

# Carbo vegetabilis

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**Abstract:** Three cases responding well to *Carbo vegetabilis* are presented. Dr. Shevin then discusses important symptom themes that facilitate identification of the remedy, most prominently, a sensation of heaviness and overheating leading to exhaustion. Heaviness is also identified as a theme of the Hamamelididae family members in general (see Sankaran). Of course, coldness and exhaustion with the desire to lie down are symptoms commonly seen in the remedy.

**Keywords:** *Carbo vegetabilis*, themes for prescribing; Hamamelididae, fibromyalgia, Raynaud's syndrome, cough, dyspnea, peripheral venous disease

## Introduction

*Carbo vegetabilis* is well known for its decompensated state (near-death, cyanotic, needing air, exhausted, etc.), but, as with all remedies, there are patients who need *Carbo vegetabilis* who have not yet arrived at this state, but rather are relatively well compensated. As such, the compensated symptoms may be more prominent than the better-known symptoms.

My understanding of this remedy was enhanced after studying Rajan Sankaran's Schema for understanding plant families. Although he does not include *Carbo vegetabilis*, the source of the remedy is charcoal from the Beech tree (*Fagus sylvaticus*) or the Birch Tree (*Betula alba*). Both trees are members of the Hamamelididae family. One of the key concepts in this family has to do with "heaviness" and "lightness." For a more detailed exposition regarding Sankaran's ideas, and the Hamamelididae in particular, the reader should consult his various works, including *An insight into Plants* and *The Sensation in Homeopathy*.

The process of creating charcoal involves the partial combustion of the raw material in an oxygen poor environment. Starting with a material that is 50% carbon, a very slow, controlled combustion will result in the loss of gases (carbon monoxide, hydrogen, methane, carbon dioxide, oxygen, and nitrogen) and volatile elements (water-acids, alcohols, tars, oil and other organic compounds). The end result is charcoal with a carbon content of 75-95%. (SOURCE: <http://www.clt.astate.edu/elind/>

[charcoalvalentine.htm](#))

This is somewhat akin to the "roasting" process used in the preparation of remedies such as *Spongia tosta*, *Coffea tosta*, etc. Roasting substances tends to reduce their content to their minerals and is an ancient technique. This is discussed briefly in Massimo Mangialavori's notes. ["Remaining in a Safe Environment: The Sea Remedies." Notes by Vicki Burley (Koiné School, Matrix 2002)].

The nature of the "Carbon" remedy group has been discussed extensively by a number of authors including Roger Morrison (*Carbon*, ed. J. Bernard, Hahnemann Clinic Publishing, 2006), Jan Scholten (*Homeopathy and the Elements*, Stichting: Alonissos, 1996), Massimo Mangialavori (seminar notes, presumably to be published in the future), and others.

Just as our patients present in very different ways, and practitioners have very different perceptual and interactive styles, it is useful to be able to apply a number of different points of view in the process of case analysis and remedy selection.

The concept of "Signature" and its relevance to homeopathic prescribing remains controversial, but, used in the correct way, it can be very useful. In this paper I will present some cases which illustrate some aspects of *Carbo vegetabilis* which I've found useful in the clinical setting. In addition, these cases, especially the first and the third, illustrate the mix of compensated and decompensated symptoms of the remedy.

The cases themselves are essentially transcripts of the interviews, and minimally edited:

### Case 1

KP: a 23 year-old female, massage therapist.

First visit: January 19, 2005

"I was sick when first born, and in and out of hospital for two years, diagnosed as failure to thrive.

"Just before my 16th birthday, I had weakness on the left side and could hardly walk. My left eye and vision were affected, and I was in and out of hospital for three years. They thought I had a pituitary tumor, but the work-up was negative. Then I was diagnosed with Lyme disease, Raynaud's, and fibromyalgia. They put me on lots of meds, Vioxx (anti-inflammatory), and Nifedipine (a calcium channel blocker) which made my heart beat faster. Apparently, I have a faster heart beat than most people.

"I'd never had problems with my stomach until those medicines. Now, I have problems every few months - vomiting, diarrhea, can't keep food down. It may go on for two to seven days. Chiropractic and massage have helped the condition." (weakness, etc.)

"My headaches started last winter, but the eye doctor didn't see anything. There was swelling of the inner part of the left eye, but a diagnosis was not made. With the colder weather, it started again. It itches really badly, gets blurry, and is not really a bad headache, but a headache behind my eyes, in my sinuses and behind my eyes.

"Lying down, closing my eyes, and warm compresses help. It gets so bad I have to lie down, close my eyes, and rest. It is worse at night, not too bad in the morning. It starts getting sore around 1-2 pm.

"My eyes feel sore, achy, itchy, sensitive; the swelling is the 'inner dot.'" (referring to conjunctivae)

"Glasses originally helped, but not now.

"Swelling and itching and headache definitely go together.

"It started a year ago, and went away. It started originally just after Christmas, 2003. Both eyes ended up swelling shut, like pinkeye, and they put me on stuff for that. After that, it was better until this fall (mid-October).

"I always have trouble in the colder weather, my left side is worse, with swelling and white or purple hands and left thigh. It happens in the left arm from mid-upper arm, to fingers.

"I get extremely cold, put an electric blanket and four more blankets on me, and drink tea. Some-

times I get dizzy from it. I try to fall asleep, stay warm. Sometimes, in a few hours, I'll get better; sometimes I'll shake all day long.

"Some days are bad. Mornings are the worst. I hurt every day. I sleep better with pillows between my legs, pillows all around. There's pain in my lower back into the left leg.

"The pain never really goes away, but sometimes it is less. Sometimes it is like someone punched me, or at other times as if I'd overworked and am sore."

*What else do you notice with that pain?*

"I feel really weak. I know that I walk funny; everyone tells me that. I limp. When really sick, I had to have my hand on the wall; my leg felt dead - it didn't work. It felt like it weighed 700 lbs. My hand got stuck closed (could move it if I worked on it). The hand was weak (rather than clenched), and I'd stretch the fingers with other hand. It was hard to move because my arm would feel really heavy as well. It was as if my arm and leg had fallen asleep."

"I had failure to thrive; I don't know a lot about it. When I was born, I was sick, and they couldn't tell my mom what was wrong. I guess it was a flu or pneumonia. The hospital decided I just didn't have the will power to live. When I came home, I used to sleep in between my parents, and they'd keep an eye on me all night long.

"I don't sleep well at all. I get tired, but it takes me a while to get to sleep. I'm not rested when I wake. If I do kind of get some sleep, I have a hard time in the morning. When falling asleep, it takes me a good couple or few hours. I think a lot about everything under the sun, everybody, the animals - hoping they are warm, whether my husband is OK, about getting enough sleep (anxiety for others). I plan everything, a big planner. Then I'll say my prayers, and then I'll take a deep breath and try not to think. I'll close my eyes, sing in my sleep. Eventually I fall asleep. Then I turn a lot in the middle of the night, which makes me wake up, because I'm sore most at night. I can't ever get comfortable. My leg bothers me (rubs distal thigh), and my back bothers -- sore and achy like I'd exercised too much.

"I have asthma, which started when I was in elementary school. It was when I exerted, but when I got sick at age 16, it was hard to breathe, and I'd start to shake from it. They took me to the hospital and, a mile down the road, I don't remember what happened, but my uncle called the ambulance on his CB radio. I remember the lights of the ambulances, and they wanted to move me to the stretcher, and my uncle said, 'No, don't touch

her!', and he took me in his arms. I looked at him and said, 'I love you very much.' They took me to the hospital. Since then, the asthma acts up.

"If it is humid out, it bothers me; or if my legs act up, it bothers me and I start to shake. This winter has been better, I only used the inhaler once. I'm careful about being out on a cold day. My feet are cold all the time. When I am really sick, as I was trying to explain, I feel cold inside – almost like my blood feels cold. I get shooting pains, more intense than if someone were to punch you, very sharp pain in my legs and left lower back. It is like if I were to be cut in half, I'd be fine.

"I'm always cold. It has to be very warm for me to put on shorts. When younger, my hands and feet were always cold to the touch, but they figured that it was just me. Then, when ill at 16, the coldness got worse.

"I'm sore and achy; I hurt every day, sometimes more than others. I'm always like that; so it is hard to describe. I try to exercise, get the blood moving and stretch the muscles. Sometimes I'm so sore and achy I don't sleep well and I have to lie down and rest. On rising I feel groggy, but more rested.

"When getting up in the morning, I just lie there and take some deep breaths. I try to stretch, thinking that will help the blood circulation, make the soreness go away (which isn't the case). It takes a long time to get up. I feel exhausted. I'm just a little sore on rising."

**Foods:** Desires salad, pasta, Chinese food (rice, chicken chow mein, or lo mein, or crab rangoon), vinegar. "I love pepper; use tons of it on everything. It gives a hotter flavor. I like hot peppers. If I have soup, I put so much pepper on it you can't see the soup! My favorite thing is steak, but only with Lea and Perrin's sauce, which gives it a kick, hot."

**Aversion to:** salt.

"The main thing is that I'm not getting any sleep, and if I do, don't feel rested."

White noise helped her fall asleep. She tossed and turned, hurting, at night. She was more rested after afternoon sleep. This had been true since age 16. The part she slept on became painful, sore.

She was a masseuse. "I create a lot of energy when I work. My hands get red and

warm, but I wish I knew more. I'm hard on myself; I had to get A's in school. I've always been a perfectionist."

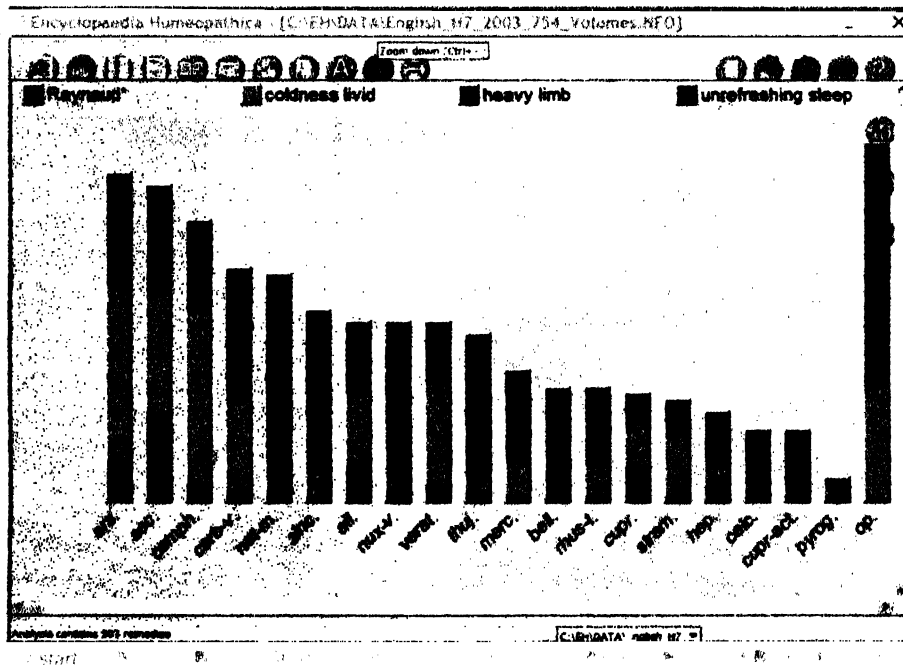
**Impression/Plan:** She displayed failure to thrive as an infant, and, to my mind, there was a question about her will to live, which seemed questionable looking at her. The illness of age 16 needed further investigation. I reviewed her past medical records, which were not particularly helpful. Neurological evaluation was non-diagnostic. The Lyme disease antibody titer suggested a weak antibody response to *Borrelia burgdorferi*, but intravenous antibiotics hadn't been helpful in any way. The early failure to thrive was evidently due to bronchitis and pneumonia.

My initial impression was that there was too much information, and I looked at a number of possibilities. She was psychic, had a love for animals, and was probably an energy healer, but I elected to ignore these elements.

The coldness was portrayed in a very striking manner, and she had definite Raynaud's syndrome. The lack of sleep was a strong issue, and what sleep she managed to get failed to refresh her.

Elements of the case: pneumonia, bronchitis; Raynaud's, coldness, lividity; heaviness of limb, and great fatigue. The heaviness, in particular, was also vividly portrayed. In the illness of age 16, her "left side weighed 700 pounds."

Accordingly, I considered the Hamamelididae, and in a search in *Encyclopaedia Homeopathica*, saw the following:



*Carbo vegetabilis* comes up in the fourth position, and none of the other remedies seemed to fit the patient. Searching further there were several references such as the following:

[Burt, W.H., *Characteristic Materia Medica - Carbo vegetabilis*]: "Icy coldness of the parts; they have a livid, purple look (Gangrena senilis)."

*Plan: Carbo vegetabilis* 30C, daily. Call in a week, after the remedy, to report. Return in a month.

February 9, 2005

"I've been sleeping better; I still awaken a couple of times during the night, but not at all like I used to. I'm a little warmer, not too much. Also, you'd asked me if anything moved or changed, and I said no, but since the remedy, it has moved. Usually the sensation is stuck in my left leg, left back; the second or third day after the remedy it went into the right leg and felt funny all day, but not in a bad way; it was like a balancing out. The next day I didn't feel good, but I'd been stuck in a car all day (which usually affects her). The next day it was still sore, but otherwise it was great.

"The feeling in my back, soreness as usual, but it's even more across the back."

*Plan:* Continue remedy. If her body temperature changed dramatically, I would most likely have told her to stop the remedy. Otherwise, unless there was a problem, she was to call in a few weeks.

March 16, 2005

"I've felt really good. I'm warmer, though still cold. I haven't felt this good since I was 16. I sleep, now. Usually I go to bed by 10-11 p.m.; I usually get up once now, but that is good for me. The first few weeks of the remedy, on waking, I could function, whereas before I didn't want to get out of bed; I just wanted to sleep. Before, I was sleeping better in the morning, even after the alarm went off at 6:30 a.m. I'd have slept most of the morning and woken around 11 a.m. Now, I wake much more rested. Actually, now I feel tired at night, which I never did before. I go to bed (now) at 10 to 10:30 p.m. and fall asleep in thirty minutes or so."

She did not remember her dreams.

"I used to sleep with a pillow between my knees and hug a pillow at my chest to keep my left shoulder back. Now it is uncomfortable to sleep like that because when curled up, my back hurts. Now I'm sleeping flat on my back, which I couldn't do before owing to discomfort in my back and leg (which was true from the illness at age 16)."

She was warmer – forty percent improved.

"Some days I'm doing something, and actually feel hot. There were some days I was cold and wore fleece socks to bed, but I awoke too hot and had to take them off.

"I seem to be in a better mood, not as irritable. Before, if I was tired, I was snappy and abrupt."

She had had no acute illnesses.

"Other people, many, have said that I look rested, that my color looks better, that my face looks changed, but they don't know why. My husband says that I act a lot different, because I'm rested."

Leg was great; not sore; no pains.

Bladder: her symptoms came and went. There was some leakage, with urging and when standing, or after urination, that would last for a week or two, then disappear and later return. This had just started recently, just before she called to make the appointment to see me, and had not changed.

"For the first couple of days, I had pain in my left back, and I was cold; then the pain spread out and went down both legs." She'd never had that on the right side. This resolved over a couple of days and then she started to feel better.

Note the rubric "Bladder, urination, involuntary, rising from a seat, on" - mag-c, petr, pit-a, spig. The carbon element is prominent in *Magnesium carbonicum*, and obviously in *Petroleum* as well, perhaps less so in *Pituitary anterioris*.)

*Impression:* Obviously a good response, but the lack of change of the bladder symptom is a bit troubling, it being of recent origin. In my initial note I'd written that she hadn't had it in a long time, but today she says that she never had it. Despite the confusion, and because of the good response so far, I opted not to change course.

*Plan:* Continue *Carbo vegetabilis* 30C, daily, and return in another month. *Carbo vegetabilis* 200 to hold.

March 21, 2005

Phone call: "It started yesterday - the constant feeling of needing to urinate and burning while urinating. It was burning a lot on urinating and my abdomen felt tight, itching and burning all day long. It is a little bit better today, but definitely bothering me."

She was drinking more water and juice (the liquids that she had).

She had never had this kind of problem in the past.

There was sexual activity a couple of days previously, but normally has sexual relations a couple of times a week.

No different foods, bath products, etc. were con-

sumed or used "I've only taken showers lately."

"Yesterday the discomfort was awful; it is annoying today."

*Impression:* Burning pains are well-known in *Carbo vegetabilis*, and she was still responding to the remedy in other ways, and the potency was only 30C; so I elect to be more aggressive with the dosing.

*Plan:* *Carbo vegetabilis* 30C, three times daily, for two days.

April 13, 2005

It took about ten days to get rid of the bladder infection. "I started feeling better, every day. I was tired, still, though sleeping better, and energy has been better, but it's not continuing to improve.

"Just before the bladder infection, my energy was down a bit, and then with it, I was exhausted, but gradually improving; however, in the afternoon, I was pretty tired. On waking in the morning, I was still doing better than when I first came, but became more tired again, as if I hadn't slept very well." She was still fifty percent better.

Her legs were doing very well - no pains.

No more bladder leakage.

Her body temperature was much better; she was warmer, not needing so many clothes.

There had been no dreaming.

"When I first saw you, I was tired all day, but got a second wind at night when I could clean the whole house. Now, I'm fully energized at 10 a.m.; I can do anything, but I get tired at mid-afternoon. My second wind comes at 4 o'clock and lasts till 3-4 a.m.. Then I feel great; I can do anything. I'm not at all tired, not heavy or bogged down. It's an extra surge of energy; I clean house, organize things. That pattern started three years ago."

*Why?* "I was stuck in not feeling good; so I put my body into a different time mode; I'd sleep by day as I hurt too much to sleep at night. I was in pain when lying down; having my back pressed against the couch would hurt, and the side lain on either went numb or hurt, or both; so I'd have to switch sides, get up, move around, and then I'd feel tired and have to lie down."

*Why did you get energy at night 3 years ago?* "I don't know."

4 p.m. to 4 a.m., winter and summer - it didn't matter; her energy would increase then. [16 h-4 h: *Thuja* (Stauffer)]

Dampness and cold aggravated her leg swelling (left side).

She had no warts, no polyps, cysts, etc.

*Impression:* It seemed a bit unclear if she actually responded to *Carbo vegetabilis* during the urinary tract infection. There was no dramatic response when I increased frequency of the 30C, but she was already through the worst of it. However her incontinence had subsided.

The whole story of increased energy at 4 p.m. was strange. In the repertory, *Carbo vegetabilis* is listed in "Generalities, Afternoon, 16 h (4 p.m.)." (Kent).

*Plan:* *Carbo vegetabilis* 200C, daily for three days; then observe the effect. She was to call early next week. If her energy came up nicely, I would continue to observe. If not, I'd have to reconsider her treatment plan.

I continued to see her at intervals during which there was steady improvement, with occasional doses of *Carbo vegetabilis* 200C for anything needing treatment. No other remedy was used. In addition to her other improvements, her Raynaud's phenomenon markedly decreased since beginning the remedy. She cancelled her last scheduled appointment in February 2006, as she was four months pregnant and doing well. She gave birth to a healthy baby later that year, and has continued to do well.

## Case 2

NW: a 48 year-old occupational therapist; she was very sensitive, in all ways. She was highly intuitive and brilliant, but rather disorganized. She had a chronic problem with alcohol abuse. She was enthusiastic and excitable. Her use of language could be difficult, as will be seen. It was not always easy to understand what she meant.

She had responded readily to various remedies in the past. *Piper methysticum* had been quite helpful, but she pursued many different therapies (herbs, dietary intervention, supplements, and many physical therapy techniques), and had a rather stress-filled life. She came with an acute bronchitis.

April 24, 2006

"I'm burning up."

Coughing, woke with greenish black phlegm on Wednesday, and golden brown on Thursday. She'd started colloidal silver a few days earlier because of a sty in the eye. She complained of an unwinding brain since February, since taking a craniosacral course to help her 'engine speed' (which is ordinarily too fast).

Her eyes had been burning for the past month.

"Too much sh\_\_t in my head; old germs coming out. There are so many people sick at work, with

employees out, and I picked up everyone's hours (increased work, needing more energy).

"I sneezed, a juicy sneeze last week, and then started with this little cough. Wednesday I couldn't breathe."

She complained of being hot and sweaty, red and flushed, more so when coughing, with yellow explosions of light on coughing in the periphery of her vision.

Breathless.

She had toxic shock at age 16, with 'thunderstorms of heat;' her left kidney felt hard and throbbing. She suffered septicemia later in the year, after accidentally slicing the left thenar area. She was treated with intravenous antibiotics, and commented that she had to do a lot of work on her kidney. She used an herbal Tribulus preparation.

"I think that my immune system is compromised.

"I had red wine for breakfast, with my oatmeal and blueberries this morning. I want red wine."

Her menses are regular, but the last one was like 'Niagara Falls,' with a very large volume of blood passed.

Mucus: like green pea soup with flecks of grayish black, just once; then it browned, and was at that moment foamy and voluminous, with a bit of tan (like a manila envelope) coloration.

Since an earlier instance of septicemia from a foreign body injury, her head has felt hot, especially in the past week and a half. Tired, weary.

Breathing: she walked the dog the same day she came in for consultation, and she could hardly walk and breathe - her breathing felt heavy. "It feels as if right here (points to her chest), where it is hot and red, a foot is planted squishing me; it's too heavy, or it's taking up too much space. I want to hook around it (posturally). There's resistance to inhaling, like it is a coffee stirrer instead of an open tube."

"I had this in the past, when I thought I had tuberculosis. It is active, juicy, spewing. I'd skin-tested positive for tuberculosis at Windham hospital in 1981. In twenty minutes I had this big welt, and I took antibiotics for a year."

She was sick a lot as a child.

"My cough was so forceful (when her children were young) I'd urinate in my pants."

The ataxic feeling was much better (since body work).

The heat felt like hot metal, just radiating, pushing out.

Breathing modalities: "I spent three days sitting outside. Last night it felt lovely to have a cool breeze on me. A cool hand on the face is an immediate relief."

"I'm weary (sighed; her hand moved away from her chest), like I'm sacrificing myself for the greater good."

Physical Exam: Lungs were clear. Pulse 88.

*Impression:* The best remedy at that moment was probably *Carbo vegetabilis* (oppression of chest, heavy, weary, heat in upper body, radiating heat but about to collapse).

*Plan:* *Carbo vegetabilis* 200C, single dose.

April 25, 2006

There had been lots of changes. She felt 'crappy' last night. "I coughed a lot, and I'm feeling decent this morning.

"I think that heat is like my gas (meaning her source of energy). I feel healthier but incredibly exhausted. That heat is everything. When I know that someone is going to change their conception point, that is how I know."

*Her sense of progress in a patient's treatment, and her awareness of heat are linked.*

"So I feel lonesome today - without the heat, it is really different.

"My chest is fine. My head is tight, from coughing. I coughed up a lot last night."

She returned a month later, feeling generally calmer, and with one of the most normal menses she'd had in three years (they'd been getting "thicker" and longer in duration).

When asked about the thickness of the menses, and she described (with an expression of disgust) a past episode of septicemia following a laceration of her hand. It wasn't clear to me that she'd actually been diagnosed as having septicemia at that time, but following this her menses had become "gloppy, dark, dark red, like the lining of the uterus ..."

She apparently had an episode of Toxic Shock Syndrome at age 16, and was sick for a summer, with high fevers. As an infant, she didn't walk until age 18 months, and stated that she was fed a diet consisting primarily of corn syrup.

Other remedies have been prescribed, subsequently, although *Carbo vegetabilis* was continued as needed for another four months.

### Case 3

LB: 46 year-old female. What follows represents a portion of this patient's case. A couple of years prior to the case below, she'd responded well to an acute prescription of *Asparagus* for a severe paroxysmal cough. The clue to the *Asparagus* prescription (after several partially successful prescriptions) was the presence of a peculiar odor

to the urine accompanying a laryngeal cough with retching. Many other remedies had either failed or had produced only mild improvement. Her daughter, also sick with fever and a paroxysmal cough at the same time, had responded very well to *Cactus grandiflorus*.

July 10, 2005

Email: "Good Morning Bill. I am sending you this email under pressure from J. (a friend who is also a patient). I think she is more concerned than I am, but I guess it is enough of a concern that I feel I should let you know.

"I am not really sick, but I am definitely not right. I am having a lot of trouble with my right leg. Not my toe, but my foot and my calf. They are constantly swollen. It is just my right one. Here is what I can tell you.

"The back of the knee is achy. The top of foot and ankle are noticeably swollen. The calf is noticeably swollen. There is repeated twitching or jumping of a vein or nerve above my right knee, where I have that big fat vein that sticks out.

"Last week before my period, it was *really* noticeable, and achy. When I started my period, it went right down, but the blood from my period was real dark and chunky, and dry like - not a lot of flowing blood, but a lot of chunks.

"My period is gone, now, and it still gets swollen. I cannot pinpoint why. It sometimes feels like I can feel the blood flow though my leg. It's so weird.

"There are other issues too. I am off my diet, cannot focus on the right way to eat. I am craving chips, not really just chips, but more directly salt. My mind is off somewhere else. I am tired more than usual. And this is really stupid, but three nights in a row, my voice goes away - no sore throat, no coughing, just a real quiet voice; it sounds like it would hurt, but does not.

"I'm still having the constant battle with bowel movements. Sometimes I don't go for four or five days. It's not a struggle to go, I just do not feel the need to.

"I guess I was beginning to think this was just me, but I feel I should listen to the ones who know me best. J. (the friend) has threatened to call you herself, so I know she is concerned, and I trust her more than anyone; so I figured something must be up. My husband thinks I have an injury and insist that I ice it, but I know that is not the case. J. and I went to Newport for the day last Wednesday and did a lot of walking; so he thought it was from that, but I went to J's house the night before and my foot and leg were big. So something is up, and I

am not sure if I should be concerned or not."

July 11, 2005

Physical Exam: just below the patella, with the leg extended, the circumference on the left side was 13 3/4 inches and 14 1/8 on right. There was mild pitting edema (pre-tibial). There was no calf tenderness, heat, and Homan's sign was negative. Gait was normal. There was a puffy edema on the lateral dorsum of foot. There were definite varicosities of the right leg, more so than the left, and a scar from prior vein stripping (1990). There were no temperature changes. The dorsalis pedis pulse was normal, and the other pedal pulses were difficult to palpate. Capillary return was perhaps a bit slow.

She had been having more trouble for the past three weeks, and felt more tired for the last two. She had felt aching behind the knee for three weeks.

Her digestion was otherwise normal, just the usual (lack of activity) constipation.

At the onset she had bruising on the dorsum of the foot, where it was swollen.

Diet: She had improved her diet, with no processed food, low salt, and lots of fruits and vegetables. She was drinking 100 ounces of water daily, which helped her with dryness of the mouth.

*Impression:* Peripheral venous disease, but no evidence for acute thromboembolism. The loss of voice in the evening, was extremely interesting, given the protracted struggle to deal with the laryngeal cough in 2004, when loss of voice had also been an issue.

I repertorized the following: Larynx, voice, lost, evening/extremities; Varices, lower limbs; Inactivity of the rectum; Food, salt, desires; and Extremities, swelling, lower limbs. *Carbo vegetabilis* was the only remedy to have all five of the symptoms:

1	1234	1	LARYNX AND TRACHEA - VOICE - lost - evening	3
2	1234	1	RECTUM - INACTIVITY of rectum	166
3	1234	1	GENERALS - FOOD and DRINKS - salt - desire	158
4	1234	1	EXTREMITIES - SWELLING - Lower limbs	61
5	1234	1	EXTREMITIES - VARICES - Lower limbs	57

	carb-v.	phos.	nat-m.	calc.	plb.	sil.	sulph.	caust.	sep.	con.
	5/13	4/11	4/10	4/9	4/8	4/8	4/8	4/8	4/8	4/5
1	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	1	2	1
3	3	4	4	2	2	1	1	2	1	2
4	2	2	1	2	1	3	3	1	2	1
5	3	-	2	3	2	1	2	2	1	1

From Royal, G., *Textbook of Homeopathic Materia Medica* (via *Encyclopedia Homeopathica*)

V 2.1): [ry1 - *Carbo vegetabilis*] “The varicose condition and the leucorrhoea are agg. just before the menses, which are early, profuse, thick, dark and offensive (*Belladonna*).”

**Plan:** Refer to vascular surgeon for evaluation.

**Remedy:** Trial of *Carbo vegetabilis* 200, one dose, and 12C daily.

*July 16, 2005 email*

“Just an update on my leg. The pain in the back of my knee is gone, no more soreness. The swelling has not gone down any though. And believe it or not, I think I am getting a cold. Last night, we stayed at the cottage at the lake, and maybe it was the night air, but when I breathed in, I had to cough – a lot. I will see how I feel throughout the day. My foot is still that slight blue/black color in that top/side spot. I think it also helped with the bowels. I have had 2 BMs since I was in to see you on Monday, which is great for me!! Not really so tired lately. Still craving salt though.”

*July 18, 2005 email*

“Today is day 4 of the 12C. I had a real weird experience Saturday night. About midnight, my heart was beating so fast, and I was sweating. It lasted for about 25 minutes. I was up waiting for my daughter to get home from work. I felt like I had taken a strong diet pill or something. I had those heart palpitations when I had that virus (the laryngeal illness), but not like this. I was kind of frightened.

“Other than that, I slept most of the day yesterday, I was just exhausted. I had another BM, which is good. Yesterday there was no swelling in my leg. When it’s like that, all the veins are real big. Like the one that runs down the front of my shin from my knee to my ankle. It was real big like you could touch it, and the ones on the side and back were the same way. It’s like when it’s swollen, it covers up the veins; so they don’t stick out.”

*August 4, 2005 email*

“Nothing has really changed. My leg/foot are still slightly larger than the left one. No pain. Just had my period last week. It was still clotted, but not more than usual. Cramps were the same as well. I really don’t feel bad. My knee is not sore at all. My leg being bigger doesn’t hurt; it just feels tight. The thing is - why is it doing this? You can still see that it is bigger, and my foot too, on the top still.

“Otherwise, I feel real good. Is it ok to start walking for exercise again? I had been doing very

little because I wasn’t sure what I was up against, if anything.”

*August 17, 2005*

Right leg circumference 14”, left 13 1/2” (both down a bit). Examination showed definite varices in the lower-limbs, as before. The swelling was moderately reduced.

Subjectively the leg was generally less swollen, and the pain had cleared up. The leg didn’t feel heavy, and she didn’t think about it.

Twitching of the vein at menses was not an issue (this time). With her period, the vein swelled, but not as much as before.

She was sometimes going without a stool for several days, causing her low back to hurt; after two puffs of tobacco she would have a normal stool.

The fatigue cleared quickly after beginning *Carbo vegetabilis*.

The stool pattern dated back at least 25 years. Fiber and exercise actually made it worse, but even then the stool, when it eventually came, was one long piece of normal consistency. She drank five bottles of water a day.

The loss of voice in the evening cleared soon after the remedy. Her mind was more focused.

**Impression:** The rubric ‘Rectum: Constipation; difficult stool, natural stool’ includes *Graphites* (1). She had a good response to *Carbo vegetabilis*. The constipation pattern had been extant at least 25 years.

**Plan:** *Carbo vegetabilis* 30C, LM method, plussed, once a day, and return in two months.

*October 13, 2005*

“I was really good, up to two days ago. Then I got a left-sided sore throat. Two days ago, on return from a shopping trip, I had diarrhea; I just laid in bed yesterday and now I have the sore throat.”

Since being on *Carbo vegetabilis*, 3 menses had come, with no warning - no pain, red flow, like a cut, smooth, no chunks. The menses came at 22 days, 17 days, and most recently 27 days, and all heavier; it was even heavier this last month, lasting longer, but felt “healthy.” Her periods before usually didn’t feel good; she felt better seeing a bright red flow, instead of the former old, brown.

Regarding her premenstrual syndrome: “I had slight crabbiness, but before (the remedy), I’d cry at commercials.” She did not crave chocolate with this menses.

Otherwise she was feeling good.

Her stool was no different. Last week, during a

bowel cleanse, she had stool daily for five days

Her veins could still be very prominent, or flat. "I'm more comfortable." There was no aching in the back of her leg, no heaviness.

Her voice had been fine.

Friends noticed that she seemed happier.

Sleep was fine, as always.

She was belching, now, which she never did before, for the last two weeks.

**Physical Exam:** throat very slightly red; no abnormal nodes; ears normal; voice normal; no cough.

**Impression:** Something good has happened with the *Carbo vegetabilis*. Now she was belching a lot. The acute was passing and I didn't think that anything needed to be done. She might reprise some old symptoms in the future.

**Plan:** Observation at this point. *Carbo vegetabilis* 200 to hold; one also must consider another Carbon remedy as a possibility in the future. She was vivacious (naturally).

*October 20, 2005*

The cold was no worse, but no better. It was starting to hurt her chest and her nose was very stuffed. The night before her teeth hurt after blowing her nose. Tightness in the chest after coughing. Though her energy was improved, she was still tired. Her urine was yellow and had a strong 'weird' smell, seemingly not of asparagus; her nose was occluded.

**Impression:** Her instinct was to repeat *Asparagus*, but this would not have been methodologically proper.

**Plan:** First, *Carbo vegetabilis* 200, three doses over the course of the day and report tomorrow.

*October 21, 2005*

The cold definitely moved from head to chest. She had a runny nose, and she woke up this morning coughing and gagging (as she had with the acute that responded to *Asparagus* in the past). She was now clearing her throat and the cough was not bad; just a tickle in the throat. Her urine no longer had an odor.

**Plan :** Since she was feeling generally better, as well as demonstrating some alleviation of the particular symptoms, continue *Carbo vegetabilis*.

*October 29, 2005*

"I don't feel sick, but that ridiculous phlegm-filled cough, and I'm urinating on coughing. The illness has gone from my throat to chest, but now

it is back into the throat, and I'm having to clear it. It's just like before (with the laryngeal illness of 2004) - I have to clear my throat owing to a wet feeling. I'm constantly coughing up a bunch of stuff, which is wiggling around in there. The cough is worse the louder I cough, or if I'm surprised or excited, or when I take a deep breath. No headache, sore throat, and my energy is all right.

"I expectorated big wads of phlegm, after which I was done coughing.

"It haven't had any waking short of breath."

**Plan:** Keep going with *Carbo vegetabilis*. I explained the rationale that even though an acute prescription of *Asparagus* might have been successful at the moment, she might well also respond to *Carbo vegetabilis*. If the latter were a "better" remedy, at a "deeper level of pathology," then problems previously resolved could return in the process of cure (Hering's law).

*November 10, 2005*

She continues to improve. Following the chest cold, she has been basically well. She is concerned with other issues in her health, mostly concerning diet and nutrition.

## Discussion

The selection in the first case was made using the concepts of *heaviness* ("as if my leg weighed 700 pounds"), with other symptoms, as listed above. I've had a number of other patients respond well to *Carbo vegetabilis* when this sensation is strongly emphasized. I've also had cases needing members of the Hamamelididae (botanical family) respond when heaviness was also strongly expressed (a case of *Castanea vesca* comes to mind, as well as *Cannabis indica* and *Cannabis sativa*).

In the second case, the (perceived) image of heat and over-exertion leading to collapse led me to consider *Carbo vegetabilis* for the case. I have found this image useful in other cases.

The third case used a more conventional analysis. Had I not considered the symptom of loss of voice in the evening, however, remedy selection might have been more difficult. Because of the difficulty in treating the prior laryngeal illness, and seeing this symptom come up in the context of the present illness without other accompanying respiratory problems, I felt that it was an important symptom, and this led directly to the selection of *Carbo vegetabilis*. The subsequent return of the old symptom complex and its subsequent resolution by simply continuing *Carbo vegetabilis* was gratifying. Urine odor, in *Carbo*

*vegetabilis*, is associated with the words “strong, putrid, offensive, ammoniacal.” I include this case in the current paper for its own intrinsic interest, rather than as an illustration of the concepts of “heaviness” and “heat.”

As discussed by Mangialavori (and paraphrased here), one of the main ideas in the Carbon compounds is that *the challenge of being in the world is difficult, and ultimately results in a sense of weakness, a desire to remain in bed, and to escape*. He considers this remedy to be one of a group particularly indicated in drug addiction, where the issue is to *escape*.

From a substance-related (signature) point of view, it is obvious that in the presence of oxygen, charcoal burns with an extreme degree of heat. Starved of oxygen, however, there can be no combustion (air hunger, desire to be fanned, to be outside, etc.). In addition, when the combustion of charcoal is complete, there is nothing left. There is intense heat followed by complete exhaustion.

A search for the word “heat” in the materia medica of *Carbo vegetabilis* yields a large number of symptoms, with many locations (head, gums, tongue, the blood, abdomen, back, chest, etc.). With the heat, there can also be coldness of other parts. *Carbo vegetabilis* is, of course, well-known for intolerance to external heat.

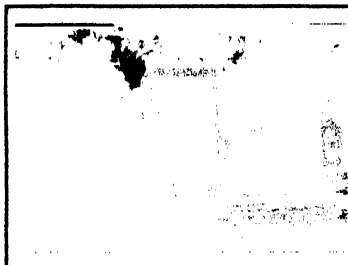
Like the concept of “heat,” “burning” pains

are common in *Carbo vegetabilis*, in virtually all parts of the body.

Heaviness, in *Carbo vegetabilis*, may be allied strongly to the desire to lie down [also found in other Hamamelididae: *Cannabis sativa* (*Synthesis 9.1*, addition Jahr) and *Hamamelis virginiana* (*Synthesis 9.1*, addition of Timothy Allen)]. Fatigue and weakness are, of course, very common symptoms, and the desire to lie down is hardly surprising, and therefore usually not particularly useful. Yet when this feature is strongly present (see particularly the first case, KP), it can still help to focus the practitioner’s search for a prescription.

If coldness, great fatigue and weakness are prominent decompensated states of *Carbo vegetabilis*, then overactivity and internal heat represent the compensated state. Like the substance, *Carbo vegetabilis* burns hot and then quickly exhausts itself. As fatigue sets in, the sensation of “heaviness” is experienced, and it is necessary to rest.

*About the author: William Shevin, MD, DHT has practiced classical homeopathy since 1981 in Northeastern Connecticut. He is a past-President of the NCH and currently serves on the board of directors of both the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia Convention of the United States and the Homeopathic Community Council. He is a well-known lecturer on homeopathic topics.* A7H

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