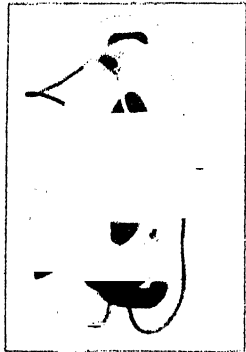


# A Matter of Life and Death

By Francis Treuherz



"If I am not for myself, who is for me, but if I am for my own self only, what am I? And if not now, when?"  
 Rabbi Hillel in the Mishna: Ethics of the Fathers, ch.1, v.14, 100 BCE

Responding to the general public's health crises on the Homeopathic Helpline, and more personal health emergencies . . . this article explores emergency prescribing, ER style

## How Far Can We Go With Homeopathy?

Cases from the 19th century demonstrate how our medical ancestors saved lives, helping people who were likely to die without their homeopathy. People were saved from epidemics such as scarlet fever, cholera, tuberculosis, typhoid and yellow fever. In the early 20th century, during the First World War, there was a Red Cross homeopathic hospital in Paris where no limbs were amputated from gangrene or infection.<sup>1</sup> In the late 20th century a medical homeopath from Seattle, Jennifer Jacobs, has shown the effectiveness of homeopathy treating potentially fatal endemic diarrhoea in Nicaragua.<sup>2</sup>

Can we put our patients through the same processes of cure? Is our alternative health service sufficiently developed for us to do likewise? Can we help with SARS, anthrax, Ebola or West Nile Fever, avian flu, MRSA? Some people obviously think so.<sup>3</sup>

Do we need, like Peter Chappell, one of the illustrious founders of this Society, to break the mould and prescribe in a manner not known to Samuel Hahnemann?<sup>4</sup>

There was a scandal in Spain when I was still a student; thousands of people were seriously poisoned with adulterated and toxic rapeseed oil used in cooking. I was sure that homeopathy could help. I suggested that the Society offer its services and I was turned down. My letter to the Spanish Embassy was ignored. A while later, the positive results of homeopathic treatment by a local homeopath, Richard Ancarola, were published in the *British Homoeopathic Journal*.<sup>5</sup>

Then there was Bhopal, and the Union Carbide poisoning. The late Dr Prakash Vakil was sure that *Chlorum*, which he diagnosed from the symptoms as the toxin, could help the chemical poisoning victims.<sup>6</sup>

Can we afford to make mistakes? When life is at stake do we, more than ever, need a publicly accountable charter or state regulated register? Is it more important to refine the high standards of our single remedy homeopathy, or muddy the homeopathic waters to get public recognition? Will we be better at curing folk if we are regulated?

What do our patients feel when they are in danger and turn to homeopathy? Is it ethical to subject them to our treatment when their lives are in danger? Is it ethical NOT to offer our treatment when they are in danger? Where are the clinical studies that would justify confidence in our protocols? Have you ever watched *Casualty* on a Saturday night and speculated on how you would treat the patients? Or seen fictitious cases there which baffled you?

## Some Short Serious Cases

When I was a homeopathy student I was told only to treat first-aid cases. I lived opposite a park with a playground and was regularly called to help children who might otherwise have gone to hospital after having accidents. One day, a drunken man was locked inside the park and impaled himself on the railings trying to climb out. All I could do was try to offer pain relief and stop the bleeding until the ambulance arrived.

When a patient's wife called me to say her husband had eaten something (it transpired this was an aspirin) and his throat was closing up, and he could not speak and looked like he could not breathe well, and was becoming rapidly worse, what could I do? I asked her to dial 999 and call an ambulance, and then, only then, to give him *Apis* 30c from their home remedy kit. She phoned half an hour later to thank me and say that they had cancelled the ambulance.

A patient who had been stung by a wasp while on vacation in Greece phoned me recently. I had given him *Apis* 30c a year-and-a-half previously, to always carry with him in case this happened, as in the past he had been prone to anaphylactic shock. He swelled up, felt he was in danger, the air ambulance was scrambled (he was on an island) and he took his *Apis*. The ambulance was cancelled, as he recovered rapidly. He was very grateful and asked for another *Apis* to carry for the next time.

In Calcutta I have seen *Ficus religiosa*, a locally proved remedy, used in severe bleeding after road traffic accidents. An Indian homeopath observed a dog eating the leaves and it coughed up blood

immediately. I used it once when someone came into my home through the glass front door having omitted to open it first, and the bleeding stopped like turning off a tap.

I have seen a patient with an acute episode of thrombocytopenia and helped the blood loss immediately with *Crotalus horridus*. I came upon a builder working in my cellar having a heart attack and brought him back to consciousness with *Latrodectus mactans*. I saw a woman who had been bleeding for three weeks, which stopped in less than one hour with *Ustilago maydis*. You would have done the same.

A toddler was brought to see me with her hand taped inside a polythene bag filled with a bactericidal ointment at the hospital following a severe burn. She had put her hand into an electric fire. I prescribed *Arnica* for her and her mother, and then *Causticum* for the pain. I wanted her to have poultices of *Urtica* and later *Calendula* but the mother feared to take off the bag. She had been told that this was the treatment for napalm burns in Vietnam. I saw her daily for a few days and then gave her *Pyrogenium* to hold for the weekend. Predictably the wound went septic and during a high fever the mother called me. *Pyrogenium* did the trick, she took off the bag, and external and internal *Calendula* saved her from the need for skin grafts.

*I came upon a builder working in my cellar having a heart attack and brought him back to consciousness with Latrodectus mactans.*

I prescribed *Hydrogen* for a man having psychotic episodes. He was referred to me by a rabbi. He was a Jewish man and had become a sort of born-again Jew. He grew his beard much longer than mine, side locks, black hat, all the traditional clothing; he was praying too hard, he was fasting too hard and he was trying to become at one with his maker. He was overdoing it and he had been sectioned. Basically he was losing his mind and I gave him *Hydrogen* 1M. I did not know if it would make him worse or better, through lack of experience, but it seemed the right remedy at the time. I do not often see people in a psychotic state. It worked very well but the psychiatrist went absolutely bonkers when he learned that the patient went off his normal medicine. Although the patient had actually calmed down, the psychiatrist did not look reality in the eye, and sectioned the patient again.

Within the NHS, an immigrant male patient had undergone three operations for an abscess at the base of his spine, with another operation pending. He had active TB, which he had brought

with him from Africa. After *Silica* and *Tuberculinum* he was restored to health and the surgeon was baffled when the operation was cancelled.

Sometimes I give the wrong potency. Can we afford to admit such a thing in public? I had a patient who came on a GP referral, for coughing blood. He was male and gay and HIV positive and he had chronic liver disease on which they had given up. He was indeed coughing and it was not a question of 'organ support', it was a question of selecting the correct remedy. I went through the case and decided on *Carduus marianus*, because it has pain on the left lobe of the liver which is near the centre of the abdomen, and which is where his pain was, also because the remedy matched his liver and lung symptoms. *Chelidonium* is the other lobe of the liver but has pain in the shoulder. So it was a careful choice. I gave him a 6c potency to take three times a day and nothing happened. I wanted a phone call from him very quickly for results. I went to Clarke's *Materia Medica* and thought hard about what was needed in this case and I gave him mother tincture of the same remedy and it worked. It was a chronic illness but the prescription had to work quickly.

A small boy was referred to me by a GP friend. I was told that the child would be taken into care due to parental neglect if the parents did not follow my instructions, and that the child would need to be hospitalised if recovery was not rapid. Some little time earlier they had brought the child to the GP with whooping cough and announced that they would prefer homeopathic treatment with which he had agreed. But he did not realise they were working from a book only, and the child deteriorated. They thought he looked a little sleepy. I decided he was in a coma. He clutched at his parents yet rejected their affection. I prescribed *Antimonium tartaricum*, which produced a fast recovery. Perhaps we are all at risk of accusations of neglect if our patients do not recover.

#### A Longer Serious Case

One day this patient felt unwell 'in his tummy'. It went on for a week, apparently well indicated, self-prescribed remedies failed to help and his lower abdomen carried on becoming more painful. He attended a committee meeting at which there happened to be present a medical doctor who was also a homeopath. "It is as if my left ovary is VERY inflamed," he said jokingly. "I feel I am going to collapse, please look after me."

The doctor cleared the room, laid out the patient on the committee table and examined him. He diagnosed a burst lower bowel, septicaemia, peritonitis, probably of diverticular origin. He did not wait for an ambulance, he asked someone to call the hospital to warn them, put the patient in his car and took him to the hospital. The diagnosis was confirmed, the medication prescribed was

intravenous Metronidazole – which is an anaerobic bactericide (Flagyl) – and surgery.

The patient refused surgery and medication. The hospital doctors' reaction was to invoke the mental health legislation, to claim that the patient would be a danger to himself and others, and must be detained in the hospital against his will, and be forcibly subjected to the conventional treatment, not withstanding the known side effects of the drug and the aversion to surgery.

Once the phlebotomist had taken a blood sample (which later was shown to confirm a raised ESR), and while the psychiatrist was on his way to sign the detention order, the patient got dressed. He escaped, staggered out of the hospital and went home in a taxi.

His wife said he looked grey and green by turns. He called his homeopath who advised him to take the Flagyl. He called a medical friend who provided a prescription for a Flagyl suppository in case the homeopathy did not work.

So which remedy was going to help an inflamed abdomen, with sepsis and rebound tenderness and guarding, pain, fever and collapse? The answer was *Pyrogenium*. *Pyrogenium* was an unusual remedy in its creation; it was not lying around waiting to be proved. Drysdale of Liverpool took half a pound of lean beef and put it in a jar and left it for a week. It was boiled, strained and filtered, diluted and potentised. The patient needed only a few doses of a high potency before he looked merely pale. The toxicity was draining away.

Recovery was helped by careful eating. *China* 200 was prescribed and recovery was rapid. Flagyl was not required. A month later he returned to the hospital for a check-up and they said the diagnosis must have been incorrect.

Is this how we can realistically care for our patients or are we putting their lives at risk? Are they scared of our treatment? Can we ask them without frightening them?

That patient in this case was myself, and I was very scared. But the homeopathic remedy did the trick. Is it realistic to scare our patients? Is it the illness that was scary or the need to trust homeopathy? I knew I had the right remedy. I think my wife, who is not a homeopath, must have been very worried.

### Getting Stoned Was Not Fun: Kidney Stones And Other Lumps

One day in March 2002, I was at home with my two sons, aged three and eight. Suddenly, I was in extreme agony with pain in my back ... or my side ... or my backside. I could not quite work out where the pain was coming from or what it was, and I hurt too much to be able to think.

I was literally writhing on the floor, screaming my head off. I also happened to be clutching my cordless phone. A friend called but I was in too much pain to speak. She hung up after listening to

my screams for a few seconds and called an ambulance. The printer from the Society of Homeopaths called. I couldn't speak to him either. He hung up and called the Society of Homeopaths office, and they called for an ambulance. A colleague heard about my plight and called to tell me to take *Calcarea carbonica* 30C every 15 minutes. He hung up and called an ambulance because I couldn't speak and was still screaming my head off. My older son pressed the emergency button by the front door, which alerts the local fire, police and ambulance services. Luckily, the ambulance service was coordinated so only one ambulance came. A neighbor came to take care of the boys, and I ended up at the hospital, still screaming, and taking *Calcarea carbonica* 30C every 15 minutes.

About two or three hours after this all began, the pain left me as suddenly as it had come. No hospital staff had paid me any attention until I stopped screaming. Then a doctor came by and asked me to pass urine into a glass bottle and we examined the results. With a naked eye we could see the pieces of stone. I was exhausted and shaken, and I rested for a few days. During that time, I read up on kidney stones and their homeopathic treatment. In *New, Old and Forgotten Remedies* (published in 1900), E.P. Anshutz wrote about his own spectacular, long-term cure of horrible kidney stones. "It is true, the most suitable homeopathic remedies afforded me relief," he wrote. "The incarceration of calculi in the ureter especially was relieved by *Nux-vomica*; but they were unable to put a stop to the formation of calculi; this result was only attained by the preparation of *Calculus renalis*." *Calculus renalis* is a homeopathic preparation of one of Anshutz's own kidney stones.

I decided to take *Calculus renalis* 30C once daily for three months, beginning in March.

*Calculus renalis* is a homeopathic preparation of one of Anshutz's own kidney stones.

### A Sudden Blow-Up

At the end of June 2002, I went to the annual Irish Homeopathic Conference in Galway, looking as if someone had just thumped me in the eye. A cyst in my eyelid had become inflamed just 24 hours before I was due to travel. I'd had this cyst for 25 years; every year or so it would gradually fill up with pus, and after a remedy like *Staphysagria*, it would burst and drain, but there was always a small, hard lump remaining. This time, my eyelid had blown up suddenly. It was swollen, painful, and

red. I took *Apis* 30C every three or four hours for a number of doses but it only palliated, relieving the swelling a little. Something was still there inside the underside of the lid. I took a few doses of *Staphysagria* 30C and it did nothing. So I visited an ophthalmic surgeon at the local hospital who slit the underside of the eyelid, and out popped some fragments of stone. I avoided her prescription of antibiotics, and it healed rapidly with dilute *Euphrasia* tincture and one dose of *Staphysagria* 200C.

*We need to be on the infectious diseases wards and in A & E departments. We must banish fear and hesitancy and get on with it.*

### Stone-Free

I believe that as a result of taking *Calculus renalis* for three months, the calcified cyst in my eyelid cracked. There was no outlet for it though until the surgeon made a slit, and out it popped. Some months after this, I noticed that a couple of calcified lumps or arthritic nodules on my knuckles had become smaller. For years, I had not been able to wear my wedding ring because of them. Now I can wear the ring, and my knuckles are no longer painful. I also have not suffered another attack of kidney stones. This is not a huge length of time to believe I am free of kidney stones, but it is now a year and six months with not a hint of a problem in this area. I believe that there must be a similarity between calcifications wherever they may occur, and *Calculus renalis* has the potential to address them. Previous to my personal use of this remedy, I had prescribed it occasionally for patients with stones in the salivary glands. There was never a crisis or problem; the stones just got smaller and were reabsorbed.

If you have stones, nodules, or calcifications, I suggest that you do not use this remedy at home. Instead, please consult a qualified homeopath to find the right constitutional remedy for you, one that will address the totality of your symptoms.

### On The Phone

Among the most extreme prescribing I undertake is working on the Homeopathic Helpline. I am talking with distant patients (or their parents or family members) whom I may never see. By no means all of them have called because their homeopath is not available. Many callers have never tried homeopathy before, and many are in serious trouble. It may be an accident, it may be childbirth gone wrong, it may be pneumonia, it may be suicidal depression or a psychotic state. They may have stopped taking allopathic medicines with no support. They may

think they have flu but be in an advanced stage of whooping cough. On duty days I am on call from nine in the morning through to midnight. There are slack periods but I must remain alert. I must know when to send them to their GP or A & E department.

Among recent calls was one that I recognised as a child with torsion of the testicles. I told the father to go to hospital now, not to wait for an ambulance, and to use *Arnica* afterwards if possible. He called a few days later to say thank you because I had been correct. We homeopaths offer a complementary service even if we have an alternative philosophy of health.

I sent a woman to her GP to have her chest examined. When she called back and could tell me which lobe of her lungs was affected, I could prescribe a remedy from her kit more accurately. Every home must have a kit. And she had an allopathic prescription in case the homeopathy did not work.

### Conclusion

You will of course have helped your own patients in acute illness. What I am suggesting is that we must be prepared to work not just with acute states, but the serious and life-threatening extreme states of the 21<sup>st</sup> century at home and abroad. We need to be on the infectious diseases wards and in A & E departments. We must banish fear and hesitancy and get on with it.

*This article is based on a talk given at the Society of Homeopaths Spring Conference in Manchester, March 2005.*

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