

CLINICAL

The vital sensation of the minerals: reducing uncertainty in homeopathic prescribing [☆]

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We illustrate the 'vital sensation' of mineral-based homeopathic medicines as revealed by an interview style based on a synthesis of the Bombay method and Scholten's, understanding derived from the periodic table. The 'Bombay method', described by Rajan Sankaran, builds on homeopathic teaching giving a structure to guide the gathering and synthesising homeopathic data. The concept of 'levels' gives a route to the deepest reflection of the vital disturbance, the vital sensation. Moving through the levels of fact, symptom, emotion, delusion and finally vital sensation provides valuable prescribing information. These aspects are discussed in conjunction with the kingdoms: plant, mineral and animal, focusing on the mineral kingdom. By synthesizing information relating to the concepts of vital sensation and kingdom we can reduce uncertainty in homeopathic prescribing. *Homeopathy* (2007) 96, 102–107.

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Introduction

Pattern matching is at the heart of the process of homeopathic prescribing, but too often results are variable. Two teachers, Jan Scholten and Rajan Sankaran, have been influential in the past decade. One of the most radical concepts offered by Sankaran is that of levels.¹ The idea of the levels is to give structure to the kind of symptoms that we encounter in taking a case. Level 1 is the name of the condition; level 2 the symptoms the patient experiences. As we go to deeper levels, we get closer to the vital disturbance and may be able to recognize what Sankaran calls the vital sensation or level 5—that which most reflects the deeper disturbance of the vital force (see Fig. 1).

Much of modern medicine deals only with levels 1 and 2. A patient with breast cancer may have treatment without anyone ever asking whether they have any symptoms related to their cancer. Most health care practitioners work at levels 1–3 and may be

perplexed by the range of emotions in level 3 and the time they consume in the consulting room. Many health care professionals training in homeopathy, find using information in level 3, such as 'ailments from vexation' and 'ailments from grief', refreshing, but in reality these are non-specific symptoms that give little insight into the vital disturbance. Connecting and understanding at the emotional level may be very helpful but we may need to go deeper if we want to be more specific in our homeopathic prescribing. Information from level 4, the level of delusion relates to fears, dreams or areas of life that give the most pleasure or pain, carries more 'energy' and reflects the patients' individuality and complexity of their situation. Level 4 can be the gateway to level 5—the 'vital sensation' level.

We also draw on the concept of kingdoms, developed by Sankaran.² Patients who are sensitive to homeopathic medicines deriving from the plant, animal and mineral kingdoms, describe themselves and their symptoms in quite different ways. Initially the differences between animal, mineral or plant language seem subtle, but it is similar to differentiating regional dialects, the more you learn to recognise the 'dialect', the quicker you know where the patient comes from! Once you have identified that the patient needs a

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Level 1	Diagnosis: Some systems of medicine do not move beyond the diagnosis in managing the problem. "You have a lump, it is cancer let's cut it out."
Level 2	Symptoms: Modern conventional medicine deals with symptoms as a means to confirm the diagnosis.
Level 3	Emotions: Holistic approaches generally take into account how feelings influence any illness.
Level 4	Delusion or world view: The deeper energetic or vital disturbance colours everything including how the person perceives the world.
Level 5	Vital sensation: Reflects the deeper energetic vital disturbance and reflects the body's "intelligence".

Fig. 1 Sankaran's levels.

mineral remedy, by careful listening, questioning and understanding of the way the person describes their whole symptom complex, one can work out which mineral is needed from the periodic table. The following case compares case taking when information is gathered in levels 1-4 with information gathered from level 5. The practitioner reflects the language offered by the patient and, without interpretation, allows the patient to travel to the deeper vital disturbance.

Case 1: pre-structure, a case of hydrogen

F is a man, aged 39 who complained of stiffness and aching in the left hip from a recurrent chondrosarcoma, excised previously in 1999 and 2000, with a further recurrence in November 2001. When first seen by ET in April 2002 he said (summarized):

"The surgeons pushed me in a certain direction but I don't want further surgery. I come from a stable family but there was not much expressed emotion—I felt lonely and rejected. I felt out of the family unit. They never came to see me play tennis—it was a very flowing sport. Sometimes my partner attacks me, and then I fear losing the family, the children. I was always quiet. I have a deep connection with woodlands. I dream of catching trains and missing them, wandering around school buildings trying to find something I have lost."

The use of the phrase 'stable family' and the feelings of rejection and isolation with a need for deep connection suggested a remedy from the mineral kingdom. The dreams and fears, give us information about level 4 or the delusional level, again suggest a

mineral remedy: the connections are not made and he is lost. There is an unusual word: 'flow'. This is what Sankaran terms the non-human specific (NHS) word—rivers flow, not humans. Picking up on this and asking the question 'tell me more about flowing' might have given rich information and we will see some two years later how, in following the thread of this word, it leads us to the vital sensation.

Prescribed *Natrum silicate* 12c daily for five days and *Iscador Quercus* 0.1 mg/ml 5 drops twice daily. Increase in energy, felt different and could do more. Felt 'spaced out':

August 2002: "Dull ache and stiffness in bony area. I feel drained, almost like I am not here, there is a lack of appreciation, love. I am giving everything out. I felt lighter after I had spoken to you. I do have the support of close friends." Repeated five day course of *Natrum silicate* 12c.

December 2002: Prescribed *Natrum muriaticum* 30c, followed by *Pulsatilla* LM2 October 2003, *Magnesium silicate* LM1 and then 30c pulsed in water until June 2004 then given *Magnesium carbonicum* June 2004 and then developed recurrent tumour March 2004. January 2005 tumour has grown and requiring further surgery.

April 2005: Tell me about your pelvis?

"It is stiff and achy."

Describe it more?

"Something is in the way, it is not free flowing, there is space, and it is empty. It is stuck. It is stiff and blocked. I need to be held, loved and cuddled. Sense of loneliness, heaviness, I am holding everything together. My energy drains and I am disorientated and lost. I feel very lonely, an intense lack of connection. I am very sensitive."

Describe the pain more?

"Squeezing, tight, cramped, freedom in life is restricted."

Tell me more about restricted?

"It's restricting my flowing movement. The attack is out of the blue, big surprise, a shock—like being hit by a bus."

Tell me more about flowing?

"Tennis is my sport—it is like dancing—your whole body moves as one—blue skies open up."

The opposite? With this question I am exploring the polarity of the substance to clarify its nature and leading the patient towards a greater connection with their vital sensation.

"Heavy, cloudy—your body shrinks and closes up."

Tell me about shrunk and closed up?

"Shrinks, body is smaller, the energy is depleting, deflating, like a balloon—a deflated tyre."

The opposite?

"Bouncing around vibrant—a balloon at bursting point, liberating full of joy. No weight of expectation. I am big, floating, six feet tall."

Dreams?

"There are people but no relation, no connection to them. I cannot connect with this woman in my dream."

An incredible bond, a powerful deep connection, the one the ultimate connection. I feel lonely, empty. Like when I am tensed up, lost, empty and cold, flat, devoid of energy."

The opposite?

"I am almost not there. I am floating and rarefied, out of body, no impediments. I am there as well but I have merged. It is stunningly beautiful."

How would it feel to connect?

"Like a deep love, an acceptance."

How would that feel?

"Very full, filled up like the balloon, relaxed and positive—it will go up high—the only way is up."

What is that like?

"Creativity is flowing out—there are no obstacles in the way—nothing prevents the flow. I would bounce over, float on by. In the past it hasn't been like that. No great flowing—the balloon has gone flat. It is punctured."

Prescription *Ozone LM7*

F. reported a "Strong reaction to Ozone with pains around tumour site and an ear infection seeping fluid. I felt free and light but then seized up."

Tell me about free and light?

"When you are connected and in tune with the universe it is a deeper power, beautiful and floating nothing restraining me, no barriers, oneness. Energy is flowing freely, peaceful."

What is the opposite?

"Confusion. No flow, obstacles, seized up."

What is it to be disconnected?

"Deflating."

Prescribed *Helium 1M* followed by *LM7*. I changed to *Helium* on seeing the peaceful gaseous state and thought this was a noble gas. "Each time I take *Helium* I get itching behind left ear with some weeping, and pain around the tumour site. Confused feeling but I'm good at work and life is expanding. I need external support. I can be uncentered. With *Helium* I am floating above it."

What would it be like to be centered?

"My life would be complete."

December 2005: With both *Ozone* and *Helium* as partial similars we see the body reacting. Thankfully the body and the repertory came to my aid with *Hydrogen* in the rubric: ear itching behind.

Prescription: *Hydrogen LM7* daily.

February 2006: "Within 10 days something happened to my life force. It was like I was being connected to the universe, it was a support, a deeper connection. The pain came back around the wound area and then improved. It felt like pelvis was retching and then I connected to higher force. I feel I have really lacked the love of a woman." Continued with *Hydrogen LM7*.

Telephone consultation May 2006: "I am doing very well—my scan is clear and my energy is good. It is very strong and consistent and my back feels secure. There is solidity and support. I feel I have got myself to a

solid foundation. I feel strong, solid, I feel I am appreciated for what I am doing in my work, emotionally sustained. The remedy is amazing support—it is steadfast." Continue with *Hydrogen LM7*.

May 2006: Taking *Hydrogen LM7* daily for three days every 4 weeks. January 2007: Energy is steady with occasional pain. Given all clear from scan in August.

Commentary

The person needing a remedy from the periodic table longs to feel complete, and their sense of incompleteness may be described in various ways. Two key words of the mineral kingdom are structure and function—without structure and function they are incomplete. Mineral people tend to see themselves as cogs in the giant wheel of life where everyone has their role to play in keeping the whole structure sound and functioning.

Hydrogen and Helium, in row 1 of the periodic table, are both gases. Hydrogen has no connection, no support, no structure; the isolation is so great that they connect to the whole—it is all or nothing. Hydrogen is not even sure of his existence, at one pole he feels one with existence, but that also makes him feel like nothing at the other pole. Helium, a noble gas feels happy in the womb and does not want to exist in the world outside—he is in the void. As we study sequential rows of the periodic table, we see that the issue of 'incompleteness' focuses on different issues evolving along the rows and columns.

Fig. 2 gives extracts from the Proving of *Hydrogen* by Sherr. We can see vital sensation symptoms of the gaseous nature of Hydrogen, along with well-known symptoms like spaced out, the unification with the female energy and physical symptoms in the buttock and hip. For F the homeopathic medicines supported him and he experienced the longest period between recurrences. However, it is only since being prescribed *Hydrogen* that his symptoms have consistently improved.

Case 2: the structure is failing, a case of Gallium

This focuses on the fourth row of the periodic table. By row 4, the ego is well developed and there is some confidence reflecting the greater sense of structure. Issues around right and wrong, black and white, and role in the work place are emphasised. Just as the non-human specific words are important to guide us to the level of vital sensation, so are the gestures the patient uses when describing their symptoms. These gestures indicate to us where there is most 'energy' in the case, and where to question further.

September 2004. A 65-year-old lady with abdominal pain due to irritable bowel syndrome seen by JG.

- Everything feels lighter and more clear.
- Feeling spacey, light - headed.
- Feel 'spaced'.
- Feeling of being out of reality.
- Felt numb and spaced out.
- I felt slightly high, removed from reality, yet very alert, clear and calm.
- Very aware of the color of the sky, the light, birds singing, flowers - like a pastoral idyll. Feeling of expansiveness, mentally cool, airy and light. Laughing - thinking of and seeing balloons.
- Everything seems funny. Laughed at serious things.
- Falling in love on a very deep level.
- This pure energy was around for some time protecting me. I feel this unification, the joining with this energy was as if a male energy joined with me sexually, but with no desire, pleasure or pain involved.
- Muscles in right buttock very sore when rocking on seat to the right and stiff and sore when moving, causing me to limp slightly when I first get up.

Fig. 2 Extracts Sherr's proving of Hydrogen.³

"My main problem is with my digestion, everything I eat makes gas within half an hour. It's extremely painful in my stomach area, a sharp pain, and then right down along the line of my Caesarean section scar, it's a spasmodic burning pain. I presume the muscles are being pulled in quite tightly there (gesture)".

Describe these muscles that are getting pulled in?

"Almost as if there is no give in the muscles there (clenches both fists). The action of digestion is trying to take place, but it's as though it is constricted in some way, as though it's too tight for the food or wind to move along it."

Say more about this too tight, constricting feeling?

"The bottom of my tummy really has always felt as though there is no elasticity. The normal elasticity of the skin, the bending, doesn't seem to be there, as though the tubing it's passing along is either inflamed or not wide enough...it causes pain because it's trying to force its way along... I'm assuming that the tube cannot expand that way." (Note use of function words.)

Tell me more about your image of the elasticity not being there... what is happening in the lining of bowel?

"The lining is more sensitive so that whatever is passing through is irritating it. It's like a child playing with plasticine, when they squeeze it too much, it abrades from rubbing across their hand, but it's something more gritty than plasticine..."

You mean plasticine is the content that is irritating because the wall has changed in some way?

"As though it's stiffened...(gesture, fingers forward) like an old bicycle inner tube, you know when they get quite old... dried...go quite stiff and brittle." (Note use of structure words.)

"As though...the gas and food together (closes and opens fingers) are too much together for that particular piece of the bowel... as though it is over extended, therefore it hurts, because it has been forced to be wider than it wants to be."

What is your imagination of this lower part, if it got worse?

"That it would stop functioning, stop doing what it was supposed to do."

And then...? "There would be an obstruction, that it would lose its ability to ...(opens fingers apart and together again and again) what is the word?...contract and expand."

In more general terms, something is not able to give, it is stiff and brittle, give me more examples...?

"Another example would be like my neck, it's difficult for me to put my head back. The muscles swell if I lift or reach or push and they get very painful, eventually I get a headache."

It feels as though what is happening?

"It's as if my neck is trying to support a spine that hasn't got enough sponginess...no longer able to take any movement really, trying to support a spine that's doing extra work. It's as if the whole of the back of my neck has lost its give."

What does it mean something has lost its give... you have the same feeling in your tummy and neck?

"It's important with any muscle, if I do something I haven't done before or haven't done for a while, and then the muscles hurt. It's as if all the muscles have got worn out (laughs), they have decided enough is enough!" (Note metaphor for her own experience.)

"It is not supple any longer... my muscles wont accept anything different can be done without them hurting. They protest if I do something like cleaning or painting, they react (gesture) to being used when they are not normally used."

That protest is telling you what?

"That the muscle is over used."

What do you mean over used, what is happening in the muscle itself?

"It is like an elastic band, pulling, an old one; it doesn't have the spring back that it would have if it was new. It will stretch to do whatever action it is, but

the stretching over-taxes, over-strains, over-stretches it."

What is worst scenario of something over stretched, over strained...what happens in the end?

"It's like my right leg; it can give way as if it can't do its job any more."

Describe when it gives way?

"It won't hold my weight...It is as if the ligaments are not holding the bones and the knee cap into place (gesture) as tightly as they should do. I think they were damaged when I fell."

What damage? "It's the same sort of thing isn't it really...They have lost their ability to give! I'm describing the same thing each time aren't I!! (laughs)."

(Note: physical symptom confluence point, she describes the same sensation in all her physical symptoms.)

And if this got worse?

"Lack of mobility of the muscles, inability to do what they're supposed to do at all."

Then what?

"That function stops."

Then what?

"The muscle wouldn't be useful any more, wouldn't be useable."

What happens if something is not usable or useful?

"Atrophy ...useless really... you throw it away because it can't do its job any more."

We have reached the level of sensation. The sensation is of structure being stiff, brittle, unable to give, just before the stage of atrophy, uselessness and being thrown away. We can now proceed to understand her mental/emotional life (level 3) and her dreams (level 4).

What was the most difficult time in your life?

"I suppose when I was first married, I was over 30 and used to being single and independent. It's adapting to someone else's point of view, finding the (rotates hand) middle road between two views. My husband was also very set in his ways, he was a headmaster. But very often with the man, it's not as easy to adapt."

"How would your husband have described you?"

"Much as I would have described him! Stubborn, independent, strong-minded, liked my own way."

How did you resolve that?

"On both sides really, you need give on both sides ...eventually you strike the medium."

Note physical-emotional confluence point: the same sensation, the difficulty to give on both sides. What we had physically was the loss of the ability to give.

What dreams do you have?

"I dream about school. I was a Deputy Head with a difficult Headmistress. There was usually some sort of confrontation with her. She was very dogmatic. She had very old-fashioned set ideas of how the place should be run. Considering it was such a traditional school, it was not always easy when she brought in changes. I was 'piggy in the middle'; I had to keep both parties happy, her and the staff."

(Final confluence point: again the need for give on both sides.)

Prescription: Gallium Met 30c, 3 doses, then one dose weekly.

Scholten identifies the themes of work, duty, order with row 4.⁴ Typically the patient who responds to a row 4 medicine has a complete identity, but his independence and security is incomplete, there is a threat from outside to his house, money, and job. He has to protect his structure from external forces, to sustain against attacking and weathering forces which threaten his framework.

There is an emphasis on rules and right and wrong, these are often emphasised for *Kali Carbonicum* but are a theme of the whole row. With right and wrong come guilt and crime, seen in an extreme form in *Bromium* at the end of row 4. With *Gallium* we see themes of column 13: left behind, overtaken, outmoded, deteriorating, giving up. According to Scholten the essence of *Gallium* is 'stubborn in their work, unable to change'.⁵ for Sankaran the essence is "imminent loss of protection and security, so I have to be rigid all the time to defend against change and criticism".⁶ A rare, soft, silvery metal. Gallium is a brittle solid at low temperature but melts at 30 °C. It has one of the largest liquid ranges for a metal, like Mercury.

Follow up October 2004: "My bowels are very much better. I am not in nearly so much pain. I get the odd twinge sometimes but not as frequent. Generally, my pain is about 50% better. My sleep is still pretty bad, I just doze. My joints have not been very good at all. My neck and shoulders are very painful after driving and my knees seem to wobble. I get a very sharp pain when I get out of the car."

Prescription: Gallium Met 200c, 3 doses.

December 2004: "I'm very well; I immediately noticed a difference after the 200c. I have only had a pain in my tummy twice, which is a great improvement. My knees are far better, not nearly as painful, they are not giving way. Four nights a week. I'm having 6 hours sleep now, which is absolutely wonderful."

Prescription: Gallium Met 200c, single dose as required.

July 2005: "Absolutely fine, no flare ups of tummy pain, my knee has been fine, I'm sleeping 6-7 hours."

What about the sensation of stiffened, brittle like old elastic?

"That has completely gone. The tissues have relaxed; there is more spontaneity of the digestive system. It is not inflamed or over stressed. Still having school dreams, but not as confrontational or argumentative as they used to be."

(Note use of 'spontaneous': the opposite of fixed and no give.)

Prescription: Gallium Met 200c single dose as required.

November 2006: "Only two flare-ups in past year, my own fault, I ate greasy food. Took 200c, worked

Words or phrases that mineral patients might use in describing the structure and function aspects of their life:

- complete – incomplete
- because of incompleteness, the perception of lack of structure, a void, gap, vacuum
- secure – insecure, stable – unstable,
- support – I lack support and structure, or I have lost support and structure
- role, duty, task, job
- capable – incapable, capacity – incapacity, useful – useless
- appreciation, value, sensitive to criticism, fear of failure.

Fig. 3 Typical 'mineral' words and phrases.

- Crumbling, disintegrating, breaking up, fragmenting, cracking
- Bedrock, foundation, cement, solid
- Expanding, contracting, melting, tensile strength, durable
- Pressure, force, friction, gravity
- Catalyst, conductor, electricity, wire, metal, shine
- Gas words: vaporise, floating, free, lightness, blue skies, spaced out, diffuse, flowing and the opposite: weighed down, restricted, bound, heavy, shrunk, deflated

Fig. 4 Vital sensation words.

extremely well. In between no trouble. Knees fine unless I do too many stairs, no giving way. My neck has been very good a lot of the time unless doing a lot of driving. Chiropractor now able to help. Dreams? Nothing about school...that was a real bugbear! I'm very grateful to you and to Gallium!"

Prescription: Gallium Met 200c single dose prn.

Discussion

Scholten introduced the concept of periodic table themes,⁷ and Sankaran deepened the understanding of the evolution of themes as we move along the rows and columns of the periodic table.⁸ Two very different mineral sensations emerge from these cases. The sensation associated with the very first mineral on the periodic table, Hydrogen, is lack of structure and connection. There is a sensation of restriction to flow in the presenting complaint and in the deep lifeworld of the patient.⁹ The vital sensation words of hydrogen are those of a gas: flow, float, rarefied, balloon, bounce and blue skies. The Gallium case illustrates the themes of row 4 and column 13 of the periodic table. These elements have structure. But here the sensation is of a threat to security and the reaction is to become stiff and rigid in order to resist this. But stiffness means brittleness, and column 13 is part of the decline phase, just before redundancy and total breakdown of the structure occur. Fig. 3 gives some words or phrases that mineral patients might use when describing the 'structure and function' aspects of their lives. Fig. 4 gives some examples of vital sensation words.

Sankaran's levels allow one to begin to identify where you need to go to get more complete information. Then in analysis, combining Scholten's and

Sankaran's themes makes it much easier to find which remedy your patient needs on the Periodic Table grid. As ever, comparing it to the materia medica ensures that the prescription is homeopathic. We have found the Bombay method has illuminated our practice and when synthesised with more traditional information, it has improved our results significantly.

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