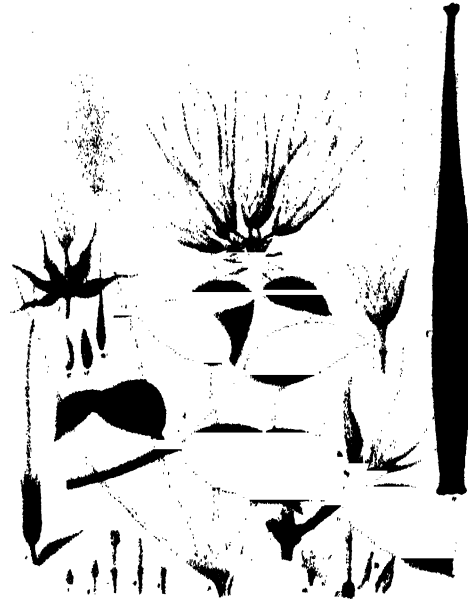


# Strophanthus Hispidus

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**Abstract:** Employing numerous references from the homeopathic literature, the author details the materia medica of *Strophanthus hispidus*. A few central characteristics include: heart failure, with weak, irregular pulse; edema, dyspnea, palpitations, rapid alternation of contraction and dilatation of pupils, loquacity, nausea and vomiting; headache with surgings to the head; hypertension (often with flushed face). The author includes a description of the benefit he personally received from *Strophanthus* in the wake of his myocardial infarction; interestingly, the remedy, in addition, to alleviating his heart condition, greatly improved his type 2 diabetes mellitus and essentially alleviated his long-standing myopia.

**Keywords:** *Strophanthus hispidus*, materia medica of; heart failure, cardiac arrhythmia, diabetes mellitus and *Strophanthus hispidus*; myopia and *Strophanthus hispidus*.



The article "Homeopathy and Medical Progress" from the editorial in *The Homeopathic Recorder* (Vol LVII, #7 January 1942, p. 360) contains the following on *Strophanthus hispidus*.

"The African plant *Strophanthus hispidus* contains a substance found in the pituitary gland of pigs called cortisone. Native to Africa, it is an ornamental climbing shrub which belongs to the natural order of Apocynaceae. An extract of the seeds of this shrub is used by the natives of Africa to make poisonous arrow tips. Game wounded by these arrows are rarely able to move more than one hundred yards; yet the flesh can be eaten with no ill effects. *Strophanthus sarmentosus* from tropical Africa is a source of commercial cortisone. The seeds of *Strophanthus hispidus* provide the drug strophanthin.

"The name strophanthus is derived from the Greek word, strophos (meaning a twisted cord of

rope) and anthus ( a flower) referring to the chief peculiarity of its appearance. The limb of the corolla is divided into five long, tail-like segments. The flower is twisted and hairy. *Strophanthus hispidus* is usually found as a woody climber inhabiting the forests between the coasts and the center of the African continent. It coils along the ground then climbs to the tops of the highest trees where it is seen hanging in festoons from tree to tree.

"All *Strophanthus* species contain glucosides that affect the heart. The glucosides are named after the species: Kombe strophanthine, Hispidus strophanthine, etc. When cut through, the seeds turn green in

sulfuric acid."

The homeopathic remedy was proven by Gisevius and Matthes. The systems of the body most affected were the heart, circulatory and digestive systems, the kidneys, the skin and rheumatic structures. Grimer cured a 63 year-old alcoholic

In this author's experience, *Strophanthus hispidus* cured my irregular and weak heartbeat, diabetes and myopia. In one of my patients it cured severely swollen ankles and extremely high blood pressure.

by giving him two to ten drops of *Strophanthus hispidus* tincture three times a day. Clarke cited two of his cases of alcoholism that were cured by this remedy.

In the book *A Study of Materia Medica* by M.M. Chudhuri there is a wonderful article on *Strophanthus hispidus* on pages 1006-07. Excerpts include:

"It was utilized to bring about a repugnance to alcohol by causing intense nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The remedy cures weak action of the heart due to debility of the heart muscles. It strengthens and slows the heartbeat, prolonging the diastolic period and restoring the rhythm to regularity. It cures dyspnea due to edema of the lungs caused by heart disease.

"*Strophanthus hispidus* directly affects the heart and has some similarity to the action of digitalis, but does not contract the arteries as does digitalis. Hence, none of the gain from cardiac stimulation is counteracted and there is no danger of back flow of blood upon an incompetent heart. *Strophanthus hispidus* is more prompt in its action than digitalis, and its action is far less prolonged than that of digitalis. It is not cumulative as is digitalis; hence, it was used by allopaths as an emergency remedy rather than a mainstay. The principles upon which homeopaths practice, however, are entirely different from that of allopaths. A homeopath will choose a remedy based on the totality of the symptoms with emphasis on the strange, rare, peculiar and characteristic symptoms.

"*Strophanthus hispidus* patients are irritable and loquacious. Nausea without vomiting is an important symptom. There is a loathing of food, and the patient experiences great burning in the esophagus and stomach. The pulse is weak and betrays a weak action of the heart due to the great debility of the heart muscles. The patient is dyspneic, probably due to pulmonary."

The following case is from the diary of Dr. John Henry Clarke:

"W.C., a delicate looking boy, was admitted to the hospital, having had an attack of rheumatic fever two years previously. He had been bedridden

one month prior to admission and one week before developed a cough, shivering and occasional vomiting. On admission he had a frequent short, dry cough, aggravated by lying, had to be propped up in bed and had edema of the feet, especially the left. His tongue was white and he had been unable to retain any food for three days. He had no pain after eating, but had much flatulence. Eructations gave much relief. His heart was greatly dilated, pulsation diffused with a double mitral bruit. There was dullness at the base of both lungs, moist rales (air through narrowed spaces) halfway up the right lung. There was expectoration of bright red blood for seven days. He was prescribed *Strophanthus hispidus* tincture, one drop every four hours. Improvement in all the symptoms occurred immediately. The sickness, cough, hemoptysis, dropsy and heart sounds cleared up and he was discharged in less than three weeks post admission."

The following information is from the *Handbook of Homeopathic Materia Medica and Therapeutics* by T.F. Allen, M.D. (page 1056).

"A tincture of *Strophanthus hispidus* is made from the seeds of this plant which belongs to the great order of cardiac poisons; namely the Apocynaceae. It acts directly upon the cardiac muscles. Its action should be compared with *Aconitum*, *Amyl nitrosum*, *Cactus*, *Digitalis*, *Glonoinum*, *Hypocynum*, *Iberis*,

*Kalmia*, *Lachesis*, *Lycopus* and *Phosphorus*.

"After receiving a toxic dose of *Strophanthus hispidus*, the heart, together with other muscles of the body, passes at the first onset from contraction to cadaveric rigidity and its muscular fibre assumes an acid reaction. The action of the heart is accompanied by an increase in blood pressure and in certain conditions by an increase of urine and lowering of the temperature. The face is flushed, lips scarlet, eyes brilliant, temperature high, skin dry, pupils dilating and contracting alternately every few seconds, pulse 140, arteries distended, left ventricle contracting with unusual vigor, aortic valves closing with a loud and distinct 'tup,' a slight regurgitant murmur, loquacity, no micturition for ten hours, purging and vomiting.

"In clinical uses it has been found valuable for

Human Heart Diagram



w:\Image\3DScience\Human Heart.jpg

a weak heart. The pulse becomes slower, stronger and more regular. It acts well in dropsy; however, it does not seem to act well when there is much œdema of the lungs. It acts best in functional disturbances of the heart from alcohol, tobacco and tea."

In this author's experience, *Strophanthus hispidus* cured my irregular and weak heartbeat, diabetes and myopia. In one of my patients it cured severely swollen ankles and extremely high blood pressure.

The following case by C.M. Boger, which is both illuminating and instructive, was obtained from the *Proceedings of the Forty-Second Annual Session of the International Hahnemannian Association* (pages 331-333).

"71 year-old female, troubled by waking at about two a.m. in great distress from the accumulation of gas, belched with a loud penetrating sound that could be heard throughout the house, accompanied by violent palpitations of the heart alternating with a hard thumping within the head.

"Boger gave various remedies for indigestion with no effect. That night he was called and found symptoms of true angina pectoris. Danger was extreme, but *Aconite* saved the day! An examination showed a strong mitral regurgitation with extreme dilation of the left ventricle.

"So much for snapshot prescribing! As events turned out, the diagnosis would not have even remotely led to the remedy that was really indicated. With proper diet and absolute bed rest, things went well for twelve days when she suddenly developed nausea, retching and vomiting accompanied by eructations and a suspicious pain extending from the region of the duodenum up to the chest, all worse at 2:00 a.m. I thought the diagnosis and remedy were both plain enough, and to confirm this view, *Kali bichromicum* helped immediately and only left her very weak and prostrated from such a gastro-duodenal crisis which looked so much like a duodenal ulcer.

"After this the heart lesions seemed stationary; however, she had almost nightly paroxysms at 2:00 a.m. with violent throbbing of the heart alternating with hard beating or thumping in her head, accompanied by great alarm and stitches in the heart. A remedy covering the entire symptom picture was not apparent. Hence, he gave *Glonoinum* on the head and heart symptoms, expecting little but getting no result whatsoever. In the interim, he ransacked all the literature where he might perchance find the symptom picture at hand. Boger was rewarded when he found these symptoms in the *Homeopathic Recorder* (Vol 12, #11. p. 502): 'Felt a pulsation in the head and the heart passing

soon into a lively perception of the action of the heart, slight stitches and twitches in the region of the apex, eructation and hiccoughs, an undulating sensation in the head and the whole body.'

"A single dose of *Strophanthus hispidus* 12C turned the trick and she was entirely relieved for several days. Another dose relieved for about a week, while still later the interval became two weeks. She was kept in bed against many protests. Now and then there were times when no mitral regurgitation could be detected at all and the dilatation was decreasing. This case was one of the biggest surprises of his practice.

"Several distinctive features of *Strophanthus hispidus* are worth pointing out:

The pulse is alternately rapid and slow.

Very mobile pupils, dilating and contracting alternately.

Blood surges alternately to the head and heart (*Glonoinum*).

Throbbings and undulations.

Nervous excitement.

Loquacity.

Stitches.

Twitchings.

Acts primarily on the heart, stomach and intestines."

The following information was obtained from *A Handy Book of Reference for Students and General Practitioners of Homeopathy* by George Royal, M.D., M.S. (pages 130-131):

"*Strophanthus hispidus* was very popular in years past, but soon fell into disrepute owing to the fact that it was used indiscriminately and given in allopathic (large) doses. For a time it was lauded by allopaths for the purpose of sustaining the heart during pneumonia; then severely condemned because it killed patients who had pneumonia. The same attitude toward it was taken by the homeopaths who copied the allopaths, or followed the directions of the pharmacists. However, it has a place which no other heart remedy can fill, as seen in the following case:

"Case: Mr. G. McC, male, 49, thick-set, fleshy; healthy until he was 28 when he had an attack of rheumatism, followed by compensating hypertrophy of the heart. At age 37 he was in an auto wreck which caused a break in compensation and the beginning of "fatty degeneration" which, however, was checked and held under good control until he contracted pneumonia. Dr. A.M. Linn was called to attend him and found the left lung nearly solid; he was expectorating a good deal of blood and had some heaviness of the chest. Temperature was 104, pulse 145, weak and irregular, with the normal diastole nearly obliterated. Dr.

Linn gave him *Phosphorus* 6x (5 gtt q h). He was called back after five hours and found the pulse to be more rapid and weaker. Dr. Linn then gave him an injection of 1/4 gr *Strychnia*. An hour later as the patient was getting worse, he called me (Dr. Royal) telling me to bring *Crataegus* and *Strophanthus hispidus*. We gave *Strophanthus hispidus* 2x (5 gtt in a dram of water) and repeated the dose in 15 minutes. An hour after the first dose the pulse was fifteen beats less and the quality better. The medicine was then given q h for 8 hours, then q 2 h until about 50 hours after the first dose, when resolution began. Dr. Linn changed to *Ammonium carbonicum* 3x (5 gr q 2 h) which took care of the lung edema.

Three weeks later when the patient began getting up and the heart symptoms returned, Dr. Linn put him back on *Strophanthus hispidus* 3x with excellent results. The patient, however, had to use it occasionally for years."

This is very similar to this author's case in that I have needed to take *Strophanthus hispidus* 200C and 1 M potencies periodically since my heart attack.

The following information was obtained from *Diseases of the Heart and Arteries: Their Causes, Nature and Treatment* by John H. Clarke, M.D. (pp. 190-1993).

"Indications for prescribing *Strophanthus hispidus* by those who have used it are as follows:

Chronic degeneration of cardiac muscle with a usually small, frequent and irregular pulse.

Edema.

Great difficulty in breathing and arrest of breathing.

Nervous palpitation.

Loathing of food, followed by vomiting after eating and sometimes severe diarrhea."

Clarke wrote additional information on *Strophanthus hispidus* in his book *A Dictionary of Practical Materia Medica* (pp. 1286-1289).

"Clinical uses: Alcoholism, anemia, cough, diplopia, cardiac dropsy, hæmoptysis, heart affections and levitation.

"Case: Dipsomaniac, 63 years. with a weak heart and intermittent pulse. Patient was given 7 drops from an infusion of *Strophanthus hispidus* t.i.d. The first dose caused nausea and a repugnance to alcohol which proved to be permanent. Two other alcoholics were given *Strophanthus hispidus* and cured. It caused nausea and profuse sweating. In addition, the sudden withdrawal of alcohol was not attended with delirium.

"A.H. (a writer) gives his experience with *Strophanthus hispidus* in treating urticaria, which also bears out the gastric relationship of the remedy.

"Case: A lady had constant outbursts of urticarial rash dating back to an exposure to an offensive effluvium from a dead whale cast upon the sand. The attacks would recur after drinking a glass of table beer. *Strophanthus hispidus* cured in doses of 5 gtt of a 1 X tincture.

"A.H. considers *Strophanthus hispidus* of great service in anemia of young girls when palpitations and breathlessness are marked features."

Clarke wrote about other remedies which should be compared with *Strophanthus hispidus*. In anemia, *Ferrum metallicum* should be considered. *Apocynum* and all the remedies made from the order of Apocynaceae should be studied for the treatment of dropsy. *Digitalis*, *Crataegus*, *Cactus* and *Phaseolus* should also be considered in heart problems. Where there is a history of alcoholism, *China*, *Nux vomica*, *Avena sativa*, *Quercus* and *Lycopodium* should be considered. Clarke considered alcohol, tea and tobacco to be contributory causes for *Strophanthus hispidus* symptomatology.

Clarke lists the following symptoms for *Strophanthus hispidus*:

"Mind: Irritative humor. Precociously loquacious (child).

Head: Stitches in left temple, later in right temple. Severe headache about junction of skin and hairy scalp, gradually spreading to temples. Pulsation in head and heart. Undulating sensation in head and whole body. Twitching in occiput.

Eyes: Impaired sight of left eye with nausea and faintness following the headache. Double vision, eyes brilliant, pupils dilating, quivering and contracting every few seconds.

Face flushed with scarlet lips.

Throat: Burning in throat and esophagus, extending to stomach, compelling empty swallowing. Dry tongue and fauces.

Stomach: Eructation and hiccough, twitching in stomach, loss of appetite and extreme gastric distress. Nausea without vomiting. Loathing of food, followed by choking and vomiting after eating. Repugnance to alcohol.

Abdomen: Pressure and shooting pains in the right hypochondrium. Stitching in right renal and hepatic region. Rumbling in abdomen and pinching at naval. Stitching in region of sigmoid flexure.

Stool and Anus: Frequent diarrhea with violent colic but good appetite. Stool with burning and tenesmus in anus.

Respiratory organs: Cough worse lying down. Expectoration of bright red blood.

Chest: Pressing pain in middle of right third rib anteriorly.

**Heart:** The heart is easily and powerfully affected. Physiological diastole (double beat) of pulse obliterated. Chronic degeneration of cardiac muscle. Pulse small, frequent and irregular. Great difficulty of breathing, edema. Lively perception of action of heart, then a pressure sensation of anguish, tending to deep respirations. Pressure in hepatic region. Intense palpitations from slight exertion. Loud heart sounds. Slight regurgitant mitral murmur.

**Limbs:** Heaviness and pains in forearms and fingers, then same type of pain in left hip joint, extending into drawing twitches in top of left shoulder, extending into joints of foot, which is quite painful when moved.

**Lower limbs:** Swelling of legs. Itching and stitching in both feet. Dorsum of foot painful and tense. Swollen ankles and feet.

**Generalities:** Coldness of limbs and faintness (from preparing tincture). Increases contractile power of all striped muscles, rendering their contractions more complete and prolonged. In lethal doses it causes the rigidity of contraction to pass into rigor mortis. During afternoon nap, sensation as if being lifted from the couch.

**Fever:** Coldness of extremities. Temperature raised. Skin dry or profuse sweat."

The following is a quotation from Dr. Rabe taken from *The Proceedings of the 39th Annual Session of the Hahnemannian Association*.

"I recall a case in which the symptoms of cardiac decompensation were present where *Kali bichromicum* was used and brought about practically a cure. The man had been suffering for some time with rheumatic fever. When I saw him, he was in great pain and could tell me very little. He had incessant pains in the joints as well as the heart. There was a jumble of heart murmurs. In that case I gave him *Strophanthus hispidus*, five drops four times a day, with a very decided improvement; and ultimately *Rhus toxicodendron*, under which the man finally got well and was able to go about his work."

Frans Vermeulen lists the leading symptoms of *Strophanthus hispidus* in his book *Synoptic Materia Medica, Volume 2*"

"Mind: Anxiety, especially anticipation.

Palpitation of heart and tendency to breathe deeply. Fear of ordeals

Floating sensation of being lifted up during sleep. Irritability.

Loquacity (but not as marked as in *Lachesis*). Alcoholism.

**Generals:** Corpulent persons.

Children suffering from chlorosis, anemia and irritability of the heart.

Senile vertigo from cerebral anemia.

During the climacteric period when there are aching pains through the hips and extensors of the thighs.

**Alternations**

Rapid alternating with slow pulse. Surging to head alternating with heart. Dilated with alternating contracted pupils. Very mobile pupils.

Craving for coffee.

< Darkness.

> Sunlight.

Increased secretions (nose and kidneys) - diabetes (polyuria).

**Physicals:** Headaches, temples, stitching pains.

& Dimness of vision; diplopia.

& Dilation with alternating contraction of pupils.

Redness and swelling of lips.

Functional disturbances of the heart from alcohol, tobacco and tea.

Palpitations; chronic, especially nervous.

< Exertion; emotions.

& Heaviness of forearms and fingers.

**Rubrics:**

Mind: Precocious loquacity in children.

Eye: Photophobia after eye operation. Pupils alternately contracted and dilated in the same light.

Vision: Dim vision during vertigo.

Face: Discoloration, red, flushes; red spots; scarlet discoloration of lips.

Throat: Heat compels swallowing.

Stomach: Hiccough and pain in chest.

Kidneys: Chronic passive congestion from heart or kidney disease.

Respiration: Difficult respiration during pain in heart.

Chest: Goitre heart. Pain in heart alternating with pain in head. Pain in heart and short breathing. Bursting sensation as if heart too full. Palpitation of heart during anticipation. Breathlessness.

Extremities: Sensation of heaviness in fingertips.

Skin: Eruptions, chronic urticaria. Itching alternating with cold air.

Generalities: Hot bathing, washing >. Light, sunlight >. Darkness <.

Pains appear suddenly, disappear gradually. Pains alternating with itching.

Food: Aversion: Alcohol.

Desire: Coffee.

Worse: Alcohol, tea, tobacco.”

Case 1 is this author's personal experience. Case 2 is that of a patient I treated with *Strophanthus hispidus*.

### Case 1

9/1/2003

68 year-old male (author)

Heart attack at 5:00 a.m. Unable to lie down and must walk about. I was taken by ambulance to the emergency room where I was administered a “clot buster” that dissolved the blood clot. I was given morphine sulfate which made me very loquacious. I lectured extensively to the medical staff about homeopathy. The nurse asked my wife if I always talked so much.

An angioplasty was performed the following day with one stent placed in the left descending coronary artery. I was given morphine sulfate again during the procedure which caused loquaciousness, confusion and restlessness. After the angioplasty, I was in a precarious bleeding state due to being given IV heparin for two days and from the trauma to the femoral artery during the angioplasty. I was told that I must keep my leg perfectly still for three hours. Because of the medications, I was irrational and not entirely cooperative.

The nurse checked my bleeding status at the femoral artery site every few minutes, and it was only after my wife secretly gave me *Arnica* 200C that the bleeding stopped.

After subsequently reading many books and articles on heart remedies, I found *Strophanthus hispidus* to be almost a specific for my symptoms and condition. I was unable to find in the literature two important symptoms in my case:

Must walk about during heart attack; cannot lie down.

Extreme loquaciousness. I found loquacious listed in many sources, but not to the degree that I experienced.

Since October, 2003 I have been taking *Strophanthus hispidus* in the 200C and 1M potencies with good results. When my pulse becomes weak and irregular, I know that it is time to repeat the remedy. I find that I need to take a dose about once a month. In addition to correcting my irregular pulse, I noted that my myopia was corrected. I had worn glasses for distance since the age of 13 and for driving. One day after taking the *Strophanthus hispidus* I put on my glasses and, to my surprise, I was blind. I had to take the glasses off to watch television. At my appointment with my ophthalmologist two years later my eyesight had significantly changed.

My vision had improved from the former 150/20 to 25/20 in the left eye and from the former 200/20 to 45/20 in the right eye. When I took the vision test to renew my driver's licence, it was normal. Whereas my driver's license formerly indicated that I must use glasses to drive, it now indicates that my vision is normal! I was also unable to find any reference in the homeopathic literature to the correction of myopia with *Strophanthus hispidus*.

Another “side effect” of *Strophanthus hispidus* for me has been an improvement in my blood sugar. I have a five year history of Type II diabetes mellitus, which I am able to control with diet and exercise. Now, after taking a dose of *Strophanthus hispidus* my blood sugar drops to an almost normal level. More recently, after having not needed to take *Strophanthus hispidus* for four months, my blood sugar rose to 200 mg %. After taking *Strophanthus hispidus* 1M, my blood sugar dropped to 94 mg %.

After my heart attack, a holistic physician discovered that my iron level was high on kinesiology testing. In fact, it was so high that the level was off the chart on the blood test he ordered. For many years I had taken 6,000 mg of Vitamin C on a daily basis as a preventive measure against hepatitis and other diseases I was exposed to in my dental practice. I then realized that the high dose of Vitamin C had caused a toxic level of iron assimilation that had damaged my liver and consequently the blood vessels in my heart. Needless to say, I stopped taking high doses of Vitamin C. The most I take now is 250 mg. My iron levels have decreased; however, they are still mildly elevated. I try to eliminate all iron additives in my food and since my well water contains high levels of iron, I now drink only distilled water.

In May, 2007, I had a second heart attack which seemed less severe than the initial attack three-and-a-half years earlier. I attribute the less severe symptoms to the fact that I took *Strophanthus hispidus* 200C and 1M as soon as I noted an uncomfortable feeling in my chest. I also had pallor, beads of perspiration and weakness. I also took aspirin 325 mg and nitroglycerine before the EMT team arrived.

A second angioplasty was performed the following morning. Two stents were placed in the right coronary arteries over the right auricle. A large blood clot was removed and extensive calcification was noted. The interventional cardiologist read me the “riot act” for using homeopathy which he said “doesn't work,” instead of the standard protocol of statins, Plavix and aspirin. This cardiologist's nurse also told me that she had purchased a homeopathic remedy at the health food store

when she had the flu and it did nothing. I told her that she should have seen a professional homeopath! My regular cardiologist told me that during the angioplasty my heart did not go into arrhythmia, which he said was very rare. I attributed this to having taken *Strophanthus hispidus*, which had strengthened the heart muscle. This cardiologist prescribed a statin drug, Plavix and aspirin, which I tried to take; however, I experienced terrible side-effects. The Plavix made me extremely dizzy when lying and rolling to the left. *Conium* 200K gave me relief. The statin drug caused pain on the right side of my body and aspirin caused vision problems and a severe occipital headache. This cardiologist has now retired and I am now seeing another cardiologist who is open to my treatment with homeopathy. He does not understand homeopathy, but is willing to work with me. In addition, I take many nutritional supplements and will continue to take *Strophanthus hispidus* 200C or 1M once a month. I follow an eighty percent vegetarian diet and continue a daily walking routine.

Thank God for homeopathy and the laws of nature!

## Case 2

50 year-old male school teacher.

1/3/07

Very obese and edematous.

Legs and feet severely swollen, especially ankles.  
B.P. 200/130

Heart palpitations, worse at 2:00 a.m. Very loquacious.  
Rx: *Strophanthus hispidus* 200C.

1/4/07

B.P. 150/80

Ankles almost normal.

I gave him *Strophanthus hispidus* 1M to take with him with instructions to take only if needed.

9/16/07

The patient was taking five different allopathic prescriptions. He felt weak and tired, but had noted no heart palpitations. He felt that the *Strophanthus hispidus* had slowed his heart too much. I told him not to take the remedy unless the palpitations returned, and encouraged him to see my cardiologist, who is amenable to homeopathy.

Even though this case is far from being cured, the action of *Strophanthus* in normalizing his blood pressure, palpitations, and edema was undeniable.

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