

Erectile Dysfunction in Patients with Cardiovascular Disease

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Abstract: The association of many cases of erectile dysfunction with cardiovascular disease is emphasized and the profiles of five frequently indicated homeopathic medicines for this condition are described.

Keywords: erectile dysfunction and cardiovascular disease; *Aurum metallicum*, *Baryta carbonica*, *Digitalis*, *Iodum*, *Lycopodium*

Introduction

Erectile Dysfunction (ED) is defined as a persistent inability to attain and maintain an erection sufficient to permit satisfactory sexual performance in males. (Beers *et al.* 2006)

Causes of ED

ED may result from psychological, neurologic, hormonal and arterial causes, or cavernosal impairment, or from a combination of these factors (Lue, 2000). Although over eighty percent of ED of secondary origin has an organic etiology, there is a psychogenic factor which must always be considered (Beers *et al.* 2006). In this article, the focus of discussion will be on ED due to cardiovascular disorders.

Sexual problems are common in patients with cardiovascular disorders. It is particularly prevalent in those with angina or those who have suffered myocardial infarction. In severe cases of myocardial infarction, there is no resumption of sexual action. (Weatherall *et al.* 1996)

In a recent study (May, 2007), it was found that 52% of males aged 40-70 who were diagnosed with ED were suffering from cardiovascular disease. It was also found that patients with hypertension are more likely to have ED and patients with ED are more likely to have hypertension. The treatment of hypertension by some drugs such as thiazide diuretics and beta blockers also tends to increase the incidence of ED.

Sexual dysfunction in cardiovascular disorders results from abnormalities in pelvic vasculature, especially arteriosclerosis (Weatherall *et al.* 1996), resulting in impaired blood flow to the penis.

Homeopathic Treatment

In terms of the homeopathic philosophy, these patients do not need aphrodisiacs of any kind to restore their sexual function, but remedies that clearly, from a therapeutic point of view, have symptoms pertaining to both the cardiovascular and the male genital systems. The remedies must have an elective affinity for the two systems. This phenomenon must be clearly reflected in the totality of symptoms as well as in the combination of symptoms presented by the patient.

The following remedies display the characteristics outlined above, and, what is more, have made a difference in the lives of patients presenting with erectile dysfunction due to or associated with cardiovascular disease.

Digitalis

Digitalis is more often indicated in older men, especially those suffering from heart failure, with the characteristic slow and irregular pulse. They have palpitations and dyspnea, aggravated by the slightest exertion or excitement. Cardiac pains worse from coition. There are difficult erections and a feeling of weakness in the genitals after coition. The genitals feel cold and relaxed. There is a tendency to involuntary seminal emissions during sleep without accompanying dreams. Edema of both the scrotum and penis can be a nagging problem in the *Digitalis* patient. Dribbling of urine; constantly passing bloody urine.

Lycopodium

Although *Lycopodium* has an elective affinity for the right side of the body, it does have an effect

on the heart. The following symptoms display this phenomenon: palpitations of the heart, especially in bed, in the evening; attended with anxiety and trembling. Sharp, shooting pains into the heart. Pulse quick and unsteady.

Lycopodium is also known to have a profound action on the male genital system; immoderate excitement or absence of sexual desire. Weakness or total absence of erection; the penis is cold and relaxed. Premature ejaculation is quite characteristic of the *Lycopodium* ED syndrome. There is a tendency to fall asleep during coition. One of the interesting peculiarities of *Lycopodium* is poor sexual performance with his wife, but he performs surprisingly better with his mistress or a stranger. The *Lycopodium* subject's urinary stream is often retarded, slow to start.

Iodum

Mathur describes the *Iodum* patient as one who has loss of sexual power with atrophy of the testes, that may have been preceded by hypertrophy. The subject has increased sexual desire, but performance is wanting. Prostatic enlargement, causing incontinence of urine, especially in old men.

He also describes tachycardia, violent palpitations from the least exertion, and sensation as if the heart were squeezed together. These patients lose weight constantly despite a good, even excessive appetite.

Baryta carbonica

Baryta carbonica is a well-known remedy for conditions affecting old people. As such, cardiovascular conditions affecting old people, such as atherosclerosis, hypertension and aneurysms have been alleviated by this remedy.

Baryta carbonica is prescribed for very violent throbbing of the heart, excited by lying on the left side; this symptom is renewed by thinking of it. The heart feels bruised. The palpitations are felt in the head. There is shortness of breath with a sensation of fullness in the chest. The patient feels migrating chest pains.

In the sexual sphere, *Baryta carbonica* has flabby genitals that feel numb. The testes are indurated, as is the prostate gland. Erections are feeble; erections in the morning before rising; there is premature ejaculation. The subject falls asleep during coition.

This combination of symptoms makes *Baryta carbonica* a suitable remedy for ED due to cardiovascular disorders.

Aurum metallicum

Aurum metallicum has joint pains that ultimately

settle in the heart. Its cardiac pain extends down the left arm, causing anxiety and violent palpitations. There is a sensation as if the heart stood still, compelling the patient to stop. There is a heavy weight felt on the sternum. The dyspnea is aggravated at night, by moving fast, and also ascending stairs. The dyspneic *Aurum* subject cannot lie down; he has to sit bending forward to obtain relief.

The testes of *Aurum* are prone to a state of hypertrophy. They also atrophy, at times to a state that has been described as "mere pendant shreds." Erections are weak; the penis stays in a flaccid state with flowing of prostatic fluid.

Discussion

While the remedies discussed above have, in clinical practice, proved to have an influence in restoring sexual function and improving the symptoms of cardiovascular disease, they also have a profound effect on the prostate gland. This observation prompts one to think that there may be a link between heart disease and prostate disease. The link between prostate disease and ED has been well established. The author is posing a challenge to researchers: is there a link between prostate disease and cardiovascular disorders, especially in old age?

When taking such a case and formulating treatment, other organic causes, as well as psychogenic and iatrogenic etiologies of ED should not be overlooked. However, this article's focus is on the impact cardiovascular disease has on sexual function. The aim is to create awareness among practitioners not to overlook the cardiovascular causes of ED, seeing that they may be more serious than the presenting complaint. Some patients will present with ED as the primary complaint, in which case the examiner will explore all the possible causes and concomitants, including cardiovascular causes. On the other hand, a patient presenting with a clearcut cardiovascular complaint may not mention his sexual difficulties, even when questioned about it. It takes special skill for the examiner to unearth sex-related problems from a patient who may be unwilling to discuss the subject, especially when the examiner is of the female gender.

Observations and Recommendations

It is the author's observation that the management of patients presenting with both cardiovascular disease and sexual dysfunction may present a serious challenge. Experience has taught that many patients who have suffered myocardial infarctions had a history of chest pains during or after coition. Had they been managed with a remedy like *Digitalis* or any other indicated remedy, it

could have made a difference in their lives.

It is also known that many aphrodisiacs, one popular brand being Viagra, carry some cardiac risk and should not be used in patients with pre-existing cardiovascular disorders (Snyman,2000). Some herbal medicines are also contraindicated in heart disease, two such are Gingko biloba and Horny goat's weed, also known as *Epimedium*. While their aphrodisiac properties are well known, their harmful effects may not be known. It is therefore recommended that doctors particularly should familiarize themselves with the primary and secondary effects of herbal or other natural remedies that are used as aphrodisiacs so as to advise their patients.

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INDICATIONS	< Freezing air, before thunderstorm, sex, sitting > Evening, lying on back
CAUSE	< Alcohol
PATHOLOGY	Psoric, syctic, tubercular
CHARACTERISTICS	Awkward + clumsy with delusions of size, twitching eyelids + grimacing mouth
DISCUSSION	Neurotoxins in cause brain intoxication similar to alcohol but stronger i.e. cheerful delirium + vertigo, followed by profound stupor [Boericke].

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 By Rachel Roberts (info@ihtraining.org)
 Answer on page 102.