales. There is some doubt as to whether the potencies produced could be accurately reproduced using the Korsakoff method.

A fourth scale of potency, which can again be attributed to Hahnemann, is the LM



range. This is prepared by diluting the mother tincture of the remedy to a 3c potency then using serial dilution of 1 to 50,000. This is called either the 50 millesimal scale (LM) or the quinquagintantamillesimal scale (just Q!). These remedies are usually administered in a liquid form on a daily basis and are often thought to avoid aggravation and provide effective relief of symptoms especially in long-term conditions.

Choosing a potency

Now that the different scales of potencies have been explained it doesn't really help in deciding which potency to use for effective treatment. Most homeopaths use their own personal experience with particular circumstances and specific remedies to help them choose the appropriate potency. Generally, medical homeopaths will prescribe from the decimal, centesimal or LM scale as they realise that these are more readily available in Great Britain.

Choosing the potency to give will be influenced by several factors. The diseased state will obviously influence the choice of potency. A finger trapped in the car door does not require a deep acting remedy whose effects may take weeks to surface and last for months. The finger in the door scenario requires a rapid acting remedy like Hypericum, repeated every ten to 15 minutes. The potency would ideally be 6c but in this type of acute treatment a 12c, 30c or 6X would be just as appropriate. When responding to first aid treatments it would be highly unlikely for someone to have every potency handy and usually 6c potencies of Arnica, Hypericum, Aconite and Rhus tox can be used to give effective first aid if the remedy suits.

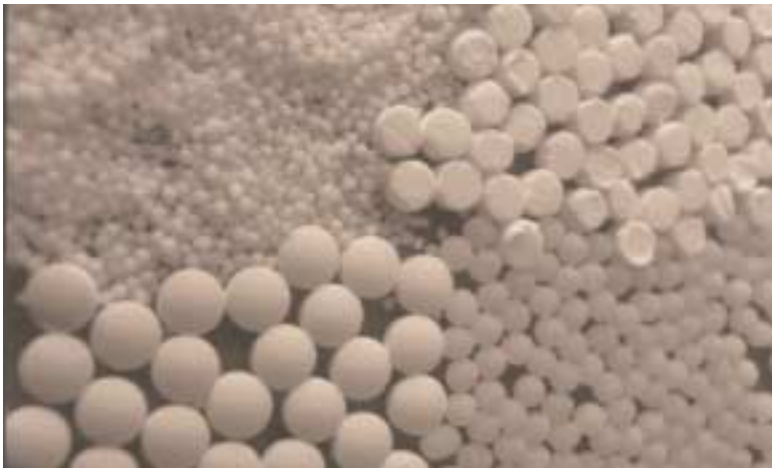
When the diseased state is chronic then a less hurried approach can be used. If symptoms are more physical then a lower potency such as 12c or 30c is usually considered whereas when



Photos courtesy of Helios Homoeopathic Pharmacy

emotional and mental symptoms are more prominent then a higher potency of 200c or above is often called for. A homeopath will often use his or her experience in treating a certain diseased state to determine which potency to choose and how often the remedy should be taken. For example in treating hormonal problems such as PMT or menopausal symptoms, a 200c potency of the remedy can be given during the cycle over three days and repeated on a monthly basis for three months. If this type of potency and dosing regime has proved effective with other patients then a homeopath will build on that experience and use a similar system again for similar symptoms.

Another influencing factor in choosing the potency of the remedy is the particular homeopath's "roots". The teacher, school, or book from



which a homeopath has gleaned his or her knowledge will undoubtedly influence the choice of potency. The decimal scale is used to a greater extent in Germany and France with potencies of 6X, 10X, and 12X being popular. Potencies of 6c, 12c, 30c and 200c are used most regularly in the UK.

The fourth factor and often the deciding factor in choosing the potency is availability. If a homeopath has only got a 30c potency of the required remedy to hand then it can be the most appropriate!

Potency and dosing of homeopathic remedies can be a quagmire if too much thought is used. If in any doubt a lower potency of 6c or 30c is probably the best way forward and only experience will tell. When self-diagnosing the most readily available potencies are the 6c and 30c. These can be obtained in most pharmacies. In the majority of cases these lower potencies will be enough to stimulate a homeopathic reaction and encourage a favourable response. The lower potencies suit acute situations where a rapid response is necessary and the symptoms are often more physical than emotional. The 30c potency can be regarded as a middle of the road potency and can be effective for both physical and emotional symptoms. Many homeopaths prefer to use the higher potencies of 200c and above as deeper acting remedies when there are a number of emotional elements to the case and a deeper response is required. Although the higher potencies are available to purchase they are mainly used by qualified homeopaths because of the increased chance of aggravation and are not always appropriate for self-medication.

Caroline Giuntoli BSc MRPharmS DFHom(Pharm) is a community pharmacist based in the West of Scotland. She tutors at Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital and counter-prescribes remedies on a regular basis.

Five medical homeopaths explain how they prescribe a potency

Marguerite Curley MBChB DRCOG MFHom

I rarely if ever use LM potencies, mainly because it is a somewhat complicated regime for the patients to follow. I would consider using them in a case of deep pathology which had ceased to respond to a well indicated remedy. Looking at my practice, 6C, 30C, 200C and 1M make up 95 per cent of the potencies I use with very occasionally a 10M or a 12C.

Charles Forsyth MBBS MFHom

My commonest starting potency in both acute and chronic conditions is probably a 200c, and I usually give two or three doses twelve hours apart. But it is dependent on the type of pathology, the sensitivity and vitality of the patient and the remedy I am using. The more unstable the condition, particularly if the pathology is potentially serious (eg multiple sclerosis, angina, asthma) and the lower the vitality of the patient – I would use a lower potency, eg three or four doses of a 30c. If I want to start with a higher potency, I very often use three doses in ascending potency 30c, 200c, 1M, given 12 hourly. I rarely start a chronic case with a 10M. Of course, in severe, acute situations, I may well start with 1M or 10M. I rarely use LM potencies.

Janet Gray MA MBBCh MFHom DRCOG

My policy is to use low potencies (eg 6c) for chronic conditions with deep-seated pathology, such as rheumatoid arthritis, and higher potencies (eg 200c, 1M) for emotional and hormonal problems, such as anxiety, depression and pre-menstrual tension. I find the 30c potency very effective in children, and rarely go higher. Certain conditions, such as eczema, have to be treated very gently to avoid an aggravation, and in this situation a 12c is very useful. I am fairly traditional in my use of a split single dose (ie three doses at 12 hour intervals) when treating constitutionally, and low potencies once or twice daily when treating on a local level.

Keith Souter MB ChB FRCGP LFHom (Med) DipMedAc

I tend to use low potencies for local, biophysical problems, and high (200c or 1M) or very high potencies (10M and above) for strong mental and emotional symptoms. When doubtful of an individual's energy or vitality, then I will tend to use 30c, a good multi-purpose and safe potency. I rarely use LM potencies.

Jenifer Worden MB ChB MRCGP MFHom

I personally use mostly 30c potencies for acute and chronic prescribing as this was the simplest course of action when I was an NHS GP. It was easier to have a wide range of remedies in a single potency than a few remedies in a selection of potencies. I do use 200C and 1M but usually only to "kick-start" a patient's healing process. I use LM's rarely, usually when dealing with severe asthma where I want to avoid aggravating already dangerous symptoms.

masterclass

MAJOR ARCHETYPES OF THE MATERIA MEDICA

by David Lilley MBChB FFHom LLCO



Photo courtesy of BHA Library

This pullout and keep series includes:

- Sulphur
- Calc carb
- Lycopodium
- Pulsatilla
- Silicea
- Nat mur
- Sepia
- **Lachesis**

The snake is one of the most powerful symbols in the homeopathic materia medica, and none more so than Lachesis, the dreaded bushmaster, a pit-viper of the Amazon basin. The longest and largest viper in the world, growing to over three metres in length, Lachesis is a magnificent creature, with a massive body as thick as a man's thigh, a short tail and a wicked-looking, triangular head, which broadens towards the back. Highly poisonous, it possesses fangs three centimetres in length and hypodermic scimitars capable of stabbing deeply into its victim's tissues.

Lachesis is a denizen of the tropical and equatorial rainforests of northern South America and Central America. There it lives on the forest floor, its handsome reddish-brown skin, marked along the back with black-brown rhomboidal spots, providing the perfect, disruptive colouring necessary to camouflage it as it lies amongst the fallen leaves waiting for its prey. Contrary to popular belief, the bushmaster is not usually aggressive, but it is extremely dangerous because, relying on its superb camouflage, it is loath to move and reveal itself, and is therefore relatively easy to stand on – often with fatal results.

Lachesis belongs to the Crotalidae, a snake family that includes the pit-vipers, rattlesnakes, lanceheads, moccasins and copperheads, which are the vipers of the New World, the Americas. Like other vipers the venom of the bushmaster is a potent cocktail of virulent enzymes, which are primarily destructive to the blood (haemotoxic) and the soft tissues (proteolytic and cytolitic), thus causing haemorrhage and necrosis. By contrast the venom of Naja, the cobra, which belongs to the family Elapidae, is primarily poisonous to the nervous system (neurotoxic) and the heart (cardiotoxic). These differences in venom action assist the homeopath in his choice of snake remedy.

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Lachesis

As with the previous remedies considered in these masterclasses, Lachesis may be viewed with the eye of a shaman to better penetrate the snake's hidden genius. She provides the matriarchal image of all snakes, for not only is she the largest representative of the most evolved snake family, she is also the only pit-viper that is *oviparous*, producing eggs, all others are *ovoviviparous*, giving birth to live young. Hence she is the forerunner, the source and essence of all things serpentine and venomous, and the jungle is her shrine. This is significant. She comes from the bosom of Gaia (Mother Earth), from the reproductive centre of the planet, its metabolic heart, the equatorial rainforests of the Amazon basin. Here speciation is at its most prodigious; it is Gaia's hothouse for the generation of diverse life forms – a teeming paradise – a Garden of Eden. Deep within its steamy density lurks the awesome bushmaster, her venom charged with the creative and destructive passion of the planet. She is the serpent of our genesis!

In the Judeo-Christian creation myth the snake is portrayed as the evil tempter and seducer, the very personification of deception and intrigue, premeditating and perpetrating the downfall of mankind. Aptly it is coiled round the Tree of Knowledge, or of Intellect, and induces Adam, via Eve, to partake of the fruit and lose his innocence – the innocence of instinctive, animal existence that keeps the urges and impulses within the bounds of natural restraint and in harmony with life's laws. This is symbolic of mankind attaining that level of intellectual and emotional capacity which permits "freedom of choice" and custodianship of the conscience, a release, unfolding and responsibility which were bound to bring conceit and conflict.

There is no cult more universal or ambivalent than that of the serpent. In ancient cultures the snake was above all a magical and religious image of the creator divinity itself, or a symbol of the primeval life force, the primitive animal will, which it is our destiny to wrestle and ultimately subdue. As such it embodies all man's potentialities, the divine and the mortal, the sacred and the profane, and the contention between the two. The snake has always been perceived as a dualistic force, a source of strength when mastered, but potentially dangerous and often emblematic of chaos and corruption when yielded to. Snakes have been seen as gods, ancestors and sacred protectors or as demons and monsters – as sources of inspiration and prophecy or of evil and temptation. In its simplest form the duality of the snake is easy to understand because few creatures have been regarded with more awe and fear than the snake. It either engenders reverence or revulsion, admiration or horror, but, whether the response to the snake be positive or negative, it rarely fails to provoke fascination – a fascination that may even amount to obsession.



Photo: The Fall of Man by Lucas the Younger Cranach. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas/Bridgeman Art Library

Coiled around the Tree of Knowledge, the snake induces Adam, via Eve, to partake of the fruit and lose his innocence

the Lachesis personality

Rooted since antiquity in paradox and polarity, duality is the very essence of the snake, of Lachesis and of the subject who requires this wonderful remedy. As with so many of us, they are in contention with themselves – the lower self opposes the higher, the animal nature vies with the human, deceit confronts sincerity, egotism struggles against selflessness, arrogance competes with diffidence and perversity challenges morality. Conscience and desire strive for dominance. The entire sphere of spiritual conflict is the battlefield of Lachesis. The conflict is often heroic. The venom from which the remedy is prepared is immensely powerful and destructive and those who require it are proportionately of an intense and passionate nature. The Lachesis individual is ever in danger of being possessed by passions and feelings. They are aware of the struggle within them, their labile emotions and thoughts and their unpredictability. At times they feel at the mercy of their emotions, torn between the promptings of their heart and their head, between their thoughts and feelings and between desire and guilt. If they are unable to indulge their passions or sublimate their emotions through creative release, they will have to

repress them and the price is emotional or physical ill-health.

The snake in movement is a miracle to behold. Without legs to propel it the creature flows effortlessly along, like a shining rivulet - sinuous and silent. The entire energy of the snake is manifested in fluidity and flow. In the course of evolution the snake withdrew its limbs to attain flow. Its venom contains enzymes, which dissolve and digest the tissues of its prey, causing what was firm and solid to break down into a fluid form, which can flow. Flow is intrinsic to the snake and this is equally true of the Lachesis person. In any condition where suppression of flow or function predominates, be it emotional, intellectual or physiological, Lachesis may be indicated. A typical example is the cessation of the menstrual flow at the menopause, a time of life frequently calling for the use of Lachesis. Likewise the appearance of the menstrual flow in a Lachesis person will signal the relief of premenstrual symptoms and brings a feeling of well-being.

Thus even without the extra insight of homeopathic, proving trials, we can learn a great deal about the human archetype which corresponds to this remedy from a study of the mythology, the external appearance and the natural history of the snake. A treasure of therapeutic indications is revealed and through the clear image of a powerful metaphor the remedy is fixed in our memories.

The bushmaster is a master of camouflage. It is a "sit and wait" predator, using its cryptic colouring to deceive and ambush its prey. In a similar manner the Lachesis individual can practice cunning and deceit to waylay the innocent and naïve. They don a deceptive mask to conceal their unscrupulous intentions – they are not what they seem. They hatch plots and schemes to catch the unwary, but also to revenge themselves against those they consider enemies.

They are creatures of the night; it is then that they become alert and watchful for their prey. They have cat's eyes, the pupils are a vertical slit and the retina contains mainly rods giving them excellent night vision. Lachesis is a night owl, needing little sleep, doing their best and most creative work at night, even into the early hours of the morning – reading, writing, studying or enjoying stimulating conversation, particularly about philosophy and religion. The mind is extraordinarily active and clear in the evening. Some become unduly vivacious and talkative at night, but then have difficulty finding sleep, spending hours at the mercy of their overactive minds. Like many night-time people, Lachesis individuals are not at their best in the morning. They often wake into an aggravation of their complaints, into a headache, an attack of asthma or a bout of depression. They may come to fear sleep; such is the state of suffering which greets them on waking.

Although a snake of massive proportions, the speed with which it can strike defies description. It is an explosive blur of movement ending in a death-dealing blow delivered with deadly accuracy. As it strikes, its mouth gapes wide, permitting the awesome, hinged fangs to swing down so that the snake can strike and stab at the same time, gaining maximum penetration. Lachesis, the human, can respond to an emergency with speed and initiative, making instantaneous decisions and acting upon them with confidence and alacrity. They possess a volatile capacity to react and retaliate. They do not prevaricate or mince their words; they can speak daggers to those who confront them. The theme of quickness is present throughout the mental, emotional and physical pictures. They are quick and even hurried in everything they do. The Lachesis mind is quick-witted, nimble, alert and highly perceptive. They can comprehend new concepts, even those outside their field of experience, with remarkable facility. They speak rapidly. Often the Lachesis mind can be too fast for others to keep up with and sometimes the flow of thoughts demanding expression is too fast for their tongues to cope with. On a physical level they share with the snake an admirable athleticism, poise, balance and co-ordination.



Photo: Wellcome Picture Library

On a physical level the Lachesis person shares with the snake an admirable athleticism, poise, balance and co-ordination

The remarkably active, forked tongue of the serpent is a powerful symbol. It is constantly darted out of the mouth through a notch in the upper jaw. It acts as a sense organ picking up scent molecules from its environment. The snake tests life through taste. The

Lachesis being has a taste for life – an instinctual hunger for life experience – a nature filled with desire, which has an intense urge to taste all that life has to offer. The agile, active tongue confirms the proverbial talkativeness of the remedy, which is also a manifestation of the remedy's need to flow. For Lachesis, talkativeness is often a release or vent for repressed emotions or desires. Not only do they talk a lot, they also speak loudly and rapidly and are inclined to jump continuously from one subject to another. A highly functional aspect of this loquacity is their ability with words. They have rare linguistic skills, often multilingual, and they are highly articulate with a wonderful gift of oratory. The immense power of Lachesis reaches its highest expression in the public speaker. They have remarkable charisma and eloquence, speaking with passion and intensity, which is persuasive, seductive and if he wishes, inciting. They are often extremely gifted, creative and imaginative with the written or spoken word. True to the serpent's ambiguity this skill can be used for good or evil. The forked tongue has always been a symbol for deceit, intrigue and treachery.

The large, staring, unblinking eyes are disturbing and compelling. All snakes lack eyelids, hence their fixed, penetrating gaze. The never-sleeping eye, ever watchful and alert, denotes a mistrustful, suspicious nature – a temperament jealous, possessive and paranoid – always expecting to be taken advantage of, to be done in, or to be harmed in some way. The love of Lachesis, whether for family, friends or experienced in a sexual relationship, is a constricting and possessive love, often tainted with jealousy. This jealousy can become obsessive and malignant. They can never relax, always watching their partner, always alert for signs of infidelity, always peering, prying and imagining. Often their jealousy remains unspoken, pent up and seething within, and will eventually affect their health bringing on headaches, high blood pressure, menstrual pains, excessive menstrual flow or asthma. Jealousy in Lachesis may turn love into hate and may lead to violence and tragedy, especially if alcohol is an added ingredient.

The eyes are also sharp and piercing, cold and calculating, hypnotic. Behind them lies a sharp, penetrating mind, which analyses everything, misses nothing and is not easily moved to sympathy or compassion. The same hardness and meanness of disposition is revealed in the unsmiling, thin-lipped mouth. Some can be as relentless, ruthless and cruel as the serpent they mirror. They are as cryptic and menacing as the snake lurking amongst the leaves of the forest floor. These less common members of the Lachesis family are not talkative at all. Here the waters are deep and silent and harbour a dark energy, coiled and primed, often discharged in sinister and nefarious ways in the jungle of human life. The venom glands of the snake are modified salivary glands, and thus "spit" is turned into "spite". The hiss of the viper is pregnant with S's and so are the utterances of Lachesis. They are spiteful, sarcastic, sardonic, scathing, satirical, slanderous, sceptical, superstitious, sanctimonious, self-righteous, suspicious, secretive, sultry, sexual and seductive and we may justly add, cynical and psychic.

The snake has always been recognised as a sexual or phallic symbol, implying a strong sexuality and a powerful libido or sex drive. The sexual energy is the most fundamental energy of Lachesis and its power lies behind the intensity, the turbulent passion and the creative genius of the archetype. It must find expression sexually, creatively, religiously or spiritually. It may not be suppressed. In the young it is most likely to be experienced and expressed in its fundamental form – sexually. Both sexes may be sexually preoccupied and even troubled by persistent erotic thoughts and fantasies. The sexuality is always coiled and ready to strike. Many will say that if their sex life is good, life is good. It is part of the flow so essential to snake life; it relieves tension and stress. The female particularly brings to a relationship a passionate romanticism and ardour, which enriches it. She is conscious of her sexuality and its power and uses it. She moves with serpentine grace and is able to charge the simplest action with sexual energy.

This libido energy is also available for the highest purposes of our existence and can transcend into poetry, art, literature and music. The tendency to transcend and sublimate such energy into the arts by ardent, passionate and turbulent souls of this archetype is empowered by one of the best known characteristics of Lachesis – its left-sidedness. The internal anatomy of the snake has had to be radically modified in order to accommodate the internal organs in such a narrow elongated body. Throughout the unique adaptations to internal anatomy peculiar to snakes we see a sacrificial degeneration in the left-sided organs. Translated into human pathology this is presented as physical dysfunction of the left side of the body, but the mental stage upon which this dysfunction is enacted is the right cerebral hemisphere, which is the seat of our intuitive, artistic, imaginative and creative self. It is the stimulus of this dysfunction that can transform a gift into genius. Lachesis can soar like a phoenix!

David Lilley is a Fellow of the Faculty of Homeopathy. He trained at the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital and developed his practice in South Africa over the last 35 years. He is internationally renowned as a teacher of the materia medica.

Next issue: Bob Leckridge, President of the Faculty of Homeopathy, begins a major new series



The golden cure

Depression following redundancy from a career in finance indicated the remedy Aurum metallicum, writes *Marysia Kratimenos*

John was referred to me with depression and fatigue. No cause for the exhaustion had been found; it was presumed to be emotionally based. The anti-depressants he had been prescribed had not improved his energy level.

Conservative in appearance, dressed in a business suit and wearing polished shoes, John was polite, although quiet and formal in his behaviour. He answered my questions honestly and respectfully.

He had been unwell for two years before he came to see me. His problems had started after he had been made redundant from his job. Initially he had consulted his general practitioner, who had prescribed anti-depressants. These had caused such unpleasant side effects that John had stopped taking them within days. The depression had intensified to the point where John was showing suicidal tendencies, so his GP arranged admission into a psychiatric hospital. Another anti-depressant was found that suited him better, but John was not happy taking the tablets as he felt "numb and drugged".

He had worked in the finance department of the company for all his working life and was now in his late fifties. The decision to "let him go" had been made as a result of an economic down turn. At his age, he felt it would be nigh on impossible to find another job. He had big financial commitments and would not hear of his wife going to work. He was the breadwinner in the family. He felt humiliated that he had to turn to the state for support. He was riddled with guilt that he had placed his family in a vulnerable financial position because of his health.

Prior to his illness, he described himself as a perfectionist at work. He was extremely hard working and felt great loyalty to his company, so their "betrayal" was all the more difficult to accept. On hearing the news of his dismissal, he had suffered crushing chest pain. He thought he was having a heart attack, but all investigations were normal. Whenever he was "stressed" the pain would return, and it frightened him. Both his parents had died of heart attacks.

John described his childhood as happy, he "wanted for nothing". He loved his parents dearly and described the day that his father died as the "worst in his life". He said his parents taught him the importance of honour, hard work, financial security and duty in life. They attended church regularly, as

did he and his wife and children. He was happily married with three teenage children living at home.

His health had always been good and he had enjoyed regular exercise in the past. He had no other medical problems. He ate a good diet and had no marked food preferences.

John was reticent about talking of his depression, blaming it on the redundancy. He felt worse at night and if he managed to sleep, he would have bad nightmares. He would wake early. He was afraid of death although he desired it. His worst fear, which he felt had been realised, was that of poverty.

As John was taking anti-depressants, I prescribed Aurum metallicum 6C to be taken daily. Certain medications can interfere with the action of high dose remedies, and in these cases I prefer to use low potencies on a daily basis.

John returned to the clinic six weeks after starting Aurum. There was a dramatic change in his mood – he was beaming! He said that his energy levels had increased so much that he was going to the gym daily. He felt truly happy in himself and was stunned that such tiny tablets could have had such a huge effect. He had agreed for his wife to go back to work to ease the financial problems until he found a new job. This was a major shift; he joked about having old-fashioned chauvinist values. His main objective was to stop the anti-depressants as soon as possible and his psychiatrist had agreed to this.

John has remained well over the last two years. He gradually weaned himself off the medication and occasionally has Aurum if his mood or energy dips, which is rare. His chest pain has never returned. He revels in the delicious irony that gold cured him and yet the striving for wealth almost killed him.

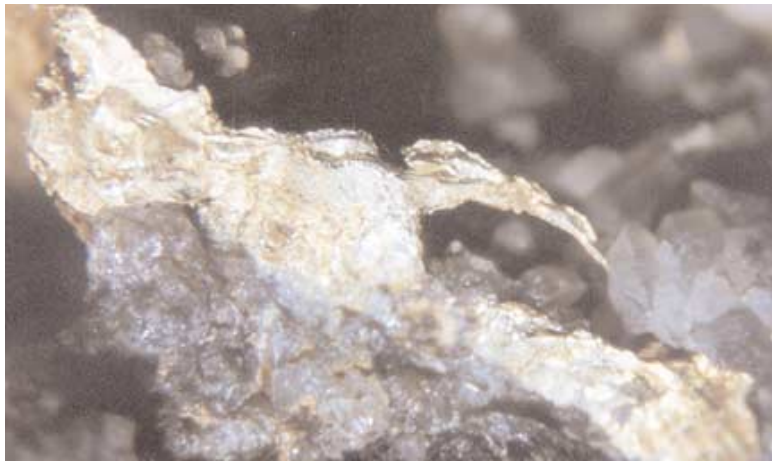


Photo courtesy of Hal Currie

Gold does not combine with other elements easily, so mining is relatively simple

It was believed for generations that one could ascertain the medicinal qualities of a substance by close observation of its properties. The modern scientific mind scorns such superstitious nonsense, but in homeopathy many are exploring this avenue. At the very least it acts as an aide-memoire and helps to structure the vast materia medica.

The ancient myths and legends also help to glean a deeper understanding of the remedies. Jung regarded these as a reflection of the collective subconscious thought, and commenced work on archetypes, which continues today in homeopathy. The remedy pictures or essences are merely archetypes.

Aurum metallicum is pure gold; a soft malleable metal which is found in many parts of the world. It does not combine with other elements easily, so mining is relatively simple. Gold nuggets can be panned from many riverbeds.

Gold has been used medicinally since ancient times, originally as a treatment for syphilis, and more recently in injections for rheumatoid arthritis. Syphilis is a very destructive disease, which may lie dormant in the body for years, before leading to aggressive heart, blood vessel and nervous system disease. The diagnosis of syphilis usually evokes fear in the patient, as in generations past it was incurable. Aurum has these fears in its remedy picture, as well as the destructive nature, both in the physical symptoms (early heart disease) and the emotional picture (violent anger and suicide).

Gold is a precious metal reputed to strengthen the nervous system, purify the physical body and balance the mind. It allows one to accept love and aids personal illumination. It is the Sol of the alchemists, sol being the sun. Gold is the metal of the sun god.

The Ancient Egyptians mined huge quantities in Nubia (modern day Sudan). Africa has immense gold reserves and is the site of the fabled mines of King Solomon. The Egyptians used the gold to decorate the temples of the gods and the tombs of the pharaohs, who were believed to be the reincarnation of the sun god, Amun Ra. Alongside the Valleys of the Kings and

Queens a special village of craftsmen was created, the Place of Truth. These men and women fashioned the elaborate tombs and offerings to the dead. It was rumoured that these people were able to create gold from base metals, a legend that has been perpetuated in alchemy, a science that originated in Egypt and is the origin of modern day chemistry.

The Egyptians were deeply religious and spiritual people, well versed in magic. Christian Jacq, a French Egyptologist, explains the deeper meaning of the process of transmutation in his fascinating series of books, *The Stone of Light*. He explains that this is actually a spiritual transformation, rather than a physical; the process of illuminating our base qualities and attaining enlightenment. The Philosopher's Stone, which is fundamental for the transmutation according to alchemic tradition, is emerald green – symbolically the colour of the heart. Aurum is an excellent heart remedy, and the Aurum personality is often described as having a heart of gold.

Gold has always played an important part in religion and spirituality. One only has to look at churches, mosques and temples to see huge amounts of gold offered up to God. Gold does not tarnish unlike many other metals, symbolising its purity and incorruptibility. It is a regal metal, one that is used to symbolise love and fidelity in the wedding bands. So it is with the Aurum personality, often deeply religious and profoundly spiritual. Aurum is the patriarch of the family, the king of the castle. Aurum is honourable, trustworthy and proud.

In Greek society gold was regarded as a symbol of power and wealth. The myth of Midas is a potent reminder of the danger of the love of money; the king Midas wishes that all he touches may turn to gold and this leads to his death from starvation. In his quest for material wealth, he has forgotten the importance of the necessities of life and the simple pleasures. The shadow side of Aurum is that materialistic tendency, the avarice and the fear of loss of wealth and position. The story of gold is punctuated with these characteristics.

This is also reflected in the Judaic and Christian faith. When Moses ascends the mountain in the desert of Sinai to commune with God, he is given the Ten Commandments, which are placed in a golden arc. When the Israelites broke the law by worshipping a golden calf, Moses broke the tablets and God sent a plague as punishment. Remorse followed the outburst of anger, an Aurum symptom. Moses returned to the mountain and on his return was bathed in such a strong golden light that no one could look upon him. This golden aura is regarded by Buddhists as a sign of divine enlightenment. The name Christ is derived from the Greek meaning the golden one. Saints are traditionally depicted as having a golden halo.

The Aztecs regarded gold as the symbol of their sun god, Huizilopochtli, and crafted beautiful gifts as religious offerings. Their culture fell as a consequence of the Conquistador's greed. Cortes took the Aztec king, Montezuma, hostage promising to release him in return for a huge room full of gold. The natives were surprised, as gold was so abundant that it had little value to them. Believing Cortes to be the reincarnation of their god, Quetzalcoatl, they were lulled into a false sense of security. They gladly complied with the request and apparently provided the Spaniards with several tons of gold. Cortes betrayed them and had the king murdered. The gold was melted down and transported to Spain, where it now decorates the Catholic churches. The Aztecs never recovered from this betrayal, their culture was decimated and thousands perished. Likewise the Aurum archetype is devastated by betrayal and can lapse into a suicidal depression. John's story clearly demonstrates the Aurum personality and the type of problems experienced.

The Inca mask reflects the importance of gold



Photo: Sue Cunningham Photographic Library

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Symbolism in homeopathy

David Lilley gives a précis of his talk to The Friends of the BHA in May this year

I believe my recent masterclass articles in *Health & Homeopathy* will have served to give an insight into how I view the creation and the remedies we use; a mosaic of symbols, which can be interpreted in human terms. Now I would like to expand on these themes.

Nature is the great creator of symbols; she expresses herself in metaphorical form. The patient who sits across the desk from me is a metaphorical representation of the real individual seeking my help. This person is not just a physical being, not even just an ego-personality, but also something far more profound and it is this essence that I must touch with the similar essence contained within the matching symbol of the homeopathic remedy.

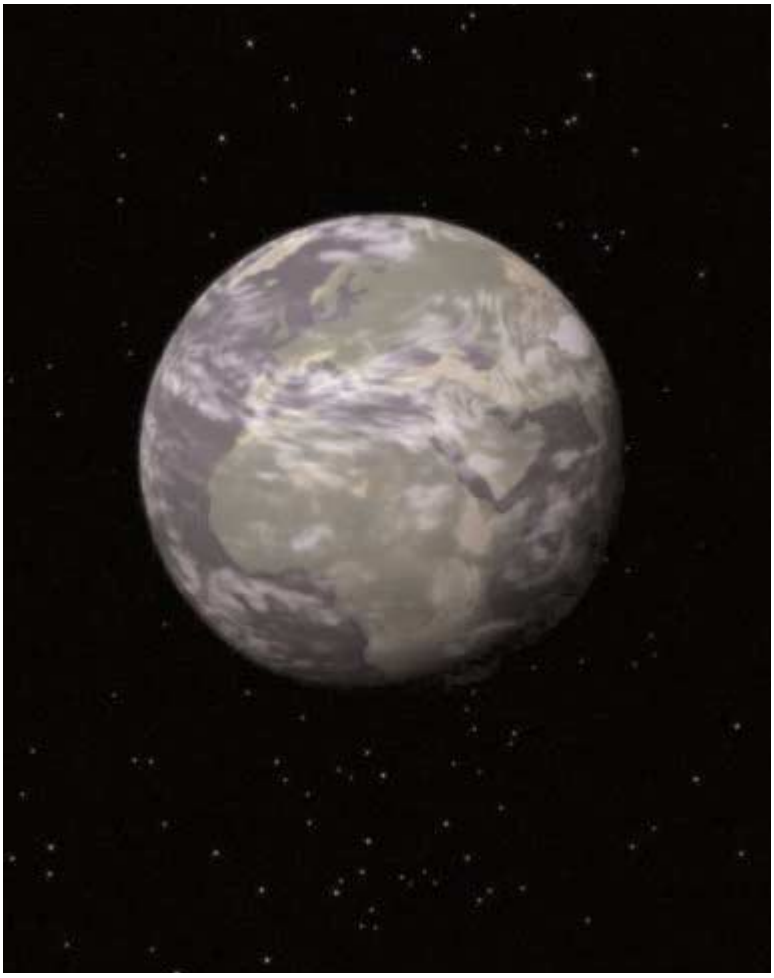
We all make use of symbols in our personal lives, presenting ourselves to society in certain guises, with which we seek to conceal, protect or profit ourselves. These are the various personas that we project. Just as we need to unravel and understand nature's symbols, we need to decipher the patient's persona. For instance, how different are the personas of Nat mur and Phosphorus. The salt being is closed; he does not want you to penetrate his deep heartaches. He simulates composure, looking as cool as a cucumber, crosses his arms defensively across his chest, leans away from the doctor and answers questions reluctantly. Phosphorus, in contrast, is most confiding, leans forward in a friendly fashion, is animated and shows gratitude for the attention he receives.

What we see on the surface, does not portray all that lies within; it is a symbol – a metaphor. Behind lies a soul, a multidimensional being, a person who is eternal and indestructible, a soul that is in transit, dwelling on this life plane for a time in order to evolve spiritually through life experience. Homeopathy, medicine for the soul, can aid this process.

We all make use of symbols in our personal lives, presenting ourselves to society in certain guises

Einstein realised the significance of symbols and said, "To know, that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive (symbolic) forms, this knowledge, this feeling is at the heart of true religiousness." In similar vein, Ralph Twentyman wrote, "The human soul responds to the processes and substances of our world with myth, legend and poetic imagery, and these can be understood as the revelation of the higher reality lying latent, like a sleeping princess, within the natural phenomena. They constitute, one might also say, a homeopathic proving in a very clear and heightened form." I agree with him when he adds, that a study of these images and symbols can lead us to a deeper understanding of the healing power of a substance than can be achieved through homeopathic provings alone.

In the process of the creation our homeopathic remedies emerged in a specific and significant sequence. Out of the expanding sea of energy generated after the "big bang", great spheres of hydrogen and helium formed. Gravitational pressure and prodigious heat building up within such a sphere caused nuclear fusion and the production of stellar light and heat. A star was born. In a star 25 times the mass of our sun, hydrogen and helium burning lasts for billions of years, producing carbon which, when all the light gaseous atoms have been consumed, becomes the next fuel to support the life of the star. This lasts for 600 years.



In the process of the creation homeopathic remedies emerged in a specific and significant sequence

Carbon is the first substantial symbol formed by the universe. It is also the first symbol for humankind, since carbon is the pillar and cornerstone of all organic life forms.

Now, to interpret the therapeutic signature etched into the created form, let us look at carbon in a human way. What must it feel like to be the first solid atom cast into the void of the newly born universe? How would you feel, what emotions come to mind, what thoughts swirl around in your head, how do you see yourself and the world about you? Are you filled with confidence, optimism, eagerness and strength – or something else?

I would feel lonely, isolated, abandoned, forsaken and oh, so vulnerable, puny and frightened, surrounded by an awesome, forbidding and hostile environment. I would have fear of the unknown, the unfamiliar and of the future. I would fear my solitude and the great dark out there and what evils await me within its gloom. I would be filled with ominous foreboding, a sense of inadequacy, a fear of failure and such a heavy sense of duty, being the first atom responsible for creating all that must follow.

You might say you would feel confident, excited and optimistic. What colour are you then? You are carbon – black! Another symbol, another manifestation of the collective persona. What does black signify for you – and we are not thinking of colour or race here? Is black happy or sad? Do we speak of a white cloud of depression or of being hounded by white dogs when we are really down? When we are SAD (suffering from the depression of seasonal affective disorder) is it because all is bright and sunny? No! They suffer because it is dark and cloudy. This darkness images too painfully their own, inner darkness, sadness and dejection. Black is the colour of gloom and doom. Our homeopathic carbons and carbonates are filled with trepidation, anxiety and fear. Their inner dialogue is negative, their attitude pessimistic. Can they fulfil their obligations and their sense of responsibility? Can they ever have done enough? No! And responsibility unfulfilled leads to guilt which ever pursues them. Such is the thinking of Carbo animalis, Carbo vegetabalis, Graphites, Petroleum, Kreosotum and the major carbonates.

They also feel that they are exposed to something remorseless. To the ancients the cosmos was filled with intelligence and purpose, driven by the love of God for the benefit of humanity. Newtonian science has removed this God and replaced it with a relentless, arbitrary, clockwork machine. This same science has even tainted our perception of ourselves. Gone is the reflection of one made in the image of God – replaced by a being who is the result of a chance happening in the random activities of a goalless universe – a pawn in the play of cosmic forces. Carbon is adrift in a merciless cosmos with only their wits to sustain them and their conclusion is: life is for serving, suffering and sacrifice; life is a bitch and then you die!

Such dismal carbon thoughts are a reflection of what is known in homeopathic psychology as psoric thinking. Psora is the name given by Hahnemann to the origin of all disease. The descent of carbon into the manifest universe is analogous to first man being banished from the Garden of Eden, which in turn is analogous to first man emerging through evolution from the animal world and developing the emotional capacity to suffer in a human way. Then comes the sense of severance and isolation so typical of the carbon mind and the capacity to experience intense or prolonged grief and fear; a state of dis-ease, which eventually becomes disease – Psora.

However there is another aspect to carbon and therefore also to the carbon personality. The carbon atom needs company – so much so that it bonds to other carbon atoms to form giant molecules, molecules that create all life forms from amoeba to dinosaurs and finally homo sapiens. But what happens when carbon has created its masterpieces – time and time again throughout history? A catastrophic wipe out – an almost global extinction. What does carbon do, faced by such a disaster? It picks itself up and begins building again. So carbon has not only a deep sense of responsibility, but also tenacity, endurance, perseverance and stubbornness. Despite all odds it soldiers on. But at the same time there is often a sense of sufferance and resignation. When they have suffered a lot they begin to feel that there is a purpose in suffering. That it in some way cleanses and purifies them. Some will say they are paying off karmic debt. Martyrdom is part of carbon philosophy.

Mag carb is the remedy for the Oliver Twists in our world – children who are unloved, neglected and rejected

In its life cycle carbon parallels the spiritual ascent of man. When black, sombre carbon is exposed to intense heat and pressure, which is analogous to the life experience, what do you get? A diamond, the most splendid of jewels!

In its life cycle
Carbon parallels the
spiritual ascent of man

Returning to stellar alchemy – after 600 years, during which time the great star has been creating neon and magnesium from the fusion of carbon atoms, all the carbon is exhausted and neon becomes the next fuel. Neon fusion produces oxygen and more magnesium. It is as if magnesium is hyperactive, clamouring for attention and to be noticed. If I was God and I wished at this point in the creation to make the first molecule, all the ingredients are now at hand. I take carbon and magnesium, the only substantial elements in the entire universe, and add some atoms of oxygen and there I have it – the first molecule, Magnesium carbonate – forsaken and alone – the orphan of the universe!

All we have said about carbon we can repeat for the personality of Mag carb, only more so. In our interpretation of this scenario we unveil the hidden genius of the remedy. As Kent pointed out Mag carb is the remedy for the orphan, the adopted child, the illegitimate child and the unwanted, neglected and rejected child. It is surely significant that carbon, the atom from which all life springs, is created so early in the nuclear processes of stars and is followed by magnesium which is such a magnificent remedy for children, and especially abandoned children. These are the Oliver Twists and Cinderellas of the materia medica. If we look up the rubric – "delusion: deserted, forsaken" in the repertory, what do we find? Mag carb in big black letters. The creator must have known how many forsaken souls there would be in this modern world of ours. The remedy is also found under that saddest of all rubrics – "Feels forsaken – not loved by their parents." Poor Mag carb, deprived of love and affection, strives for attention in the only way he knows, by noisiness, naughtiness, disobedience and aggressive behaviour.

Would you not feel forsaken, alone, unloved and unlovable if you were the first molecule cast into the abyss? The situation may be likened to a very young child sent off to boarding school without discussion by the family, without communication or



Photo: bfi Stills

explanation; a family in which children are not invited to give their opinion or express their needs, preferences or fears. The little one reads this as meaning, "I am not wanted. If I am not wanted, I am unlovable. If I am unlovable, I have done something wrong and therefore I am guilty." All of this is found in Mag carb. Some are so estranged that they are unable to accept love even when it is present. This is symbolised in their inability to assimilate mother's milk. The very milk that is an expression of maternal nurturing and should bring about bonding and the building up of a healthy body, they cannot tolerate.

With the formation of iron, the star suddenly runs out of fuel

When all the neon in stellar nuclear synthesis is used up, the star turns to oxygen for survival and at truly infernal temperatures produces silicon, sulphur, phosphorus and yet more magnesium. The key element at this point is silicon, which at three billion degrees Kelvin becomes involved in hundreds of nuclear reactions that yield as their end product "the ultimate stellar ash" – Ferrum 56, an isotope of iron. With the formation of iron, the star suddenly and dramatically runs out of fuel because no more energy to sustain the star can be derived from protons and neutrons being pressed closer and closer together. In Ferrum 56 they are as close as they can ever get. In an instant, electrons and protons fuse, the star collapses, and a titanic explosion, which we call a supernova, follows the implosion. The light from this cataclysmic event glows in the heavens for at least two weeks with all the brilliance of an entire galaxy of suns.

In the qualities of Ferrum 56 and the supernova explosion we gain insight into an important homeopathic archetype Ferrum metallicum. Is this a small ego or a big ego? For homeopaths it is important to distinguish the small egos from the big egos and also to recognise the small egos that masquerade as big egos. When viewed anthropomorphically, the supernova must represent the most decisive act possible. It is instantaneous and total. It is the act of a very big ego, the act of someone who is supremely confident and aggressive. It is the act of a warrior. Whilst being uncompromisingly destructive it is also creative since it results in the fabrication of the heavier elements like gold, silver and lead. Warfare is equally paradoxical.

Ferrum is the warrior archetype. Iron has always been associated with war and with the God of War, Mars, and his colour, red. Mars is the red planet, the plumes and cloaks of the Roman legions were red, the British soldiers were the redcoats and iron is the central atom of haemoglobin, the red pigment of mammalian blood. Red is the symbol of passion, anger and masculine aggression. It is tribal and territorial.

Ferrum is a much-neglected remedy. Warriors abound everywhere, not only in armies but also in sport and in the corporate world and wherever the male ego seeks to fulfil itself in competition and acts of daring and endeavour. What does he look like? He has strong determined features, often a cleft chin, a broad brow, steely gaze and a resolute mouth. He has presence. At his best he has dignity, composure and confidence, at his worst he may be arrogant, overbearing and pompous. Unlike Lycopodium he is solid right the way through. Ferrum is a wonderful remedy for those who have been exposed to warfare, for those who have witnessed death and carnage and for those suffering from post traumatic stress disorder.

I hope these correspondences between nature's symbols and human nature will give you a deeper vision and understanding of the mysteries of the creation. One last thought: man is a mystic being, on a mystic quest, in search of his divinity. His sickness is a mystic experience with mystic significance. It charts his course, his ascent to perfection.



Photo: Grenadier of the Volunteer Regt. by Arthur Devis. National Army Museum Picture Library

British soldiers wore redcoats – red being the symbol of anger and masculine aggression