

# My son the homœopath!

By Francis Treuherz

There are many pitfalls and ethical issues in prescribing for close members of one's family and yet there are occasions when it is very necessary to do so. And it is a temptation to do so for one has a belief that one is doing one's best for one's child or parent, which of course can become a source of moral blackmail whether the prescription is successful or not. When is an emergency not an emergency? I have had occasion to prescribe for both of my elderly parents in recent years and I am now all too aware of the risks.

My mother in her late seventies had two major operations in quick succession, just one month apart. Six years previously, following a fall and a fractured femur she had a steel pin inserted and made a good recovery with the help of homœopathy. Six years later she required a hip replacement as her hip joints had worn differently from that time. She made such a good recovery from surgery with the assistance of *Arnica montana* that a month later she dislocated her new hip through over-activity! The second operation was too much for her and she declined rapidly with complications in the form of a urinary infection which did not respond to Septrin. On the contrary the Septrin seemed to weaken her and she could not eat.

Her homœopath was on vacation and I was called in to advise. I found her at home looking thin and weak and I was at first unable to distinguish any unusual feature of her case or see the important core of what was to be cured. I was in despair and she was in despair. That was the issue and I quickly turned to Kent's *Repertory* to the familiar rubric in the Mind chapter, *Despair of recovery*, and my eye alighted on a sub-rubric *during convalescence*. There was only one remedy listed, in the second grade of importance, and that was *Psorinum*, a nosode of the scabies vesicle first proved by Hahnemann. This seemed at first to be unlikely.... what other rubrics could I possibly find?.... and then I mused on her life. She had been young during the depression in Germany and had to take a wheelbarrow load of money to buy a loaf of bread. We had always to eat up all our food as children because of this, not to waste a scrap, and in her old age she was still as thrifty as ever though well enough provided for. She had a lifetime culture of poverty consciousness even now and this is part of the essence of *Psorinum*. It is listed as having a fear of poverty and a lack of reactivity. This was the remedy that I chose and administered in a 1M potency. "Oh I do feel better and I am so glad that you are a homœopath!" she said. Her recovery was sustained.

What a reaction! I was thrilled and on reflection chastened. Had she not recovered what could I have done? And since she did recover was it the remedy or was it the 'my son the homœopath' factor as I now call this variant of the placebo effect? Had the recovery not been sustained this may have been the case. We shall never know but she nevertheless goes from strength to strength.

A couple of winters ago my father, in his early eighties, had an intractable troublesome cough which responded well to the ministrations of his homœopath and then relapsed. This happened a few times. He had done particularly well on *Causticum* I recall but it no longer held and yes, you guessed it. His homœopath was on holiday

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and this coincided with my visit. Prescribing was complicated by the need to discuss even intimate personal feelings in a loud voice as his hearing aid was only partially successful; he also has selective deafness, hearing what he wants and switching off what he does not want to hear. He is an active pipe smoker which of course colours everything. He seemed not only weak and weary but withdrawn and actually did not want company which made him definitely anxious and even exacerbated his cough. He was in his study most of the time and asleep a good deal. The cough chapter of Kent is full of the most common modalities which all coughs seem to have and I could not see what was troubling him.

I joined him in his study after a siesta. I opened Phatak's alphabetical *Concise Repertory* and looked at *Company aggravates* and *Cough* and there I found it: *Cough aggravated from company, Ambra grisea*. This unusual substance is made from the digestive fluid of the sperm whale (and not as is erroneously thought from its sperm, nor from amber which is *Succinum*). It is known as being good for the elderly and for those who are shy of public appearances; they cannot do anything in the presence of others. This is very true of my father at times. (It was thought that King George VI was given *Ambra* to help him with his anxiety at important public appearances.) And the *Ambra* cough is hollow, spasmodic and barking and comes from deep in the chest. The remedy not only rapidly dealt with his cough but restored much energy and confidence. Here it was a different aspect of the 'my son the homœopath' problem. This was a wonderful prescription for my father which he richly merited for years and I had never before seen the need for it and I should have seen it. I was too close to him to perceive that which had to be cured.

I am happy to have helped them celebrate their golden wedding in September 1990!

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