

Two Boys with Persistent Coughs

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Abstract: Two boys with recurrent coughs of a croupy, asthmatic nature are presented. The family history or perinatal history of thyroid disease in the mother was one of the keys to the successful prescription of *Iodum purum*. A brief description of iodine the element is given followed by some characteristic material medica.

Keywords: croup, asthma, *Iodum purum*

S.T. was a 3 year-old boy when I first saw him in 1994 with cough variant asthma. His mother brought him in and was frantic because she had taken her son to so many doctors and none had been able to help him. He would get paroxysms of croupy coughing so severe that, if in a store, nearly everyone would turn and look at him in disbelief that such a strong, loud cough could come from such a small boy. Before he came in he had been on oral and inhaled steroids and all kinds of antibiotics, asthma medications (albuterol, cromolyn, etc.), and antihistamines with very little success. Before seeing me, he had seen numerous pediatricians, pediatric allergists, pediatric pulmonologists, pediatric ENT surgeons who all agreed on the diagnosis of cough variant asthma, but were not able to provide a therapy that worked to the mother's satisfaction. We were able to treat him homeopathically and get him off his medicines. Still it was difficult to find a remedy for the croupy asthmatic cough. Then, one day the mother developed a thyroid condition (i.e., Grave's disease, for which we treated her successfully with homeopathic remedies, and a little methimazole for a short time from the endocrinologist) and told me that two other family members had similar thyroid conditions. This added information from the family history allowed me to prescribe a remedy, namely *Iodum purum*, that removed the cough within a few days, an outcome no other remedy had previously been able to achieve. Normally, his attacks would last for weeks and occur fairly frequently. With the *Iodum* 200D (D signifying a Dunham potency), he would take two pellets 5-6 times a day when he got the cough, and it would immediately start improving and be gone within a few days. His attacks of coughing at first would recur, but then became less and less frequent until finally the cough disappeared for good. The only potency that

was used was the 200D. The prescription was solely based on the fact that *Iodum* has a croupy cough and it is a substance highly associated with thyroid diseases. I would rate this case a 10/10 in terms of response to the remedy/magnitude of improvement, and, as the reader may recall, this result was achieved after multiple allopathic medications and many other remedies in various potencies, each of which made a ten to twenty percent difference at best, and usually did nothing.

Based on this first experience I was able to help another young boy with recurrent asthmatic bronchitis which had occurred periodically since the age of two-and-a-half. N.G. was first seen on 10/27/09 when five years old. The mother was quite concerned about her son who did respond somewhat to albuterol nebulizer treatments, but not in a curative manner. He was allergic to tree pollen, dust and ragweed. The father was an internist. The mother was on levothyroxine for hypothyroidism throughout her pregnancy with this son. She was not on thyroid medicine with her older son's pregnancy and he is healthy. Because of my prior experience with the above patient, I considered *Iodum purum* for this child. The repertorization done on the first visit appears on the following page.

If one looks at the thyroid history in the mother (repertorized as goiter), plus the excoriating coryza, the barking, painful cough and the vomiting with coughing, one is left with only six remedies: **Bell** (3), **IOD.** (4), **Merc.**(3), **phos.**(2), **Spong.**(3), **sulph.** (2) (This is using the *Complete Repertory Version 4.5* with Andre Saine's additions available from his website at www.homeopathy.ca.)

Although one could make a case for *Phosphorus* due to the desire for cold drinks, milk and cheese and his desire for company, due to my previous experience, I had learned to value the etiology/family his-

	Phos.	Nit-ac.	Bry.	Nux-v.	Merc.	Dros.	Sil.	Calc.	Ant-t.	Verat.	Bell.	Acon.	Spong.	Ars.	Mf-c.	Iod.	Sulph.	Puls.	Chel.	Rhus-t.	Lyc.	Lach.	Con.	Nat-m.	Caus.
Total Rubrics Kingdoms	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73
Traditional Miasms																									
EXTERNAL THROAT; GOITRE (149)		1	1	1	1	1				1	1			1			1	1	1			1	1		
NOSE; DISCHARGE; excoriating (146)			1						1	1	1	1	1				1				1	1	1		
STOMACH; VOMITING; General; coughing; on (101)	1			1						1	1	1	1				1				1	1	1		
STOMACH; VOMITING; mucus; cough, from (11)									1														1		
COUGH; WHOOPING (167)					1							1	1				1	1			1	1	1		
COUGH; BARKING (50)					1					1	1						1	1			1	1	1		1
COUGH; HANDS; holding; larynx (2)												1													
COUGH; PAINFUL (63)	1					1			1	1		1					1	1							
NOSE; CORYZA; extending to; chest (30)	1		1	1										1	1	1	1					1			
GENERALITIES; FOOD and drinks; milk; desires (66)		1							1								1					1			
GENERALITIES; FOOD and drinks; cheese; desires (23)				1														1							1
FOOD and drinks; cold; drinks, water; desires (158)				1				1					1				1	1	1						
MIND; WHIMPERING (64)	1	1		1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
MIND; PLAY; desire to, playful (22)																									
MIND; COMPANY; desire for (107)		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1						1				1	1	1	1	1
COUGH; WEATHER; change of (12)	1	1					1			1			1									1			

tory of the thyroid disease in the boy’s mother during pregnancy very highly. Thus, the first choice was clear, *Iodum purum* 200C, to be repeated as needed for the cough.

With the next cough, he had the excoriating coryza and was going into one of his coughing spells. His mother had already tried *Aconitum* 200C and *Phosphorus* 200C in multiple doses to no avail; so I asked her to give the *Iodum* 200C, in water up to every two to three hours and as needed for the cough. This controlled the cough and helped finish the acute illness. With the next episode, by starting with the *Iodum* right away, the complaint remained at an excoriating coryza without a cough, which had never happened before and was greatly relieving to the mother. Since then the boy has continued to be free of his asthmatic bronchitis. This case is not cured yet, but this boy is well on his way to cure thanks to the clue of the perinatal history of thyroid disease.

Iodine, the Element

Iodum purum is the element iodine. The word Iodine is derived from the Greek ioeides, meaning “violet-colored,” which is a combination of ion for “violet” plus eidos for “appearance.” It is so called due to the violet color of the vapor given off when the crystals are heated. (7) Iodine is a member of the halogen group of elements, along with fluorine, chlorine, and bromine. It occurs sparingly in the form of iodides in seawater from which it is assimilated by seaweeds, in Chilean saltpeter and nitrate-bearing earth, known as caliche in brines from old sea deposits, and in brackish waters from oil and salt wells. Its worldwide soil distribution is extremely variable, resulting in areas where the element is lacking. These

areas include the American Midwest and Great Lake area [described as the goiter belt], the English Midlands and Southwest England, as well as certain parts of China, Central Africa, Continental Europe [the Alps], Russia, the Himalayas, and South America [Andean countries]. In many developing countries iodine deficiency is endemic. (10)

Iodine is used as a disinfectant and germicide, in pharmaceuticals, and food supplements. In the USA, Canada, Switzerland, New Zealand and some South American countries sodium or potassium iodide or potassium iodate is added to table salt to prevent iodine deficiency in the general population. In the UK salt is not iodized. Several iodine compounds are used as contrast mediums in diagnostic radiology. The radioactive isotope iodine-131, which has a half-life of 8 days, is employed in medicine to monitor thyroid gland functioning, to locate thyroid cancer metastases to the brain and liver, and to treat goiter and thyroid cancer. Exposure to iodine-131 as a by-product of nuclear reactions can cause thyroid cancer; for example, the 1986 nuclear accident in Chernobyl, which resulted in a dramatic increase (10x or more!) in thyroid cancer in children in the affected area.(11) Potassium iodide is used to saturate the body with non-radioactive iodine when there is risk of unwanted radioactive iodine exposure. It protects the thyroid gland, lowers the thyroid cancer rate after such exposure, and allows the ingested radioactive iodine to be excreted in the urine.

Iodine is essential to many species, including humans. It is excreted mainly in the urine. Iodine is present in the thyroid hormones triiodothyronine (T3-with 3 iodine atoms) and thyroxine (T4-with 4 iodine atoms). These hormones determine the metabolic

rate of the body. The adult contains between 20 and 50 mg iodine, most of which is concentrated in the thyroid. Lack of iodine gives rise to goiter; underactive thyroid; and if congenital, cretinism. Myxedema is a non-pitting edema which can be present with either hypo- or hyper-thyroidism (i.e., Graves' disease). Deficiency of iodine can be caused by reduced dietary intakes, or by excessive intake of anti-thyroid foods, such as raw vegetables of the brassica family [broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, kale, cauliflower, turnip]. These foods contain so-called goitrogens - substances which inhibit the absorption of iodine. Goitrogens are also present in such vegetables as spinach, lettuce, beets, and cassava, but are destroyed in cooking. Drugs such as lithium and amiodarone also interfere with iodine metabolism and may cause hypothyroidism (hyperthyroidism also for amiodarone). (12)

Some of the best natural sources of iodine are kelp, seaweeds, haddock, shellfish, sunflower seeds, pistachios and onions. Milk may be a good source if it comes from dairy cattle encouraged to lick salt blocks that contain iodine.

Materia medica of *Iodum purum*

Iodum was first proven by Hahnemann, and then re-proven by Jorg in 1824, and self-proven by Hering. Characteristic aspects of the material medica of *Iodum purum* follow.

- 1) "Ravenous hunger with progressive emaciation of the patient.
So severe is the emaciation that the arms and the body are almost fleshless, her breasts quite flat, her calves entirely disappeared and her thighs no thicker than her forearms in her days of good health.
Always hungry: eats between meals, and yet is hungry. Better eating. Most symptoms are better after eating." (8)
"Emaciates with an enormous appetite. Can also have diminished appetite." (6)
"Varying appetite, now voracious hunger, then no appetite.
"Absence of appetite is also among the effects of *Iodum*, and either condition may indicate it. I once used it with excellent effect in the case of a young woman who had had a nervous shock, and had lost all appetite and desire to live. She was much emaciated, and had quietly made up her mind to starve herself to death. I gave five drops of *Iodum* 3x in a wineglass of water half an hour before meal-times, and her appetite returned with such vigour she could not choose but eat, and was soon restored to a normal mental and bodily state. I have recorded another similar case of nervous shock producing rapid emaciation and vomiting cured by *Iodum* in my book on Indi-

gestion. Both these patients were somewhat dark, and *Iodum* is specially suited to persons of dark hair and complexion; dark, yellow, tawny skin. Herein it is the antipodes of *Bromium* and *Spongia*." (5)

"Appetite for meat.

Thirst, desire for spirituous liquors." (8)

2) Hypertrophy/Enlargement of all glands (thyroid), except mammary, ovaries and testes, which dwindle. Body withers and glands enlarge.

Thyroid enlarged. Goitre, with sensation of constriction.

Withering throughout the body, muscles shrink, skin wrinkles, and face of child like a little old person, but glands under arms, in groins; and belly enlarged and hard. (Arg. nit., Abrot., Nat. mur.) (1)

Great emaciation with glandular hypertrophy. I knew a patient who became interested in homeopathy because her dog had been cured of cancer by a notable veterinary homeopath. The dog had very enlarged glands and was emaciating. *Iodum* was given and the dog, who had been pronounced incurable by the allopathic veterinarians, rapidly improved and was cured. The patient thought, if it could cure my animal, why not me?

- 3) "Constant desire to be eating, which temporarily relieves pain of duodenal ulceration and other digestive and mental symptoms. Hungry with much thirst. Anxious and worried if he does not eat. (Cina, Sulph.) Loses flesh, yet hungry and eating well. (Abrot.)
"This relief by eating is not only of the sensation of hunger, but his sufferings in general; he only feels well while eating, or always feels best while eating. It makes no difference whether it is phthisis pulmonalis (i.e., pulmonary tuberculosis), mesenteric, or general, that this symptom, well developed, rules out everything but iodine in almost every case, and it has made many remarkable cures. I have cured many cases of goiter with *Iodum* cm, when indicated, giving a powder every night for four nights, after the moon full and was waning." (9)
- 4) "Extreme restlessness; runs about; must be busy and occupied; anxiety when at rest; yet easy sweat and easy exhaustion from motion. Hurried. Cross and restless. Compelled to keep on doing something to drive away his impulses and anxiety, (Ars.) but *Iodum* is warm-blooded, and wants cold; *Arsenicum album* is cold and wants heat warm room, warm clothing, etc.
"Restless moving about; she runs about incessantly and does not get to sit down, nor does she sleep at night; so that she has to be considered as crazy.
"He is afraid at every trifle, that one or another mishap may rise from it. "Excessively merry and loquacious; she does not give anyone a chance to say a word." (6)

"Restless, inclined to move about, not permitting to sit or sleep, though she could tear everything to pieces." (8)

"Better occupation; dreadful impulses and thoughts during rest.

"A patient of mine had once been given Iodine for goiter by an allopath. She was compelled to discontinue it because it produced this inconvenient symptom: impulse to run; she felt she must fall if she walked." (5)

5) Strange impulses to kill. Violent acts. Discontented with everything.

6) Sad, melancholy mood.

"Very ill-humored and sensitive during the whole period of digestion, from noon till evening, with an oppressive sensation in the throat and chest, as when one is about to weep." (6)

Averse to company of intimate friends.

Anxiety and dejection; the patients generally busy themselves with the present.

Anxious dreams.

Distressing, restless dreams.

Anxious dreams, about deceased persons.

"She dreams every night; about swimming in water, walking in mud, that her daughter had tumbled into the well, etc." (6)

7) Increased sensitiveness to external impressions; horrible news affects him profoundly.

Sensitiveness to noise.

8) Fixed, immovable thoughts.

Obtuseness of the head, with great disinclination to serious employment.

9) Always feels too hot; wants to bathe in cold water; to be in a cool place.

"Warmth of the skin is increased.

"Increased animal warmth of the whole body." (6)

10) Worse: heat, in warm room, wrapping up head, hat, when quiet, right side.

Better: open air, (*Lycopodium*) (opposite to *Silica*) walking in open air, washing in cold water.

11) Iodine has torpidity and sluggishness. The very indolence of the disease suggests *Iodum*.

12) Dark hair and complexion. (*Bromium* fair and blue eyes.)

13) Croup in scrofulous children with dark hair and eyes. (*Bromium* opposite.)

Croupy cough, with difficult respiration; wheezy.

Cold extends downward from head to throat and bronchi. Great weakness about chest.

Iodum cough is worse indoors, in warm, wet weather, and when lying on back.

Overgrown boys with weak chest, aged persons.

Irritation to cough, from a severe tickling in the throat.

Cough with exertion, so that she comes near vomiting; after expectoration of mucus it ceases.

Cough, with pressure and tightness of the chest.

Frequent dry cough in the evening.

Deep, dry cough, with shooting in the chest.

Occasional excitation to cough, with tenacious expectoration.

Dry, croupy cough, with titillation, sensation of soreness in larynx, barking, with gray or white salty, sweetish expectoration, shrill whistling and rattling in chest, sawing, hissing respiration, oppression, hoarseness, difficult speech, expectoration of tough mucus, soreness and pain extending to upper third of sternum.

Cough moist but harsh as from tickling all over chest, wheezing, metallic cough, tough or slimy sputa, constriction of larynx, worse in wet weather, worse in morning. (8)

Dry, croupy cough, mucous membrane of larynx and trachea dry, mucus hard and tough.

Croupy, hoarse cough, worse in warm, wet weather. Violent attack of cough threatening suffocation, with whistling tone and great anguish.

In croup, it follows closely after *Aconitum*. If *Aconitum* has been given and the patient is not improving, or if *Aconitum* has relieved only the restlessness and extreme anxiety but not the cough, the patient is still dry and hot and the cough is still croupy, then give *Iodum*. (In fact, this was the situation with both of my patients above. *Aconitum* and other indicated remedies had been given for croup with little or no effect. This history alone may make one consider *Iodum*.)

In catarrhal laryngitis, if the larynx is sore to touch, the cough is dry and croupy, and there is an excoriating watery discharge from the nose (compare with *Allium cepa*). (My second patient had such an excoriating coryza.)

Whooping cough, with emaciation and with enormous appetite. (2)

14) Eyes: Itching in the canthi and on the eyelids.

Redness and swelling of the eyelids, with nightly agglutination.

Inflammation of the eyes.

Lachrymation of the eyes

15) Upper respiratory symptoms:

The submaxillary glands are swollen, without pain.

Stuffed coryza, very frequent (chiefly in the evening); in the open air becomes fluent with much expectoration.

Fluent coryza, like water, with much sneezing.

The larynx is painful

Pain in the throat, with expectoration of indurated mucus.

Pressure in the region of the larynx, extending to the esophagus, as if these parts were swollen.

Intolerable crawling and tickling in the larynx, which can only be removed by hawking and coughing, with

gathering of water in the mouth; in the morning in bed.

Violent clearing of the throat (second day).

Frequent clearing of the throat, in the morning.

Increased secretion of mucus in the windpipe.

The throat is strongly constricted.

Increased secretion of saliva, compelling frequent spitting, for several days.

Very bad taste in the mouth, especially when the stomach is empty or quite full.

- 16) Heart feels squeezed. Painful compression around heart, as if squeezed by an iron hand (*Cactus*) followed by great weakness and faintness. Palpitation from least exertion. Tachycardia.

Epilogue

In my two patients, the only of these symptoms present were the family history of thyroid disease (i.e., goiter) and the croupy cough and some of the upper respiratory symptoms. The first patient was perhaps a bit restless; however, the mother did not care about that; all she was worried about was the cough. His restlessness did not make a big impression on me at first. There were no significant cough modalities in either case, the first because the mom was a poor historian (former alcoholic) and the second because there were just no modalities present. In the second case there were the concomitants of the excoriating coryza, the vomiting with the cough and the painful cough. In both these cases, one could say that one has more of a two-legged stool leading to the remedy; i.e., the croupy cough associated with the maternal/perinatal history of thyroid disease. A family history of thyroid disease might be like a beacon to indicate that *Iodum* should be considered for these obstinate cases of very annoying, croupy cough. This is much like how *Carcinosin* is considered when there is a family history of cancer. The only problem with this is that both cancer and thyroid disease are all too common nowadays.

Another remedy one might consider in retrospect in these cases would be *Thyroidinum*. It certainly fits the thyroid history, but in my repertory (*Complete 4.5* with Andre Saine's additions) it is not found under cough: croupy, barking, rough, rasping or hoarse. However, in the proving of *Thyroidinum* there is a mention of a barking, dry, violent, painful cough worse on entering a warm room.⁽¹³⁾ *Thyroidinum* is not well represented in the repertory, however, and could only be prescribed when strongly suspected and after finding symptom correspondence upon referring directly to the materia medica and provings. I have used *Thyroidinum* (as has my colleague, Dr.

Joel Shepperd) in cases of hypothyroidism when the patient did not want to take the allopathic thyroid replacement and have seen the TSH levels fall with such treatment.

Another remedy to consider with the history of croup and thyroid disease would be *Spongia tosta*, which was in fact tried unsuccessfully in the first case. I did not consider it in the second case as the boy craved cold drinks. The *Spongia* cough is typically better with warm drinks and is aggravated by cold drinks.

One could say that the thyroid etiology trumped the other aspects of these two cases. However, the rest of the case was not ignored, there was just no other remedy which was as well indicated as *Iodum*. In the second case I prescribed *Iodum* first, and it is still a case in progress, but the child is doing very well and the parents are happy that he has had no more asthmatic bronchitis attacks. In the first case, I only prescribed *Iodum* in desperation after many other remedies had not worked curatively; as stated earlier, his cough steadily improved after that remedy and eventually subsided altogether. This family had a very strong family history of mental illness with the dad having been diagnosed as bipolar and the mom being a recovered alcoholic. This patient subsequently developed burning tongue syndrome a year or two later with lots of salivation, which responded well to *Mercurius vivus*. Then some bipolar-like issues (mainly aggression toward his sister) developed and the mom took him to a psychiatrist for I believe Seroquel. The family then moved to Arizona. The mother has been in touch occasionally, and, as she has reported, the cough has not returned. Looking back, I wonder if some of the bipolar issues and the violence toward his sister could have been helped by the *Iodum*. I did not get the impression that the *Iodum* response was a suppressive one, just that the patient had a strong genetic tendency toward mental illness which family tensions only exacerbated.

The main point of both of these cases is the importance of family/perinatal history in the selection of the remedy.

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