

Mother and Child

Introduction

Reading the homœopathic journals I can see that there has been some confusion around long term case management. I am presenting the case of a mother and child that I have been treating for approximately four years. One of my major interests has been the treatment of all members of the family and some families have been in my care now for over twelve years. Here I hope to illustrate a combination of some basic prescribing to give encouragement to those who are just starting, and a demonstration of something about mother-child dynamics.

It is here that I would like to say that I am extremely grateful to Dr Vassilis Ghegas for his help over the last ten years since he has been teaching practical homœopathy for following long-term cases. To date no one else has taught me consistently in this way and shared their experiences, both successes and failures. I would encourage those of you who are coming to the conference in September to listen to him as he is one of the most experienced teachers. My understanding is that from listening to many of our current teachers we can synthesise their knowledge and bring it back in to our practices drawing our own conclusions. We can then see if it works after we have analysed our cases and seen the results of our prescriptions.

First case - Mother - Mrs W.

Mrs W. came to see me for the first appointment in June 1991. She is a slender, frail and elegant woman with large eyes. She was in a deep fatigue where she simply wanted to sleep all the time. She was irritable, wept on telling her symptoms and was also complaining of heaviness in her stomach and a lot of nausea. This had all become much worse since the birth of her son eight months previously. She had needed fertility drugs to get pregnant, the pregnancy had been dreadful, she had nausea and exhaustion all through and had had an induced labour which had gone very badly. The epidural had left her with terrible headaches and she had also lost a lot of blood. The baby had been easy but she was now constantly anxious, unable to sleep properly, losing her hair and had had no period even though she had stopped breast feeding some months previously. She had generally been off sex since the hormone treatment. She was quarrelling with her husband because he wanted a busy social life and she was fed up with everything.

Food desires - spicy, coffee, smoked meats, milk.

She was chilly and thirsty for cold water.

Past history - happy childhood but when she was three her mother had pneumonia and she was separated from her for a brief period of time. She has one brother and one sister, older than her. Her father made a point of giving them all equal amounts of attention.

Brief case analysis - this was an obvious case of *Sepia* to me based on fertility treatment, loss of sexuality, history of nausea, weepiness, hair loss and my experience of the *Sepia* essence. I have found that this remedy is so common after pregnancy with these sort of symptoms. I am curious as to other

homœopaths' experience.

Prescription *Sepia* 200c.

First follow-up, July 1991

She is sleeping better, feels like dressing up again, feels more refreshed, the headache is better, the stomach pain is better and her period returned one week after having the remedy. Her hair is growing and the deep exhaustion was beginning to lift. She said "I am happy to wake up".

In December 1991 she had a repeat dose of the *Sepia* 200.

In June 1992, a year later, she came back to see me, pregnant again. She had not needed any fertility treatment. For the first two weeks of the pregnancy she had been very tired and lethargic and was having trouble sleeping again. Her sexual energy had been much better over the winter but now it was gone again.

Prescription *Sepia* 200, which did not act so she was given *Sepia* 1M which helped.

August 1992 - Just as she was going on holiday in the summer she developed a very severe chest infection and I prescribed *Phosphorus* 30c. She ended up taking antibiotics while she was away as there was no homœopath locally. When she returned to England she had a severe cough, she was desiring cold milk, smoked foods, she was exhausted but not in the *Sepia* state that I had seen her in before.

Prescription *Tuberculinum bovinum* 200c.

She did very well. The cough cleared up, her energy picked up and she said she felt again very well. The rest of the pregnancy was uneventful.

After the baby was born, in January 1993, Mrs W. happily reported that she felt very well. She said that she had been much better since the last prescription, she had had no colds and her glands had not come up. She had not mentioned the colds to me before but she was pleased that she was no longer so susceptible to them. She also said that she was warmer. "I feel a normal human being, I can take naps now, I can lie down and sleep. As a child I could do this, but not since. The deep fatigue has gone. I still expect to be tired but I have a house full of people and in the past I could not have coped with it. I have also had no more headaches for ages."

Second Case - Master F, Mrs. W's son

In November 1993 she brought me the eldest son, who was three years old. He was waking in the night, two to three times. He is screaming from nightmares, he wants a light on all the time, he is scratching and biting his friends, he is very jealous of the baby, he cries easily, he often gets colds and he is very possessive, particularly about his toys.

Prescription *Stramonium* 200c with a warning not to leave the children alone together particularly for the first month after the remedy as I was expecting violent outbursts of anger, directed at his sister. I also told the mother that as the nightmares changed and became less, the anger might become worse and to try not to tell him off but to provide a holding environment as best as both parents could while her son went

through this difficult emotional time.

The mother reported in January 1994: "he started to sleep almost immediately. The screaming stopped, he became very aggressive towards his sister and very jealous. He was stealing toys from other children and had fits of crying but now he is a lot happier, his sleep is peaceful, he has had no colds".

To date this child has had no further prescription and according to the mother has been very well physically and has integrated as far as she can see the changes in his life due to the arrival of his sister.

January 1995 – the mother came to see me, a year and a half since the *Tuberculinum* prescription. She had been very well until November 1994 and then a mood started to settle on her that reminded her of her childhood: "I am very sad. I feel I am changing into a different me. I feel insecure. I cling to my children. I see everything through different glasses and I know it is happening but my emotional state is so strong I cannot step out of it. I feel as if I am in a dream, like I have got cotton wool in my head. I used to feel like this as a child. When I go away from the children I feel something is going to happen to me and that they will be left on their own, without me, how will they cope? I am always surprised, even when I have just gone out for a drive somewhere, that I come back and I am OK. I am very critical of my husband. We have arguments all the time. I am shouting at him and feel very angry. I have become very dissatisfied. I feel separated from everybody and feel I have no friends. Nothing seems normal to me anymore."

I realised that I needed to go through this case again very thoroughly, particularly with reference to her childhood as she had mentioned it at least twice during the consultation. There was something that I found out about her childhood that I had not understood before. Apparently, at the age of three, when her mother had gone into hospital with pneumonia, Mrs W. had become very upset and anxious. Even though the mother was only away for two weeks, for months after her mother's return, Mrs W. was apparently very clingy, frightened, crying with outbursts of anger and had suffered chest problems herself. When I looked in the Repertory at the rubric 'As if in a dream', there are three remedies in black type: *Nux moschata*, *Opium* and *Stramonium*. From my lectures with Vassilis he was constantly reminding us to pay a lot of attention to the remedies in black type, and from my teachings from Rajan Sankaran and psychotherapy I am reminded that the mother and child state is often the same. If the child had not done so well on *Stramonium*, I might have been reluctant to prescribe it for the mother as the case was not clear to me at that point.

With hesitation I prescribed *Stramonium* 200c for Mrs W.

Follow up – May 1995

After the remedy Mrs W.'s head immediately became clearer. The dreamy state that was so frightening disappeared, she said "I have been alert and content, it is so nice. Before I would lose my temper when things upset me, now I just let them float by. I have never had an emotional change like this in my life, I have always felt insecure, now I feel balanced and pleased, my husband notices it. You know I always had this feeling for as long as I can remember that I might not survive, for my children, I don't have that anymore, it has completely gone. This has never happened, for as long as I can remember".

It is interesting to note that she mentioned her sister also has this feeling that she will not survive and I wondered about

Stramonium as a remedy for this family. Mrs W. said that she had also recently become pregnant again. "Even though I have two children, a third pregnancy and a home to run, my energy is fine. This is so different from my first pregnancy."

Psychoanalysts have discovered from clinical experience that children may sometimes re-enact events that have happened to the mother or the grandmother at around the same age. The circumstances in these two cases are definitely different but the remedy is the same and this says a lot to me about the state of the mother reflecting itself in the child in some way that we do not yet fully understand. Apart from trying to bring together two different teachers' understanding of homoeopathy, these two cases are interesting from a psychotherapy point of view.

It is clear to me that the mother's anxiety about her own death, and subsequent abandonment of her children is an unconscious expression of her sense of loss when she was three, a projection of her own insecurity. From my research I have found that three year olds apparently do not have the sense of time that adults do. Psychotherapists have discovered that some children of hospitalised parents experience the disappearance of the mother as a death. It seems likely that this was Mrs W.'s feelings.

It is obvious that she does not want the same thing happening to her children as had happened to her. When I understood this, it makes the prescription of *Stramonium* very obvious – ie it is possible to consider using the delusion that she is alone and forsaken which is what she experienced when she was a child and her mother was in hospital.

We have to be very careful that we do not interpret what our patients say and it is only with hindsight that I can draw these conclusions; we never know with homoeopathy if our prescription will work until we give it. I would also say that due to the physical exhaustion this woman suffered possibly due to the hormone treatment, the first bad pregnancy and the difficult labour, that her 'defence posture' of *Stramonium*, (to use Rajan Sankaran's language), could not be seen by me. I feel sure that she needed the remedies that have gone before, and I have prescribed in the way that Vassilis has taught me, which is based on Kent.

I might add at this point that I have read and studied psychoanalytic literature. I have come to appreciate how important it is to understand the inner experiences of the child for in some cases difficulties can be seen to be carried through to adulthood. I hope that others of you who may have seen this in your practices will write about your cases. That way we can begin to share our understanding of the subtle processes occurring in childhood that can produce sickness or dis-ease in our patients years later. Let our research and combined experience in homoeopathy can go forward in a positive way.

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