

## SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL

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### Research meeting in Monaco

This is a report by Anthony Campbell of a meeting to which he was invited, together with D T Reilly, M Taylor and M D Jenkins: in order to participate in a discussion on present and future research into low dose effects. The meeting was part of a series hosted by Monaco on complementary medicine and allied subjects, known as Les Entretiens de Monaco sur les Medecines Energetiques. This year the discussion was centred on *Infinitesimalité* (roughly translated as 'very low dose effects'). Fifteen people participated; nine of them from France; the other two were from Australia and Israel.

The quantity and quality of research in France came as a revelation to the British contingent. The author referred to the generally very high scientific standard of the papers presented. These workers evidently represented only about half of those currently working in France on low-dose effects. Their work was very largely based on animal experiments. Where the British had a clear lead was in clinical research. Reilly's recent hay fever study published in *The Lancet* was the only clinical contribution, and was particularly well received.

At the end of the meeting the group was invited to send three representatives to the planning committee of the Entretiens. Two French representatives and the author were elected. It was decided that the group would meet at least once a year in the same setting; would be known as Le Groupe Internationale de Recherche sur l'Infinitesimalité (GIRI); would publish a report of proceedings; and would be enlarged to include any researchers in the field. The author concluded: "GIRI marks an important and exciting new development in the study of low-dose effects. What is particularly interesting about the group is that it provides a setting in which clinicians, pharmacolo-

gists, physicists and others can meet to discuss these phenomena freely and without preconceptions".<sup>1</sup>

### Two historic research papers

Research is Homoeopathy's forgotten heritage. So stated Peter Fisher as he introduced two landmark pieces of research from the past. He complained that, while the works of Hahnemann, Kent and others were subjected to detailed and sometimes excessive analysis, the means by which these conclusions were reached were scarcely discussed: 'If we are to move forward, it is essential that we develop and refine our methods for finding the right medicine, and for understanding how it interacts with the patient'. The author introduced the two papers briefly.

The first piece is taken from Professor Howard P Bellow's *The Test Drug Proving of the OO&L Society*, published in the USA in 1906. This large-scale, double-blind, placebo-controlled proving of *Belladonna* was certainly the first proving to have been organized along these lines, and quite possibly the first piece of medical research of any kind to have adopted this method, which is now the 'gold standard' in medical research.

The second piece is the first English-language publication of a series of experiments performed by W M Persson in the Soviet Union, originally published in 1933. The model developed by Persson was adopted and improved by W E Boyd in his now classical work on the effect of mercuric chloride on starch diastase.<sup>2</sup>

'General directions' is the title of the extract from the Bellows paper. Under 10 groupings and in one and a half pages, it is an account of the detailed instructions given to each prover.<sup>3</sup>

'Microdose effects of drugs and chemicals on the enzymes urease, diastase and trypsin' is an 8-page account of the Persson experiment, translated from the German. The aim of the work presented in this paper was to determine enzyme sensitivity to micro-doses of various drugs and chemicals, the intention being to progress to isolated organs and the living organism at a

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later stage. It was considered that such a programme of pharmacological studies might serve as the groundwork for subsequent clinical studies and bring system into the microdose studies carried out by many workers. This first stage, determination of effect on animal and plant enzymes, represented an attempt to determine the pharmacodynamic *in vitro* effect of microdoses; and aimed to obtain experimental demonstration of drug-enzyme interaction.

The general conditions to be observed when dealing with microdoses were first described, then a detailed description of experimental methods. Twelve medicinal agents and chemicals were assessed for effects on each enzyme in turn. Silver nitrate and mercuric chloride had a slight effect on urease; mercuric chloride, sulphur and after them calcium chloride had marked effect on diastase. Microdoses of Iris showed marked activation of trypsin, the magnitude cycling with progressive dilution; the effect diminished from a maximum at  $10^{-10}$  and disappeared at  $10^{-100}$ . Phosphoric acid and arsenic showed smaller activation. Gold chloride had only a slight effect on diastase. The remaining preparations, benzoic acid, platinum chloride and insulin, had no effect. These results are portrayed in nine tables and eight figures. In dealing with diastase, data were insufficient to establish the best method of quantitative analysis for such small doses. They therefore set up concurrently the highly sensitive polarimetric and colorimetric methods. The former produced no reaction, whereas colorimetry was extremely sensitive, making it possible to assess the nature of the micro-dose effect up to and including dilution to  $10^{-100}$ . The results to some extent confirm the effect of 'homeopathic' doses on biological objects such as enzymes.

It is rather difficult to assess this paper; but the main significance of it is the fact that it informed the subsequent work of Boyd in the 1950s.<sup>4</sup>

## Experimental differentiation of potencies

This paper, 'Differentiation of potencies of *Agaricus muscarius* by experimental catalepsy' is by N C Sukul, B Bhattacharya, and S K Bala of the Department of Zoology, West Bengal. The authors studied the effect of potencies of *Agaricus* on restraint-induced catalepsy (RIC) in rats, as the symptoms produced by *Agaricus* are similar. They stated: 'There is no known scientific method to differentiate between potencies of a homeopathic drug beyond the twelfth centesimal'.

Nine potencies of *Agaricus* were administered to rats subjected to RIC, in increasing potency from mother tincture to CM. These enhanced the cataleptic state; the higher the potency, the longer was its duration, and the longer did it take to reach the peak effect. The effect of administering atropine sulphate, which diminishes catalepsy, was then studied. Its' action

was suppressed by *Agaricus* and, once again, the degree of suppression increased with the increase in potency. A full-page table shows the effect of the different potencies of *Agaricus* on RIC and its effect on interference by atropine. The results were statistically significant. Figure 1 shows the time factors.<sup>5</sup>

## Congress of LMHI in Washington

This is a 5-page report of the 42nd Congress of the Liga Medicorum Homoeopathica Internationalis by Peter Fisher. Julian Winston of the US National Center for Homoeopathy gave an illustrated talk on the history of homeopathy in America, and Maesimund Panos was then installed as Honorary President of the Congress; a figure much loved and respected by the younger generation, for whom she represented a link between the former glories of American homeopathy and its current resurgence (the membership of the American Institute of Homoeopathy had recently risen above 100 for the first time since the 1940s).

The first session, devoted to theory, was opened by Charles Kennedy (GB), speaking on the relevance of the *Organon* in 1987; demonstrating a convergence between the doctrine of homeopathy and current trends in conventional medicine. Denis Demarue (France) showed how Hahnemann anticipated Pasteur with his theory of miasms; but also showed that large parts of his pathogenic theories were obsolete, and that miasms should be understood as modes of reaction rather than diseases per se. In forthright comments at the end of the session about his views on the constitutions of Nebel and Vannier (Carbonique, Phosphorique and Fluorique), and on the Tuberculini-que miasm, he considered the concepts, although interesting, to be obsolete; and the traditional drainage concept of French homeopathy to be basically an allopathic idea.

Roger Morrison (USA) presented a paper written in collaboration with George Vithoukas, discussing the prognostic significance of acute illnesses supervening in the course of treatment of chronic disease. Although perhaps over-elaborate, the author considered this to be a useful, original contribution to the study of aggravations and their meaning, and a salutary antidote to the bland assumption that any aggravation is good.

The sessions on aetiology had a block of three theoretical papers from the Vienna School of Homoeopathy, presented by three Austrians. Leopold Drexler discussed the general approach of this school and its views on aetiology and constitutions; Jutta Gnaiger discussed the time dimensions of symptomatology; and Helga Lesigang presented cases illustrating the importance of these various aspects of aetiology in prescribing.

One of the other Congress themes was *Staphisagria* and *Colocynthis*, especially their use in psychiatry. Alexandre Machado (Brazil) delivered a very full

discussion of *Staphisagria*—its pharmacognosy, habitat, chemistry and pharmacology; and its pathogenetic symptoms. Cesare Cremonini (Argentina) illustrated the schematic method of remedy study used by the Cordoba Centre for Homoeopathic Medical Studies with a discussion of *Colocynthis*. This method employs the concept of 'minimum syndrome of maximum value', but also the unfamiliar concept of 'miasmatic escape symptoms'.

Fernando Risquez (Venezuela) read a valuable paper which discussed the semantics of Kent's repertory, showing that Kent used 'common sense' language and calling for a more sophisticated post-Freudian use of language, illustrated by some psycho-therapeutic case histories. Jacqueline Barbancey (France) spoke of the different images of *Staphisagria* in different materia medicas, with psychiatric case histories; and Jugal Kishore (India) drew out some of the finer features which distinguish it from *Colocynthis*, again with a number of case histories.

Among the most impressive and well-documented case reports were those delivered by Diwan Harish Chand (India), which included a case of chronic renal failure which responded dramatically to *Arsenicum*; and those of Francisco Eizyaga (Argentina), which were particularly well-documented and illustrated the effectiveness of his method of repeated low potencies (6c) in advanced and even terminal conditions. Another interesting series was presented by the father and son team of Alok and R S Pareek (India) who described two of their series of 36 cases of non-malignant gall bladder disease showing good results from *Cholesterinum* 3x combined with the indicated medicine. These cases were backed up with good radiological and ultrasound evidence.

The contributions to the session on non-clinical research were almost exclusively French, including three impressive papers from the Boiron team. Jean Boiron presented a further study on arsenic excretion in rats; Philippe Belon reported a further study on degranulation of basophils inhibited by histamine in potency; and Elisabeth Hariveau dealt with platelet

aggravation promoted by Acetylsalicylic acid 5c. There were two illustrated talks which particularly impressed the author: A M Binsard described an improved globule with beautiful scanning electron microscope photographs; and Gerhard Resch (Austria) presented a paper on structural and physico-chemical aspects of potentization, with engravings by the Dutch artist M C Escher.

The final session was largely concerned with clinical research. Peter Fisher analysed the objectives of clinical research in homeopathy; discussed the various possible designs of both trials and discussed the design of provings. Bruno Brigo (Italy) presented an excellent double-blind, placebo-controlled study of homeopathic treatment of migraine which produced a highly significant result.

One of the most interesting sessions of the whole congress was the research meeting entirely devoted to discussion of proving methodology; and in the closing session, Matthias Dorcsi (Austria) made a gesture, which the author thought that the Faculty of Homeopathy might consider emulating, by presenting the American Institute of Homeopathy with a cheque to allow a young American homeopathic doctor to study in Vienna.<sup>6</sup>

## References

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