

The following is the first of what we hope will prove a popular column for readers to contribute simpler case histories from their practice. We invite you to share your experiences!

Herpes zoster: A Case

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A 74 year-old woman called complaining of a recently diagnosed case of shingles affecting the right lower extremity – buttock, genitalia, and medial thigh. Itching and burning had just begun. The itching was worse from contact with clothing and better from cold applications. She felt chilly and the night before noted cold perspiration in bed. There was also aching of the joints in her right leg – a fiery, hot pain. Her right hip area hurt to lie upon it. Her appetite was low, her energy dreadful, and all the preceding week she'd had a strong thirst for ice cold water. She noted a metallic taste in her mouth. The appearance of the eruption was as follows: vesicles on a dime-sized red base, scattered; some producing a watery discharge; no crusting.

Discussion: Here's what the repertorization of the above case reveals:

Total Rubrics Families	Rhus-t.	Sep.	Merz.	Puls.	Sulph.	Calc.	Brs.	Mez.	Graph.	Si.	Lyc.	Lech.	Hep.	Phos.	Led.	Nun-a.	Nat-m.	Petr.	Speng.	Psor.	Kali-s.	Kali-chn.	Carb-a.	Kali-bl.	Kali-ar.	Cact.	Thu-j.	Thu.	Staph.	Resc.	Thu.	Cadm-s.	Sars.	Zinc.	
kin. P. ERUPTIONS. Herpetic. zoster, zona																																			
Skin. P. ERUPTIONS. Discharging. moist																																			
Skin. P. ITCHING. Painful. burning																																			
Skin. P. ITCHING. Touch. agg																																			
Skin. P. ITCHING. Warmth. agg																																			
Perspiration. P. COLD																																			
Perspiration. P. COLD. Night																																			
itching. generals > cold applications																																			
ralities. M. LYING. Durng. side. on: painful																																			
skin itching > cold plus < warmth																																			
Taste. P. METALLIC																																			
skin. generals < touch clothing																																			

Of the remedies figuring prominently, *Rhus toxicodendron*, *Mercurius* and *Mezereum* corresponded, of course, most closely to Shingles. *Rhus toxicodendron* was unlikely due to the patient's amelioration from cold. *Sepia* was well represented and is ameliorated by cold applications. A search of *Referenceworks* found references to an amelioration from cold applications for *Mercurius* [see Allen's *Diseases and Therapeutics of the Skin*]. *Pulsatilla* and *Sulphur* could be expected to be ameliorated by cold. *Mezereum*, missing from any mention of amelioration from cold applications, is known to be better from cold [Boericke's *Repertory*: pruritis, cold ameliorates]. The sensitivity to light touch (clothing) suggests *Mezereum* of the above contenders, although *Mercurius* is also sensitive to touch and worse from lying on the affected side. The net result of the above musings led me to consider strongly both *Mezereum* and *Mercurius*, with essentially no clear way of distinguishing between the two but for *Mezereum*'s more prominent position in the rubric Skin, itching, touch aggravates.

Rx: *Mezereum* 200, one dose every twelve hours, as needed.

Result: When she called five days later to confer about her chronic case, she exclaimed that the pain had left in eight hours and the rash was rapidly disappearing. "It's going away. Fabulous! I can't believe it; it's a miracle!" ATH