Health & Homeopathy

Winter 2002/03



Major new series
– making sense of health and illness

Fighting winter ailments

Eczema
in children

Sara Eames describes how she treats this relatively common problem

In the children's clinic at the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital, eczema is one of the most frequent reasons for referral. It varies in severity from a few small patches to a severe skin condition which can cover most of the body.

It appears to be an increasingly common condition and the allopathic treatments available are palliative rather than curative, and may be associated with long-term side effects. Severe eczema in a child can have a massive effect on the whole family. Complicated creaming and bandaging regimes are very time-consuming and children are often irritable and eat poorly as they feel so uncomfortable. Severe itching can interrupt sleep for everybody and children can feel stigmatised at school if their rash is visible. For all these reasons people often seek homeopathic help for their children.

History taking is a vital part of the art of homeopathy and, as there are many possible causative factors in a case of eczema, which can effect the choice of a homeopathic remedy, it is essential to collect as much information as possible.

Eczema is often linked with other allergic conditions so I like to find out as much as possible about any other medical problems in the child or his family and I also go into as much detail as possible about the pregnancy, birth and early life of the child.



Photo: National Eczema Society

Children with eczema are often irritable as they feel so uncomfortable and severe itching can interrupt sleep for all the family

The choice of homeopathic treatment is a wide one as there are many remedies, which affect the skin, and a variety of treatment models which can be used. One of the most successful ways is to prescribe the constitutional remedy for the child, that is the remedy that fits the overall person, not just the local skin symptoms. Examples of remedies commonly used in this way include many well known homeopathic treatments such as Sulphur, Calc carb and Arsenicum album.

There is often a strong family history of allergic conditions, or other diseases in a case of eczema. When Hahnemann was developing his principles of homeopathy he noted the strong predisposition to various disease types in different families and postulated an inherited explanation for this in his theory of miasms. This approach is still extremely relevant today and in the treatment of eczema it is often essential to consider this miasmatic approach and prescribe a relevant nosode. I

find it very useful either when there is a clear family history of certain diseases or when a constitutional remedy seems to suit a child very well but does not produce a complete cure.

There are many other treatment models which are useful for eczema. I find very commonly that parents have often already made some link between an event in their child's life and the onset or worsening of their eczema. These can be a variety of things such as separation from a parent or carer, the birth of a new baby in the family, the introduction of new foods into the diet, a seemingly unrelated illness or vaccinations. The beauty of homeopathy is that there are remedies which are known to be useful in these situations and I find that when there is a clear aetiological link with the symptoms, homeopathic treatment is particularly successful.

Thus Nat mur can be useful after a child has been separated from his mother, or a remedy made from the chickenpox virus can help if a child has never been well since having had that illness. If a baby's eczema has worsened soon after a specific vaccination then he can be treated with a general remedy to help after vaccinations, such as Thuja, or with a specific remedy made from the vaccination itself.

Local treatments

As well as using a mixture of these overall approaches, eczema can be such a distressing condition that it can be really helpful to use local treatments as well. These can be in the form of homeopathic remedies based on the local symptoms. Examples of these would be Sulphur for a red, burning, itchy rash, worse for heat and water or Graphites for a crusty, cracking eczema which oozes sticky, honey coloured fluid. Local treatments can also be applied topically in the form of creams, ointments and tinctures. I find Calendula and Urtica urens a particularly helpful mixture.

Lifestyle changes

In combination with a homeopathic approach it is nearly always necessary to give nutritional and lifestyle advice. All children will benefit from a healthy diet based on fresh, additive-free foods. In addition, some children have severe allergic reactions to specific foods which need to be avoided in the short term and which can often be reduced by a combination of overall homeopathic treatment, improved nutrition and desensitisation, in the longer term.

Some additives in food can exacerbate a child's eczema
Photo courtesy of Keith Richards



Case histories

Two children whom I have recently seen at the RLHH illustrate the combination of various homeopathic strategies in the treatment of eczema.

Steven age three was covered in eczema when I first met him. He had a very dry scaly skin, which bled profusely when he scratched it. He slept poorly at night due to the itching and always wanted to be in his parents' bed, so none of the family was getting proper sleep. He had been treated extensively by his GP and local hospitals, mainly with steroid creams and repeated courses of antibiotics when the skin looked infected. He also had a tendency to get recurrent coughs and colds. In spite of all this he was an extremely lively, sociable boy who was popular at nursery, sensitive to others' feelings and loved to be the centre of attention.

He seemed a fairly typical Phosphorus child and a course of Phosphorus improved both his skin and his tendency to catch colds by about 50 per cent. When the dose was repeated and the strength increased, however, there was not much further improvement. His mother was applying Graphites ointment locally and was able to give up the steroid creams completely, but I still felt we could improve things further.

He had a history of one grandparent having suffered from TB and his mother remembered that his cradle cap had worsened as a baby after his BCG vaccination. On the basis of this I prescribed Bacillinum, a mixed tubercular nosode, and the improvement continued. His skin is now virtually free

of eczema and his resistance to colds much better.

Jana, a six year-old twin girl, was behaving badly at home as well as suffering from eczema. She had skin problems virtually all her life and was in hospital at the age of one for this. All of the family had been traumatised by this event as Jana was petrified by the whole experience. The parents could still remember and visualise the fear on her face and vowed never to let her go into hospital again. Since that time her skin and behaviour had deteriorated. At home she was dictatorial, always wanted her own way and fought constantly with her twin, while at school she was well behaved even though her skin was itching a lot in the warm classroom.

Based on her overall behaviour, the skin symptoms and the fact that she had been worse since a severe fright I prescribed her Lycopodium, which has been a tremendous help both to her and her family! Her behaviour at home started to improve within a few days of the first dose and her skin is now gradually improving too. She has also been able to stop her steroid creams and now uses Calendula and Urtica cream which suits her well.

Eczema may at first glance seem a superficial condition but as can be seen it is often connected with a more complicated history. In my experience parents can be very good at deciding when to repeat a dose of a remedy or in the selection of a local remedy, but I would always advise a full homeopathic consultation with a well qualified practitioner to help with the treatment for the eczema.

Sara Eames BSc ChB DGM MFHom is the Director of Education and a physician in the women's and children's department of the RLHH. She also has a private practice in north west London.

New research trial to study homeopathy in atopic eczema

Sara Eames' article illustrates how well homeopathy can treat individuals with eczema. Her experience mirrors what many of her medical colleagues in the Faculty of Homeopathy report. Despite such compelling anecdotal evidence, the surprising fact is that no clinical research project has ever been carried out in this area. Positive findings from such research would make an enormous contribution to the evidence base for homeopathy, and would support the argument to include homeopathy within NHS care for this condition.

The BHA's Research Committee has recognised the opportunity to explore this point, and has set out jointly with the Faculty of Homeopathy to undertake a major clinical trial. We will focus on the condition known as atopic eczema (also called atopic dermatitis). This is the most common chronic inflammatory skin disease among children in developed countries, and affects 15 per cent of UK school children.

We have identified over 30 Faculty doctors who wish to take part in the project. In the first instance, we need to conduct a 12-month pilot study to test out things like patient recruitment and the suitability of the clinical outcome measures we choose. With the information we obtain, we would then proceed with a full, randomised clinical trial, lasting probably three years.

A key feature of the research we propose is that practitioners taking part in the trial will not change their normal homeopathic practice of medical care. Sara's article reminds us how crucial it is to retain an individualised approach to each patient.

There is another important feature of the investigation: we will be working in close collaboration with Professor Hywel Williams, Professor of Dermatology at the University of Nottingham. Professor Williams is internationally recognised for his research in eczema, and he will give important advice on all the dermatological aspects of the work. The collaboration also bestows a wider respectability on our research efforts.

We are working to secure substantial research funding for both the pilot study and the full trial, so if you personally would like to support our research, we would be delighted to receive your contribution.

Robert Mathie, PhD
Research Development Adviser
BHA and Faculty of Homeopathy
Direct telephone:
020 7566 7801

Phosphorus...

Marysia Kratimenos traces the history of this essential element and profiles the remedy



Picture: Detail of The Alchymist by Joseph Wright, Derby Museum and Art Gallery/ Bridgeman Art Library

When Phosphorus was first discovered it was thought to be the elusive Philosopher's Stone sought by alchemists

Phosphorus is found in the form of phosphates in both the animal and plant kingdoms. It is essential for the normal functioning of the nervous system, the manufacture of proteins including DNA, the metabolism of foods and the release of energy (photosynthesis in plants.) It activates the vitamin B complex. Most Phosphorus in the body is in bone, as calcium phosphate, but large amounts are also present in the brain, muscles and red blood cells. Phosphate deficiency is very rare as it is widespread in foods, but can occur in certain medical conditions. It can lead to muscle weakness, loss of appetite, joint problems, a bone disease similar to rickets and problems with nerve conduction and brain function.

Phosphorus was first isolated in 1673, by Brandt, an alchemist in Hamburg, and shortly afterwards by Kunkel in Saxony. After distilling vast quantities of human urine with various chemicals, Brandt was left with a small amount of a brilliantly luminescent material, which was thought to be the elusive Philosopher's Stone. Although, it lacked the potential to create gold, Phosphorus rapidly became an integral chemical in the alchemists' repertoire. The name Phosphorus comes from the Greek, meaning the bringer of light. In alchemic circles it was known as the Morning Star, the planet Venus. Its unique properties led to many scientific papers being published about it and its potential medicinal uses.

Robert Boyle, the father of modern chemistry was fascinated by Phosphorus, and his research into it brought about the separation of alchemy from the more "scientific" chemistry.

Following its discovery attempts were made to discover its medicinal properties. Kunkel made it into "luminous tablets" which were reputed to heal epilepsy and melancholia (depression). Paracelsus also used Phosphorus and Hahnemann was deeply influenced by his work.

In the 18th century Phosphorus was found to assist in the treatment of tuberculosis. Phosphorus water, a less toxic form of the element rapidly gained respectability in medical circles. In 1921 the American Medical Association recommended it for the treatment of anaemia and to facilitate new bone formation. It appeared in the British Pharmacopoeia as late as the 1950s, as treatment for nervous exhaustion, depression, pneumonia, impotence and certain eye conditions. The tonics, Sanatogen and Metatone still contain glycero-phosphates. These chemicals are responsible for the uplifting effects of these health tonics.

Friedrich Nietzche, the philosopher, developed a theory that personality is dependent on the chemicals in the body. He believed that if Phosphorus were lacking, nervous exhaustion and depression would result. Predictably, his ideas were dismissed as the rantings of a madman, but recent advances in psychological medicine are starting to validate his thoughts. The new anti-depressants act by altering brain chemistry.

The devil's element

There is a darker side to Phosphorus, hence its reputation as the devil's element. It is highly inflammable and thus an essential ingredient in fireworks. It is used in the manufacture of matches, originally called Lucifer sticks. Originally the more toxic white phosphorus was used, nowadays it is red phosphorus. Those working in the match-making factories were exposed to high doses of the chemical and many developed phossy

jaw as a result. This horrific condition is characterised by the rotting of teeth and the jaw bones, leading to appalling pain and infection.

Phosphorus has many military uses; it was used in the First World War as a smoke screen. The billowing clouds masked troop movements. The Molotov cocktail utilises Phosphorus' incendiary properties. In 1943 Phosphorus bombs were dropped on Hamburg, the city where it was discovered.

The nerve gases Sarin and Tabun are phosphorus compounds. They act by interfering with the body's nervous impulses. Both were developed by German scientists looking for new fertilisers. Intensive farming leeches Phosphorus from the soil and the resulting crops suffer. The Black Death of the 14th century led to the death of a third of England's population. It is believed that it had such a devastating effect because the people were suffering from malnutrition brought on by years of such intensive farming. Crop rotation and leaving a field fallow improves the soil and these measures were brought in after the plague.

As the population grew it became essential to find more practical methods of improving soil quality. Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles, advocated the use of bone ash, compost and manure – natural sources of essential plant nutrients, which are still used today in organic farming. Commercial farmers rely on industrially prepared phosphates.

Phosphates are major food additives, used to prolong shelf life, emulsify fats and as raising agents in baked goods. Phosphoric acid in cola drinks provides the tangy taste, and the "high". Phosphates are used to bind fluoride in toothpaste. Recent work published in the respected medical journal, *The Lancet*, proves the long held belief that certain food additives exacerbate hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder. Excess phosphate intake from junk foods leads to problems absorbing iron, calcium, magnesium and zinc. The exclusion of additives and preservatives from the diet has a beneficial effect on many conditions, including eczema and asthma.

Phosphorus replaced Arsenic as the main ingredient in rat poison and as a consequence was used in murders. Poisoning led to liver failure and the subsequent haemorrhages, a raging thirst, the smell of garlic on the breath, diarrhoea, convulsions and kidney failure. The fact that the organs glowed in the dark led to early arrests, and Rodine was banned under the 1963 Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act.

The concept of spontaneous human combustion has fascinated people ever since Charles Dickens wrote *Bleak House*. Many are actually murders or accidents, but there are several cases, which defy logical explanation. It is believed that after ignition takes place, the body acts rather like the wick of a candle, so that the surrounding room is left undamaged while the person is almost completely reduced to ashes. Phosphorus has been implicated. It is used in fire-retardant fabrics especially nightwear. Treated clothing smoulders and the fire is directed towards the body.

The gut produces large amounts of phosphane gas



Greta Garbo as the consumptive heroine, Marguerite Gautier, in the film Camille*, brought Phosphorus to life for homeopaths*

Photo: bfi Stills

that is highly combustible. The source of the original igniting spark in these incidents is debatable. Farmers are aware of spontaneous ignition of haystacks, again due to the accumulation of phosphane gases. It may be that something similar is occurring in spontaneous human combustion.

"Will o' the wisp" may also be explained by this natural phenomenon, and the "ghosts" seen in churchyards. These may be nothing more than escaping luminescent gases, which are interpreted as ghostly apparitions by those with a fertile imagination. Indeed clairvoyants and mediums of the last century used phosphorus paints to create atmospheric luminescence in séances.

Phosphorus… the remedy

Phosphorus was introduced into homeopathy by Hahnemann, and he performed the earliest scientific experiments on it. As like cures like, a study of the toxicology of the element rapidly reveals its curative nature. The early physicians have long identified the potential uses of red phosphorus. By using the potentised form of the element, homeopathy reaps the therapeutic benefits without the toxic dangers.

The constitutional picture of Phosphorus was described by Kent in the 19th century. Many authors have elaborated on this model and added a psychological profile of the Phosphoric type.

The Phosphoric individual is pale, anaemic, with full red lips, thin with a narrow high arched chest: the appearance typical of someone suffering with tuberculosis.

Romantic literature of the 19th century is full of Phosphoric heroines. Dumas' *La Dame aux Camelias* is a notable example. Greta Garbo gave a brilliant portrayal of the consumptive heroine, Marguerite Gautier, in the Hollywood film and brought Phosphorus to life for homeopaths.

The constitutional Phosphorus is extrovert, bright, lively, with sparkling eyes and a charismatic nature. One feels invigorated in her company. She is intensely sympathetic and acutely sensitive to mood, atmosphere and all sensory impressions. She is impressionable and clairvoyant. She is imaginative and bubbly, the typical "bright young thing".

Mia Farrow as Daisy in the film of Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* demonstrates the shadow side of Phosphorus. Daisy is a social butterfly, narcissistic and highly-strung. Although she probably loves Gatsby in her way, self-preservation and self-interest take precedence. Her character is shallow and emotionally immature; she is incapable of the intensity of love that Gatsby feels. In difficult situations, she falls apart, descends into histrionics and demands intense sympathy and support from others. She needs protection from the harsh realities of life. After the drama of Gatsby's tragic death, Daisy continues her life as though nothing had happened; the ugly events do not fit into her idealistic view of the world. It is as though Gatsby never existed.

Just as with the element there is a darker side to the personality. Being so open, the Phosphorus type is prone to fears, anxieties and the result of a vivid imagination. There is a great fear of the dark, the supernatural, fire, storms, disease and death. The element Phosphorus is unstable; it rapidly turns into the gaseous form when exposed to air. Likewise, the Phosphorus archetype lacks boundaries on every level. The intense sensitivity to "other worlds" and the fears are one expression of this lack of personal boundaries.

This tendency extends on a physical level too. There is a bleeding tendency leading to nosebleeds, bleeding gums, heavy periods, bruising, and clotting disorders, which can result in anaemia.

Just like a match, the Phosphorus personality is prone to burn out. This may be emotional, leading to depression or nervous exhaustion, or physical illness may result. A dose of Phosphorus rapidly restores the spark.

As a tubercular remedy, there is a tendency to upper respiratory complaints: sore throat, hoarseness, bronchitis, asthma and chest infections. The bleeding tendency leads to blood streaked sputum, and the pains are burning in nature. There is a deterioration of the condition as dusk approaches, and the patient becomes fearful, craving company and sympathy.

In expert medical hands Phosphorus may be used to treat serious disease, such as epilepsy, liver conditions, including hepatitis, arthritis and destructive bone diseases. Phosphorus is an immensely important remedy in homeopathy, one of our desert island remedies. It is full of contradictions, as gentle and loving as an affectionate kitten yet as dangerous and destructive as the deadliest of poisons.

Marysia Kratimenos MB BS FRCS(Ed) MFHom is on the staff of the RLHH where she is involved in stress clinics, general medicine, paediatrics and neuro-linguistic programming.

Hurry, hurry, hurry...

A young man's impatience and a cluster of diverse symptoms led *Keith Souter* to prescribe Sulphuric acid

People choose homeopathic treatment for different reasons. Some are brought up on homeopathy and would rarely consider any other approach in the first instance. Some are converts to the method after witnessing a friend or relative's recovery, or after experiencing a dramatic improvement in their own health after taking some remedy or other. Yet others approach it with cynicism, having perhaps been down several therapeutic avenues in search of a solution to their problem.

When Tom came to see me he belonged, by his own admission, to the last group. Indeed, his opening salvo was a direct challenge: "I'm not sure that I believe in homeopathy. I can't see the logic in it. I expect my problems will be too difficult to sort out, because no one has managed to help before. I really don't want to waste your time."

As it happened, Tom had been seen by several medical professionals, including his GP, his dentist, a physician, a neurologist, an immunologist, and several other complementary practitioners. The range of practitioners involved reflected the diversity of his complaints, the most pressing of which were: mouth ulceration, migrainous headaches, general anxiety and continual fatigue.

The consultation

After the initial pleasantries I explained a little about my perception of homeopathy and the way that homeopathy might be able to help him. But already, before we had really started on the problem, Tom was giving me clues about himself. He talked in a curious staccato fashion. It was as if the words tumbled out in a rapid burst once he had taken time to think out what he was to say, rather than immediately translating thoughts into words.

And he clearly felt that time was important. Although he said he did not wish to waste my time, what he really meant was that he did not want to waste his own time. This had been emphasised by him arriving early for his appointment, then pacing fairly noisily up and down in the hall outside my consulting room until the appointed time. He was clearly a young man in a hurry.

Tom was a tall, fair-haired, 24-year-old man, an associate solicitor in a local law firm. He was dressed in a fashionably smart and professional manner. He was pale with dark rings under his eyes.

"I thought it would save time if I typed out the facts of my case," he said, almost leaping out of his chair and presenting me with a set of meticulous records.

So, time again. And one really couldn't help but notice the speed at which he moved.

Tom's problems had begun some years previously at school, when he had started to develop migraine. The attacks had gradually become more frequent and more severe. They had been fully investigated and formally diagnosed as migraine, which responded to conventional prophylactic treatment.

Later, at university, he began to experience troublesome mouth ulcers, which failed to respond to any treatment, either medical or dental. He also started to experience problems with heartburn and dyspepsia, for which he was referred to a physician, because it was suspected that he could have an ulcer. All investigations



proved to be normal.

In his final year he became quite anxious, experiencing frequent nightmares.

"They were horrible," he told me, "I was always racing about, being chased with axes or swords. I often woke up and had to rush to the bathroom to be sick."

And after university he became aware of fatigue. Nothing dramatic at first, just a feeling of tiredness at the end of the day, but gradually feeling so tired that he simply could not be bothered doing the things he had to do.

"That really worried me. I had so many projects on the go. Always reading four or five books at a time, having a full diary. I just couldn't be bothered. I just felt ill with headaches, stomach upsets or had zero energy. At times it's been a struggle to get up to work."

It was then that he started on a round of health practitioners. Over a couple of years various diagnoses such as ME, irritable bowel syndrome, candidiasis and food allergies were postulated, focused upon and treated.

"I just react to all sorts of things," he told me, indicating several pages of allergy testings done in different ways at different centres. "Cigarette smoke, ink, petrol fumes and oranges give me a migraine without fail," he volunteered, "and wheat upsets my stomach."

"What about alcohol?" I asked.

An emphatic shake of the head. "Never a problem. I know wine is supposed to give you migraine, but I love it."

Throughout that first consultation Tom had repeatedly fidgeted and looked at his watch. I mentioned this and the fact that time seemed important to him. He laughed self-consciously and admitted that he was always in a hurry.

"With everything," he continued. "I walk fast and hate being held up. A nightmare for me is being in a crowd so that I can't get on. I hate people dithering ahead of me. And I eat fast, eat too quickly I suppose, which won't help my digestion, but I can't help it."

I asked if he thought quickly, too.

He looked pensive. "Yes and no. If I'm writing, my thoughts go faster than my hand, so my writing is illegible. That's why I type everything. When I'm talking I find that my thoughts sometimes get jumbled and I mix my words up. I hate that if I'm with a client."

I asked Tom if he thought that the word "hurry" applied to him.

He smiled. "Actually, I'm more hurry, hurry, hurry."

The remedy

One can get the impression when one reads a case study that a remedy jumps out at the homeopath from the case history and the accompanying medical examination. In fact, there are many different approaches that can be used. Does one, for example, focus on a local problem, such as Tom's mouth ulceration, or try to work out the constitutional remedy? Is the constitutional remedy appropriate at any one time, or should one consider the totality of the case which includes the current cluster of problems? Whole books have been written about this thorny issue of what one should treat.

Sometimes, of course, there is something striking about the individual's case. Something which seems to run like a thread through every aspect of the individual's being. In Tom's case, the word "hurry" comes back again and again.

We have many remedies in the materia medica, which have this characteristic. One has to think of Sulphuric acid, Lachesis, Arsenicum album, Tarentula, Medorrhinum, Sulphur and Lilium tigrinum, among a lot of other well-known remedies. But of them all, Sulphuric acid is characterised by this pressure, this hurry in virtually all

aspects of life.

This hurry is the thread, which criss-crosses to produce a framework on which to build our tapestry. When we look more closely at the problems Tom was most concerned with, we find that confirmatory pictures slowly start to emerge.

The headaches that Tom suffered from were quite characteristic. They were usually left sided and he described an occasional feeling as if his brain was a bit loose.

He was hardly free of his mouth ulcers, which were painful, like acid burns inside his mouth. He was also very concerned about halitosis.

The anxiety and the nightmares are common features of this remedy. Tom considered deadlines to be sacrosanct, so anything which might make him late or fail to meet a deadline would make him feel extremely anxious.

The sensitivity to various fumes is interesting, as is the history of food sensitivity. Indeed, patients in need of Sulphuric acid have very often travelled extensively down the food allergy trail.

The tiredness is also interesting, because all of our "acids" in homeopathy have this feature. With Sulphuric acid it is present, but not usually so debilitating as to be a major issue. Indeed, Tom struggled with it, but always managed to keep working.

And finally, a neat little confirmatory feature, his liking for wine.

The follow-up

As might be expected, Tom was in a hurry to try out his homeopathic remedy, to see whether there really could be



Time was important to Tom, a young man always in a hurry

something in this method of treatment. I duly explained what we were striving to achieve and gave him a prescription for Sulphuric acid 1M, three doses to be taken over 24 hours.

When I saw him for his follow up consultation he was, of course, just as hurried as usual, but with some major differences. This time he was keen to volunteer information about how he had been. He still spoke quickly, but he himself felt that his thoughts and speech were much more in harmony, that he could verbalise his thoughts much clearer than before.

After a brief two-day period when he had an aggravation of his headaches and a transient feeling of nausea, he started to feel much calmer. The pressure to do everything at once, to put pressure on himself at work and play began to reduce. The mouth ulceration and halitosis cleared up within the next week and he felt a gradual improvement in his energy levels.

"I still can't believe it," he said. "Three little powders, it doesn't make sense. It must be a placebo effect."

"Healthy scepticism is acceptable," I told him. "Just make your assessment on results."

No further treatment was given, merely a follow-up arranged for two months thence. At that appointment Tom said that he had continued to feel well, but that the headaches had started to return, as had halitosis, though not the mouth ulceration. He thought that pressure of work had something to do with it, since he had started to have unpleasant dreams once again.

Sulphuric acid 1M was again prescribed; three doses over 24 hours.

On the subsequent follow-up Tom declared himself to be amazed by homeopathy, since his headaches, nightmares and anxiety had all gone, as had his halitosis. He had not felt so well for several years, especially since many of the things he had seemed to react to in the past no longer seemed to bother him. He declared himself to be a complete convert to the method. And so he has remained over the following years.

Sulphuric acid is present in the environment, in exhaust fumes and acid rain. People in need of it homeopathically often suffer from migraine, food allergies and environmental illness. They generally also experience the tiredness of all acids, and often may have problems of "hyperacidity", affecting the stomach to produce indigestion, dyspepsia, heartburn and classic mouth ulcers. But the most common feature of all, in Tom's words is "Hurry, hurry, hurry."



Keith Souter MB ChB FRCGP MFHom MIPsiMed, DipMedAc is a part-time GP in Yorkshire. He also has a private holistic medicine practice and is a medical author and newspaper columnist. His interests in elderly medicine and emotional problems are reflected in two of his books - *Homoeopathy for the Third Age* and *Homoeopathy: Heart & Soul.*

Making sense of health and illness

A MAJOR NEW THREE-PART SERIES by Bob Leckridge MBChB FFHom



All photos by Jane Kelly

The homeopathic approach, the whole understanding of health, of illness and of human beings which has developed from Hahnemann's first principles into our present day level of understanding has great potential to teach us how to stay healthy and how best to deal with illness. This series considers some of the basic principles of homeopathy, focusing on making sense of health and of illness. These insights will enable the reader to take practical steps to be more able to experience better health, to understand that our solutions are in our own hands. We can actively enhance our self-healing.

This pull-out and keep series includes:

- Observation and self-reflection
- Patterns of illness
- Causes and courses of disease

Observation and self-reflection

The homeopathic remedy, Arnica, has been dubbed "the great introducer" because it is the introduction to homeopathy for so many people. It can be purchased over the counter in pharmacies and health food stores and it has a simple indication for use – bruising. People often buy it because they have injured themselves and want something that will do more than just give pain relief. They want something, which will actually help them to get better more quickly. They want the injury to heal quickly and permanently. More than this, people don't want to take a medicine that will give them even more problems than they had before they took it. They want something that is free of side-effects. Arnica fits this bill. It does all these things for many people.

In medicine, there is nothing more impressive than the remedy that actually works. Unfortunately we often find that the medicine we are prescribed doesn't do "exactly what it says on the tin"! So, most people who take Arnica for bruising are very impressed. In this case, it does just what it claims it will do. It enables a complete and natural repair rapidly. This is not uncommonly the very first experience of homeopathy that a person will have. This experience then leads us to think that maybe homeopathic remedies will

The British Homeopathic Association
15 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0AA
Tel: 020 7566 7800 Fax: 020 7566 7815
email: info@trusthomeopathy.org
www.trusthomeopathy.org

work as impressively and as quickly for other problems. This is where the problems begin.

One of the key features of homeopathy is that "like cures like". That sounds nice and easy, but it isn't. Samuel Hahnemann, who developed the homeopathic method says, at the start of his book, *The Organon*, which explains the method, "The physician's highest calling, his only calling, is to make sick people healthy – to heal, as it is termed." He was right. It is still the reason why doctors learn homeopathy. They want to make sick people healthy. Hahnemann goes on to describe how to do this with homeopathy. "If the physician clearly perceives what has to be cured in disease, if he clearly perceives what it is in medicines which heals… if he knows in each particular case how to apply the remedy most appropriate by its character, prepare it exactly as required and give it in the right amount, and repeat the dose exactly when required… then he knows how to treat thoroughly and efficaciously, and is a true physician."

The first time I read that, I thought I understood it. I've read it many times since. It's amazing how concisely it captures what we are trying to do. All we need to know is the full, unique story of the patient, then to find the single best remedy for that patient. The single best remedy is the one whose description in the materia medicae (the books where these remedies are described) is the most similar to the description of the illness, which the patient has given. Here's where it begins to get very tricky. There are over 3,000 remedies to choose from. They all have uniquely different descriptions. Which one is most like the patient's description of their illness?

That sounds pretty tricky, and it is, but it gets even trickier once you stop to think, and realise that every single illness in every single person is unique. Now, you might be thinking, "But a bruise is a bruise, no matter who has it, isn't it?" and you'd be right, up to a point. That's why Arnica is the great introducer. Most bruises are similar. However, Arnica doesn't work for everyone's bruises. Why not? The reasons are revealed by paying closer attention. All bruises might look the same, but there are differences. Not all bruises feel the same, and not all are relieved in the same way. For example, in some circumstances, the bruised part will feel better if a cold application is applied to it. In other circumstances, it will feel better if a hot application is applied. Some bruised areas feel worse if they are touched. Others feel better if gentle, firm pressure is applied. You can begin to imagine the wide range of potential differences.

However, there is something else to consider. A bruise might be a bruise, but a bruise doesn't exist alone. There is a person who has that bruise. That person is unique and they may well react in quite unusual or unique ways when they have that bruise. The injury might have made them angry, or it might have knocked their confidence so they become anxious, or it might have demoralised them



Your healing systems are working all the time

and made them sad. They will react to these emotions differently and will try to cope with them differently. So, for some people, in some circumstances, Arnica will not help their bruise. What then? Sadly, in such an event, people often conclude that homeopathy doesn't work after all. They are wrong. It was only Arnica which didn't work, and it didn't work because it was not the remedy which best matched their illness. If they don't give up, what might they do then? Well, they either have to try to find the better match themselves, or they have to consult a homeopathic practitioner who has more knowledge of the remedies than the patient does.

Self-help guides

Most of the homeopathic self-help books available are designed to try to help the reader to select the right remedy in a given circumstance. They are useful up to a point. In simple, acute situations, with clear, common symptoms, the patient might find a useful remedy. So, Arnica becomes not the only remedy in the medicine cabinet. Maybe the layperson will add more remedies as other situations arise. Chamomilla might help the teething infant, or Colocynth, the colicky baby, or Nux vomica may relieve the hangover or the food-poisoning, and so on. *Health & Homeopathy* has carried a number of useful articles of this type over the years.

Sometimes, after using a few remedies purchased over the counter in this way, a person might be curious to find out a bit more about homeopathy. This may well lead them into discovering the idea of the "polychrests". These are very commonly indicated remedies, which have a wide range of uses. Dr David Lilley's masterclass series has been an excellent introduction to some of these. As

Observation and self-reflection

he points out, the descriptions of the "polychrests" are like the archetypes within us all, so it isn't difficult to see our own similarities to these pictures.

These two approaches, the cookbook approach to finding an acute remedy, and the learning the "polychrests" approach cover almost every homeopathic book ever written for a public readership. Both approaches have value and both can be quite fascinating. However, both are firmly focused on something called "remedies". In this new series, I want to fill a gap. There is a lot more to homeopathy than remedies.

The homeopathic method can help us to gain a better understanding of why we are sick. It can help us to discover, not only how to become well again, but also, how to stay well. In short, it can help us to make sense of health and illness. It can do this without even taking any remedies, but if we learn about the method and what it teaches us about ourselves, it will make it much easier to find the best remedies for our illnesses. It will help us to navigate that tricky path from illness to health. Finally, by greatly enhancing our understanding of ourselves and of others, learning about the homeopathic method can help us to grow and fulfill our destinies.

Does that sound all too good to be true? Is it too grand a claim? Well, read these articles, try out the exercises and test it for yourself. That's probably what you did with Arnica after all. It only convinced you because it worked.

Symptoms and labels

Remember that simple summary of how homeopathy works? "Like cures like". The first "like" in that phrase refers to remedies. As I mentioned earlier, there are plenty of books and articles available which help you learn the descriptions of the remedies. I want to concentrate on the second "like" in the phrase. That second "like" is you, or whoever is ill. Orthodox medicine has developed in a way that gives priority to a disease over a person. This is despite the exhortations of many great physicians, including Dr Osler, who said, "It is better to treat the person that has the disease, than the disease that has the person." (His book *Principles and Practice of Medicine* [1982] became a standard text.)

Much medical training is about establishing a diagnosis. By diagnosis we tend to mean a clinical label. It is the label that applies to a collection of symptoms and characteristic changes in tissues and organs. These symptoms and changes are the ones, which are shared by everyone with the same diagnosis. However, no two people with the same diagnosis are the same, and no two stories of the one disease are ever the same. Don't these differences matter? In homeopathic thinking they not only matter, they are the keys to finding the right remedies. People have taken on board the medical model of thinking to an extent, which can actually block them from being aware of the details of their own experience.

When I meet a patient for the first time, one of the first things I ask is "Tell me your story", or "Tell me all about yourself and how you are." Not untypically people will start with a statement of their disease. "I've got asthma" or "I've got endometriosis" or "I'm a diabetic". When I ask them to say more, they might go on to list all the tests, drugs or procedures they've received and what other doctors have said. Conveying this information might take several minutes, and in that time, I get to know almost nothing about this person.

It can be a bit of a shock for them to hear me say that what interests me most is how they experience their asthma, or endometriosis or whatever. What is their experience? How does it affect them? What does it mean in their lives? What impact does it have? Sadly, patients are not accustomed to telling their stories in detail. They've been trained to stick to the labels. This can be so ingrained that it takes a bit of work to do it differently. However, becoming aware of your daily experience is the best way to learn, not only what makes you unique, but also what are the best ways for you to stay well, or become well.

Observing yourself

Try this exercise. Get yourself a notebook. It can be a cheap exercise book from the stationers, or a beautiful handmade book, or even a computer or PDA, whatever is your preference.

You are going to write down your observations of yourself in this notebook. What you write is only for you. Only you should decide whether or not to share any of it with anyone else. It can be useful to share these insights but it's best if you write it for your eyes only. That way you won't worry about other people's thoughts or views and you'll be freer to write what it true.

I suggest it is a book, which you carry with you everywhere for the next week. Write in it whenever you get a chance, but, at very least, write in it for about 15 minutes towards the end of every day.

What are you going to write? Any observations of you, your body, your feelings, your experiences today. Let's consider the 15-minute end of day slot first. This is a time to reflect on the day just passed. Take a minute or two to sit quietly and replay the day like a video recording in your head. Start at the beginning and hit the fast forward button. Run the story of your day. Stop the tape at any point where something strikes you. If you are re-running the morning, the first thing which strikes you might be something that happened on the way to work, or when someone telephoned, or when you started on a particular task for the day. What strikes you about this particular event? Describe it in your book. What exactly

was the event? What did you notice? What did you feel? What did you experience? Then fast forward to the next thing that strikes you. Anything which strikes you as "remarkable" is – make a remark about it!

Next let's consider how you might use the book throughout the day. Well, it's the same as the 15-minute end of day slot but focused on what is happening now, or what has just happened. It might be an event, it might be a strong feeling, it might be a physical sensation of some kind. Say, for example, you notice that you have a pain. Stop now and write it down. Where is that pain, exactly? What does it feel like? Do you feel any other sensations at the same time (nausea, lightheadedness, an itch, or whatever)? What were you doing when it began? What can you do to ease it a little? Is there anything you are doing which seems to make it worse? Just write it down. Capture the detail. Check out what your body is telling you. Inside, your defence systems and your healing systems are working all the time. They are trying to keep you healthy and to deal with any problems that occur. Become a bit more aware of these activities. At the deepest level, we know what is good for us and what is bad for us. We have learned to develop our own unique strategies for coping. If you want to understand what yours are, then you'll have to become more aware of them.

Isn't this going to turn me into a health-obsessed maniac? Well, it could do, if that's the way you wish to go, but there is no reason why it should. Becoming more aware of your own patterns will help you find your own answers to many of life's difficulties and, at the very least, give you the opportunities to make changes. You can't choose to change if you don't know what the current situation is. It's like the old joke about asking the man "How would I get to Brownsville from here?" and getting the answer "Sure, if I was going to go to Brownsville I wouldn't start from here."

Well, here is the place to start. Get to know where you are. Then you'll be able to choose where you want to go and figure out how to get there. Even if your observations don't help you to see some new possible solutions for yourself (I think they will help you uncover some), knowing yourself and your reactions better will help a homeopath to find that elusive right remedy for you. Instead of sitting down and saying, "I've got x", you'll be able to tell your own, unique story.



At the deepest level, we know what is good for us and what is bad for us

Dr Bob Leckridge graduated from Edinburgh University in 1978 and worked as a GP until 1995 since when he has worked full-time as a Specialist in Homeopathic Medicine at Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital. He teaches homeopathy internationally and is the author of *Homeopathy in Primary Care*. He became President of the Faculty of Homeopathy in 1998.

In the next article we'll consider this issue of observation a little further. How can it help us to understand others? How can it help us to be better parents, or better spouses? How can it help us in our relationships with others? We'll also begin to explore what homeopathy teaches us about how we get sick and about how illnesses develop. Then in the last of the series, we'll look at what homeopathy teaches us about self-defence and self-healing.

Coughs and sneezes spread diseases…

Lee Kayne offers advice on complementary therapies for winter ailments



Photo courtesy of Kimberly-Clark

The common cold is caused by a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract. Symptoms typically appear one to two days after infection and last around a week, varying in type and severity but generally including sneezing, sore throat, runny or blocked nose, cough, headache and sometimes, especially in children, fever. The symptoms will generally resolve themselves and it is usually possible to continue with one's daily business, especially with the help of allopathic or complementary therapies.

Influenza is also a viral infection and, although a vaccine has become available in recent years, the large number of different strains means that flu is still widespread. It is characterised by sudden onset with fever, extreme fatigue, muscle soreness as well as some or all of the symptoms of a cold. These symptoms can last up to two weeks and usually require the patient to rest completely for several days. Flu is responsible for many deaths each year and can be dangerous in very young or elderly patients and in those with an existing chronic condition such as diabetes or asthma. If flu is suspected in such cases or in any case where there is a prolonged high fever, the doctor should always be consulted.

Colds and flu spread more easily in the winter months due to the cold weather - we tend to spend less time outdoors and turn the heating up indoors. This, together with close contact with others in the home, at school, at work or on public transport creates a perfect environment for the spread of a virus. And the bad news is, there is no cure! So we must concentrate on alleviating the symptoms and strengthening the body's natural defences.

Conventional treatment

Allopathic treatments for cold and flu symptoms are widely available and include painkillers for relief of muscle aches and pains, sore throat, fever and headaches; nasal sprays or decongestants for a blocked nose; antihistamines to dry up runny nose and eyes; and cough suppressants.

Combination medications containing two or more of the above are also extremely popular due to both their convenience and economical nature. Such treatments do however have limitations. Many over the counter medicines, including some painkillers and decongestants, are not suitable for children or patients taking prescription medication – a pharmacist will be able to assist you in the appropriate choice. Additionally, these medicines treat a general group of symptoms, without considering the patient's individual needs or specific type of symptom.

Homeopathy

Remedies may be taken safely by any patient including babies and those taking prescription medication without concerns regarding side-effects or interactions. Because homeopathy takes into account the overall picture - a person's emotional makeup and general health, the type of illness and specific "modalities" that make the symptoms better or worse - two patients presenting with the same complaint, such as a cold with fever, might very well be given different homeopathic remedies. For example, in treating a fever, Aconite or Belladonna might be recommended in cases of sudden onset, although Ferrum phos or Bryonia may be more appropriate if onset is gradual and depending on the modalities.

However, in a patient who is emotional, weepy and maintains that the symptoms improve outdoors, Pulsatilla may be more useful.

For flu, Gelsemium is often the remedy of choice, especially in symptoms characterised by shaking, chill and sore, aching muscles especially in patients who dislike cold and damp.

The table overleaf summarises the major remedies useful in the acute treatment of cold and flu symptoms.

However, self-prescribing is often difficult and the advice of a health

professional trained in homeopathy will always provide the most appropriate treatment and most effective outcome. This is especially important if receiving other homeopathic treatment from a qualified practitioner.

In Europe and America, a very popular homeopathic product called Oscillococcinum can be bought over the counter for the prevention and treatment of colds and flu. This product is not licensed for general retail sale in the UK, but might be obtained with a doctor's prescription.

Other therapies

Aromatherapy oils can also be very good for relieving many of the symptoms of colds and flu, if used appropriately and after seeking professional advice. Oils can be used in an inhalation or diluted in a carrier oil such as almond or grapeseed for use in massage. Peppermint and eucalyptus oils can be used to clear the head, unblock the nose and ease muscular aches and pains. Peppermint oil can also be placed in a hot footbath to help draw toxins from the body. Tea tree oil is used for its intrinsic anti-viral properties and to boost immunity and lavender oil is good for easing headaches, muscle aches and pains and soothing chesty coughs. For adults, add a few drops of oil to a bath, vaporiser or bowl of hot water and inhale. For children or babies, a few drops in a cup of warm water placed above the radiator in their bedroom at night can work wonders.

Herbal remedies, vitamins and supplements also have much to offer. A number of studies have shown that taking zinc and vitamin C during a cold can actually shorten its duration by as much as 50 per cent. The herb echinacea can boost the immune system and help prevent infection from taking hold if taken regularly.

General Symptoms	*Remedy*
First signs especially after a chill, thirsty, possibly anxious.	Aconite
Sudden onset, high fever, hot, red, throbbing headache, sensitive to light, noise.	Belladonna
Streaming nose (possibly eyes too), sneezing, clear discharge often thicker after 24-48 hours, prefers to suffer alone and shuns sympathy.	Natrum mur
Headache, pains all over, irritable, nauseous, (also good for a hangover!). Nose congested with little discharge, chilly – cannot get warm, even in bed.	Nux vomica
Established symptoms, headache, shivers, fatigue, aches and pains, alternating hot and cold, sore nose, very sleepy.	Gelsemium
Very thirsty, sore muscles/bones, headache, worse on movement.	Eupatorium perf
Fever, catarrh, burning nasal discharge, sneezing.	Arsenicum iod
Slow onset, mild fever, worse at night, better for cold, nosebleeds.	Ferrum phos
Catarrh in nose with thick discharge, ears feel blocked, worse at night, better in fresh air and with attention from loved ones.	Pulsatilla
Dry, painful cough, worse at night, thirsty - often most effective as a linctus.	Bryonia
A specialised combination remedy for the prevention and treatment of colds and flu. Often prescribed by homeopathic doctors for at risk patients.	Influenzinum/ Bacillinum

Home remedies

Even so much as mention a runny nose or sore throat within earshot of my grandma and she'll promptly whip up a batch (or seven) of her famous chicken soup! If we consider some of the key ingredients, we begin to realise that the use of this traditional remedy actually has some basis in fact. It has a high salt content and, as we know, gargling with salted water helps to destroy bacteria and ease symptoms of a sore throat. Onions and garlic (the Allium remedies in homeopathy) are also excellent for colds.

While in the kitchen, ensure your cupboard is well stocked with honey to coat a dry, scratchy throat, lemon and other citrus fruits for their vitamin C and antioxidant properties and cinnamon for its anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. Tea prepared with these ingredients (or a "hot toddy" containing one other important Scottish ingredient) is very soothing and helps to promote a good night's sleep. Perhaps Grandma really does know best after all!



Lee Kayne PhD MRPharmS DFHom(Pharm) is a community pharmacist in Glasgow.

The Tragedy of
King Richard III

– a suitable case for homeopathic treatment?
asks *Maggie Curley*

Shakespeare's keen observations of the human condition are as relevant today as when they were written over 400 years ago and many of his characters provide us with beautiful pictures of homeopathic remedies.

Sitting through a performance of Richard III one evening recently at Stratford, I slowly began to realise that I was watching homeopathy in action. A remedy was presenting itself to me and I couldn't wait to get to the Repertory as soon as I returned home.

Whether this is an accepted method of enjoying Shakespeare, I'm not sure, but it has certainly brought many characters to life for me since that night and I never cease to be amazed at discovering what a brilliant homeopath that great playwright might have been!

Briefly, the play is set in the period towards the end of the Wars of the Roses, the civil wars between the houses of York and Lancaster. Richard Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester of the house of York, is a deformed hunchback whose eldest brother, Edward Duke of York, has become King Edward IV.

Richard has been secretly scheming to secure the crown for himself by disposing of all those who stand between him and the throne. The first in this bloody line is his brother Clarence whom he arranges to have murdered in the Tower of London.

When Edward IV dies, his elder son is proclaimed king, but as he is only a child, Richard becomes Lord Protector. The young prince and his little brother are taken to the Tower and murdered, leaving the way clear for Richard to be crowned monarch. He also



Photo: Joe Cocks Collection, Shakespeare Centre Library

Anthony Sher brilliantly portrays Richard III

has his wife, Anne, murdered as he plans to marry his niece, Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward IV.

Eventually the Lancastrian, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, raises an army against Richard and the two meet at the battle of Bosworth Field where Richard is finally killed and Richmond is crowned Henry VII.

And so to the very disturbed psyche of Richard himself and the conflict of good and evil which runs throughout the play. The theme is set in Richard's opening soliloquy:

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this son of York…
But… I that am rudely stamped…
Deform'd, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up…
I am determined to prove a villain…
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle, false and treacherous

His deliberate moral choice is to be a villain in direct contrast to his brother King Edward. Richard is self-centred, ruthless, vindictive, cruel and hypocritical, a devious, evil, hunchbacked tyrant.

Richard is frequently referred to as a devil or an agent of hell: "…and mortal eyes cannot endure the devil"; "...foul devil, for God's sake hence and trouble us not"; "For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell…" ; "… and thou, unfit for any place but hell…"; "...sin, death and hell have set their marks on him."

Even Richard's mother, the Duchess of York, tells him:

Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth my hell
A grievous burden was thy birth to me
Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy
Thy schooldays frightful, desperate, wild and furious
Thy prime of manhood daring, bold and venturous
Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly and bloody
More mild, but yet more harmful, kind in hatred

And yet the other side of Richard, this monster of wickedness, is the attractive, humorous character, the character who can act a part of pious innocence, the character who is able to flatter the Lady Anne into becoming his wife:

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?...

In Act 1 scene 3, Richard says of himself:

The secret mischiefs that I set abroach
I lay unto the grievous charge of others…
But then I sigh, and, with a piece of scripture,
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:
And thus I clothe my naked villainy…
And seem a saint when most I play the devil.

In the early part of the play, Richard is supremely confident but as the drama progresses, he is tortured by self-doubt and fear. His powers decline and there is evidence of his memory failing, particularly in the episode when news has been brought of Richmond's invading army. He is tormented by his conscience and from his wife Lady Anne, we hear:

... for never yet one hour in his bed
Did I enjoy the golden dew of sleep
But with his timorous dreams was still awaked

And so the interaction between good and evil reaches a climax in the scenes before the final battle when both Richard and Richmond are visited by the ghosts of the murdered victims. To Richmond their cry is always "live and flourish" to Richard, "despair and die".

And Richard's words before the final battle sum up his inner conflict, his duality:

O coward conscience how dost thou afflict me!…
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What! Do I fear myself?
There's none else by…
Alack! I love myself.
Wherefore? For any good
That I myself have done unto myself?
O! no, alas! I rather hate myself.
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain. Yet I lie: I am not.

And:

Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;
Conscience is but a word

that cowards use…
March on, join bravely!
Let us to't pell mell;
if not to heaven, then
hand in hand to hell.

The Mind section of the Repertory is a gold mine in this case and I looked at it from both sides of Richard's character:

Cruelty
Want of moral feeling
Brutality
Wicked disposition
Hatred and revengeful
Unfeeling, hardhearted
Desire to kill
Delusions he is a devil
Want of self-confidence
Anxiety of conscience
Forgetful
Mischievous

The rubric which combines the two and in fact has only one remedy is – Sensation as if he had two wills, one commanding what the other forbids – which of course is the well known description of "an angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other".

Add three confirmatory rubrics: behaviour problems in children; restlessness in children and – frightful dreams – and it would appear that the pathological duality of Richard III was in desperate need of a dose of Anacardium!

Interestingly, for those who subscribe to the Doctrine of Signatures, the nut of Anacardium, the Marking Nut Tree, which is related to the cashew, has a somewhat deformed, humpbacked, heart shape due to its development on the end of rather than inside the fruit.

Hahnemann first proved Anacardium and in *Chronic Diseases* wrote: "If on choosing Anacardium, according to its peculiar symptoms, also one of the following states is found, this would only make more sure the correctness of its choice. Hypochondriac, troubled mood, depression, unsociableness, anxiety, fear of approach of death, lack of moral sense, inhumanity, hardheartedness, a condition as if he had two wills."

US homeopath Roger Morrison says the Anacardium state often develops in individuals who are living with unbearable inner conflict out of which come two strong and contradictory tendencies, inferiority and cruelty.

Richard III must present the most extreme example of this state, born deformed, "..scarce half made up", told by his mother "a grievous burden was thy birth to me", his intensely low self esteem is evident from the opening speech of the play through to some of his final words "O coward conscience how dost thou afflict me".

Anacardium tries to prove himself and Richard's coping mechanism to overcome his deeply flawed mind and body was to opt for the path of evil: "I am determined to prove a villain".

Ananda Zaren, an American homeopath, writes, "Tendency to overcompensate for their fearfulness or their real or imagined lack of capability. When they become aware of their own feelings of insecurity, they overcompensate by acting powerful, assertive and controlling. The weaker they feel, the more they compensate by acting aggressive."

Richard's hardhearted wickedness could not have been more aggressive, allowing him to murder indiscriminately. As the compensation deteriorates, self doubt and fear uncover the weak, pathetic creature beneath.

I wonder whether Richard's final pleading request "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse" should really have been for a dose of Anacardium and who knows, the course of history may have been changed for ever!



Photo: Jeremy Hoare/Garden Matters

Anacardium – the nut with a hump – is often indicated for people who have contradictory tendencies of inferiority and cruelty



Maggie Curley MBChB DRCOG MFHom was a GP in Kenilworth, Warwickshire from 1976 until two years ago when she gave up full time general medicine to concentrate on homeopathic practice and teaching. Living just a few miles from Stratford-upon-Avon, Maggie has always had a passion for the works of its greatest son, William Shakespeare.

Enlarged tonsils

Jeni Worden describes how she treated a toddler with worrying symptoms homeopathically



Parents Jenny and Glen are delighted with Cerys' homeopathic treatment

Baby Cerys was fast asleep in her mother's arms when I first met her in March 2002. She looked like a small but unwell cherub as she continued to sleep whilst her mother, Jenny, explained what was wrong.

Cerys, then 13 months old, had been ill on and off since she was aged just four to five months old. She had never been well since having a croup-like cough, which had then progressed to wheezy breathing, like that of asthma. After that initial illness, Cerys had gone on to develop a cough, which her mum described as similar to that of whooping cough. Her GP had been so concerned by this cough that a special swab taken from the back of the throat called a "per nasal swab" had been taken. This is one of the only ways that whooping cough, pertussis, can be diagnosed but fortunately for Cerys, this swab showed no evidence of this long-lasting infection. However, since that time, Cerys had been ill recurrently, having no more than five or six weeks of health at a time in between episodes of distressing symptoms.

These symptoms started with what seemed to be a simple cold. Colds are common in children of pre-school age and most children will suffer from six to eight colds a year, each one possibly lasting for up to four to six weeks at a time. This is the reason why most toddlers and nursery age children seem to have perpetually running noses.

However, poor Cerys suffered from complications, in that, when she had a cold, she vomited as well. This was obviously a very worrying symptom for her mum and not helped by the fact that Cerys often wheezed when she was unwell. Although Cerys was a very normal little girl in between being ill, her mother found the frequency of Cerys' symptoms distressing for her daughter and very worrying for herself and her husband.

Their GP had been supportive, referring Cerys to a consultant paediatrician for specialist advice about her condition. He had seen her about six weeks before I saw her and the GP had helpfully sent me a copy of his clinic letter. In it, he had mentioned how large Cerys' tonsils were and commented that they almost met in the middle of her throat. He noted that her breathing was "noisy" on the day she was seen but that this was not causing her any apparent distress. There was no obvious infection in her chest when examined.

The consultant thought that when Cerys caught a cold, the resulting increased mucus secretions caused irritation at the back of her throat and combined with her already enlarged tonsils, made the enlargement worse. This resulted in her coughing, as her throat tried to clear itself and then vomiting. Vomiting with a cough in children is much more common than in adults as they do not have the same degree of muscular development in their

diaphragm and gullet that adults have. This makes it easier (unfortunately) for children to regurgitate their stomach contents when being sick.

The wheeze that Cerys experienced was probably because of the cold virus making the small airways in her lungs much more irritable than usual. This results in the airways narrowing for a short time, causing a wheeze that can be easily heard.

The advice of the consultant was that there was no significant conventional treatment that could be advised at the time but that he would keep Cerys under review in his clinic in case her symptoms did worsen.

Cerys' parents, although appreciative of the consultant's advice, wanted to help their daughter in any way that they could. Their GP was more than happy to refer them to me for further help as we had been colleagues when I was an NHS GP.

Cerys was still asleep as I took both a homeopathic and conventional medical history from Jenny. Although troubled by pregnancy-related nausea and sickness whilst pregnant with Cerys (her first pregnancy), Jenny had been otherwise well. However, the vomiting symptoms had reappeared towards the end of her pregnancy, resulting in her being admitted to hospital with dehydration two weeks before Cerys was due. Cerys was finally born five days late by a Ventouse extraction.

There were no apparent problems related to Cerys' diet, although her dislike of lumpy food was very marked. Jenny described Cerys as a busy, happy, laughing baby when she was well. She liked to be out-doors.

The only area where Jenny had any trouble with her daughter when she was well was that Cerys woke frequently in the night. She loved to be cuddled and this was in fact the best way to get her to sleep, especially if combined with a rocking movement.

Although not normally a clingy child, she was just starting to be wary of strangers, which I would regard as a normal developmental milestone for this age group. Cerys had been walking for just over a month when seen and was saying simple words.

Physically, apart from being a very appealing child, she tended to get hot and could perspire easily.

Cerys had woken up by this time but was still very sleepy and it was difficult to assess her properly. She had been ill in the night, hence her unscheduled nap. Taking her physical symptoms and her episodes of being unwell since her attack of that croup-like cough when she was just four months old, I prescribed Spongia and Baryta carb 30c, one to be taken daily. I arranged a review appointment for Cerys in six weeks time.

Imagine my delight when a very different little girl came running in to see me three months later. The appointment had been delayed as Jenny was pregnant again and suffering from severe sickness once more. Cerys had had no episodes of ill health since last seen and she looked very happy, exploring my consulting room and chatting non-stop at the same time. She had seen her consultant in the intervening episode who had been amazed at the reduction in the size of her tonsils and equally pleased with her progress. Since starting the homeopathic treatment, and as the size of her tonsils reduced, Cerys also started to enjoy lumpy food. I didn't change the medication and arranged a follow up appointment for October 2002.

Cerys had a single episode of illness before her appointment but still looked well when next seen. She was also due to see the consultant. In view of this recurrence, and because Cerys was occasionally wheezy when she missed a tablet, I felt that perhaps a deeper acting remedy would help.

I prescribed three tablets of Phosphorus to be taken over a 24-hour period, in view of her combined problems of tonsillar and chest symptoms in such a happy, engaging child.

Cerys has remained well since last seen apart from one virus infection that did not result in her becoming as ill as she has been in the past. She was reviewed by her NHS consultant who was happy for her to stay on her homeopathic medication and has arranged not to see her again until Spring 2003. Jenny and her husband are delighted with Cerys' continued good health and all three of them are looking forward to the birth of a new baby soon.



Dr Jeni Worden MB ChB MRCGP MFHom was an NHS GP in a group practice in Christchurch, Bournemouth for ten years before leaving to expand her medical homeopathic practice in February 2001. She also practises at the Centre for the Study of Complementary Medicine in Southampton and still does GP locums to keep her skills as a conventional doctor up to date.