

A Case of Severe Fibromyalgia and Gastroparesis

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Abstract: A case of fibromyalgia and gastroparesis is reported; the patient also had a history of having suffered physical and sexual abuse as a child, leaving her emotionally flat and distant. She had a 'frozen,' staring expression that Dr. Saltzman has come to realize after extensive clinical experience as consistent with the remedy *Papaver somniferum*, especially when the past history contains a frightful experience, be it an abusive past or, as in the case of many children she's seen, surgical trauma. Other *Papaver somniferum* characteristics are a dissociated or numb state, mental fogginess, high tolerance to pain, inordinate sleepiness.

Keywords: *Papaver somniferum*, fibromyalgia, gastroparesis; fright, ailments from; abuse, ailments from.

Mary, age 40, came to see me two years ago feeling extremely debilitated from fibromyalgia which left her with fatigue and chronic muscular pains in her arms and legs for the preceding two years. She was also diagnosed a year before with gastroparesis, a condition in which there is delayed stomach emptying. This caused Mary to feel nauseated most of the time, as well as feeling full quickly after eating. She also suffered from reflux, intermittent abdominal pains and vomiting after meals. Mary also had a history of chronic sinus infections and bouts of bronchitis in the winters.

Mary was pleasant and open throughout much of the interview. She was married with three children and worked in design. She described herself as being in constant motion and found it hard to relax. She was typical of many of the women I see who have very busy lives and feel stressed from working and taking care of their families. Mary's tone, however, changed when she began speaking of her childhood. She grew up one of 12 children to an alcoholic father who was physically abusive towards her brothers. She also stated that she was sexually abused by her brother starting at the age of 13. What struck me at this point was the flatness in Mary's tone of voice while discussing her sexual abuse. There was no emotion in her voice (no anger, sadness, grief),

although during most of the interview Mary had been fairly expressive and engaging. When discussing her abuse, Mary seemed very distant. At one point, she had a look in her eyes, a type of "stare" that I had come to recognize in other patients. It was as if she became benumbed, dissociating from the pain of her experience. I asked Mary if she ever had episodes of dissociation. She said she thought she remembered "leaving her body" during the episodes of sexual abuse.

Homeopathic *Papaver somniferum* is one of the most common remedies in my practice today. I often recognize it in the eyes of my patients during the interview. There is a "stare" or a "frozen" look that is either there most of the time or just shows itself intermittently throughout the interview. At other times, there is a blank or dreamy type of expression. Some children may appear completely oblivious to their surroundings, such as those children on the autistic spectrum. In adults, I'll sometimes see it when there is a history of abuse.

Papaver somniferum
by Joerg Wichmann

Sometimes the trauma that patients experienced is so great that they become numb and dissociate in order not to feel the pain of it. I have often given *Papaver somniferum* with great success to children with a range of different complaints who have this *Papaver somniferum* "stare" and who disclose in their history that they had some type of surgery when younger. Whether the

problem is a result of the effects of the anesthesia or the trauma of the surgery is hard to say, but I have found it to be very effective in lifting the “fog” that surrounds these children. Often the parent is not even aware of this since the child has always been this way. The practitioner can, in these cases, almost always elicit a history of a very high tolerance to pain (for example, the child who doesn’t cry when hurt) as well as deep sleep (hard to awaken). It’s only after the remedy when the child “wakes up” that the parent exclaims how much more alert, engaging and happier the child is. Also think of *Papaver somniferum* when a mother tells you that her baby has stopped “babbling” after a vaccine and you see this “stare” in a placid looking baby.

Homeopathic *Papaver somniferum* also made sense in light of Mary’s complaint of gastroparesis. Although it was not in the rubric under Stomach, Paralysis, I knew that *Papaver somniferum* had a depressive effect on the gastrointestinal system. I remembered once giving it to a six-week old infant who had become severely constipated after a fever work-up. Knowing how traumatic a fever work-up can be (it includes a lumbar spinal puncture to rule out meningitis), I assumed that the baby was probably traumatized from this and had emotionally and physically “shut down.” Within seconds of placing the remedy (diluted in water) in the infant’s mouth, he had a massive bowel movement and the problem was resolved!

Getting back to Mary, I noticed *Papaver somniferum* was in the rubrics under Stomach, Satiety easy; Stomach, Nausea, eating after; and Rectum, Constipation. Mary’s fibromyalgia symptoms were too general to repertorize and there was nothing particularly characteristic or “strange, rare or peculiar” about her upper respiratory symptoms either.

Because I usually have such remarkable results with this remedy, I always have a high index of suspicion for *Papaver somniferum* when I see any signs for this remedy. I decided to give Mary a 30C dose to take once and told her to call me in a few weeks. What proceeded to happen after giving her the remedy was pretty amazing. Mary called me the following week to tell me that she was having some kind of mystical experience. She felt as if she were “out of her body,” but not in a dissociative, paralyzing way like she had experienced in the past. This time she had an incredible sense of joy and peace, realized that she was not “her body,” but rather “spirit,” and she felt an extraordinary sense of being “one with all that existed.” Mary’s ex-

perience was very similar to patients I have had who have had near-death experiences. I have also elicited similar stories from a few patients through the years who have been able to enter deeply meditative states.

The intensity of that experience eventually passed, but Mary never forgot it and it has changed her life. Soon after, she realized how unfulfilled she felt at work, quit, and started a non-profit organization for the poor which has grown to be very successful today. All of her physical complaints completely disappeared. She no longer suffers from any muscular pain, fatigue or gastrointestinal problems. Mary has developed a strong spiritual faith and she has discovered that she has some psychic abilities. She finds that she can “manifest” what she wants pretty quickly; so she has to be careful about what she wishes for! She has decided to enter the healing profession - probably some type of energy work - and is looking into a program. I haven’t given her another remedy in the last two years and she continues to do well.

Mary’s response to the remedy was unusual. Although many patients will feel an energy shift when they receive the appropriate remedy, Mary’s out-of-body experience was truly unique. This shows how powerfully the simillimum can affect an individual. (Note that if her response had simply been a drug proving, then many of her original complaints would have remained. But Mary had a complete resolution of symptoms on a physical and mental/emotional level.)

Mary has since sent me many fibromyalgia cases (gastroparesis is more rare) and most have been treated successfully with the correct constitutional remedy. Every case has been different since every person manifests dis-ease in his/her own unique way. Homeopathy truly honors the individual, as it should since every human being has his/her own unique experiences and responses to life’s events. It is our role as practitioners to be as non-judgmental and compassionate as possible to allow the person in front of us to feel safe enough to reveal his/her deepest fears and concerns. Only then can we use our powers of observation and knowledge of materia medica to ascertain the true essence of the dis-ease.

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