



Stress and Homoeopathy: Some Random Reflections

"It is important that a traffic sign's meaning be understood at first glance."

-D Samoilov & V Yudin

The word "stress" is a general term denoting different meanings for different individuals. It is the 'spice' of life for some, while to others it is a scourge to be avoided at all costs. What is stressful to one person may be a source of pleasure for another. It is immaterial whether the stress producing factor or stressor is pleasant or unpleasant.

Stress results from the interaction between a person and his environment. Individual perceptions of and attitude towards stress have an important bearing from causal and management point of view. The effect of stress may not be the same on the same person at various stages of life, nor are the perception and interpretation of stress alike in people of different backgrounds. To illustrate: Thunder and lightning may be a frightening experience for a child, but a farmer will welcome and enjoy these harbingers of rain for his crops.

STRESS, CONSTRAINT AND DEMAND

Stress is ubiquitous. It is always with us. We all constantly experience stress, given the complexity of life. Very few are conscious of stress. Very few perceive the genesis of stress and very few have the capacity to overcome stress. Stress is essentially a response to demands and this response is nonspecific in nature. Every demand made on the body is unique, that is, specific. Physical factors like heat,

cold, exertion produce their specific responses. In stress more demand is expected for the sake of homeostasis. The stressors increase the demand for readjustment, for performance of adaptive functions, which re-establish harmony. The rise in demands is independent of the specific activity that caused the increase. In that sense, the response is non-specific. In reality, it is a person's own response to stressors. This response demands extra energy and one has to pay a price for the expenditure of energy.

From the organizational point of view, "stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important." The constraints prevent him from doing what he desires, and demand refers to the loss of something desired. Two conditions are necessary for the potential stress to become actual stress. There must be uncertainty over the outcome and the outcome must be important.

Stress in itself is neither good nor bad. It is a mechanism built into our organism, not for the purpose of making us sick but to enable us to respond more effectively to challenges. Stress is **not** what happens but how a person **reacts to what happens**.

STRESS CONCEPTS vis-à-vis HOMOEOPATHIC CONCEPTS

Homoeopathy, an out and out rational therapeutical system with its holistic, integrated, multi-disciplinary, totalistic view, approaches the subject of stress in a convincing, rational way. The subject of stress as studied by several research investigators amply substantiates the basic concepts of Homoeopathy.

1. *"The first thing one should bear in mind about stress is that a variety of dissimilar situations are capable of producing stress; and hence no single*

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one can, in itself, be pinpointed as the cause of the reaction as such."

That the cause of the disease is multi-factorial and that the disease is not caused by a single factor, is the very basis of Homoeopathic philosophy. Homoeopathy believes that every disease is general and no disease is local although it may have local manifestations. The very concept of totality behoves the causal considerations through all angles possible. The rubric "Ailments From" has the strategy of studying the clusters. The aetiological perspective is studied in Homoeopathy in depth. However, it is not only the aetiological factor in the form of a stressor which is studied in Homoeopathy, but also the reaction rendered by an individual towards the stress.

2. *The 'stressful' state is not merely psycho-physiological reaction to stressors but an 'integrated' parameter of psychic and somatic activity."*

Homoeopathy firmly believes in 'integrated' thinking. While taking into account the physio-pathological changes occurring as a reaction to stress, it seeks to see the 'man' behind sickness. It doesn't see the sickness only at physio-pathological level.

3. *The activity which develops in the course of endogenous (internal) environmental and exogenous (external) environmental stressors is highly 'individualistic.'*

It is precisely here that homoeopathic way of thinking gets corroborated as the strategy is to plan the treatment modality that specifically caters to the needs of the sick individual. The central tenet of prescribing i.e individualization focuses on 'individualistic' response. It focuses on the study how every individual is different from all other individuals in the world.

4. *The stress has a 'dynamic' influence on man's activity."*

The sources of stress are all around us. We can categorise stress broadly into two types - predictable

and unpredictable. The first category includes those events that affect our lives over a period of time, e.g the birth of a child is a predictable stressor. On the other hand, some of life's more serious stressors arrive entirely unpredictably, or we may fail to predict them, e.g the sudden death of a newborn baby. Unpredictable stressors present greater challenges, they put a load and they demand more mobilization of resources for the sake of re-adjustment.

Predictable and unpredictable stressors can be physical or psychological and the areas through which stressors can put up demands are protean, but they have one thing in common, that is, individualistic response of dynamic type. Homoeopathy expounds the concept of dynamism both at the causal and reflective planes.

5. *"The concepts of 'stress' and 'personality' are usually considered as quite separate, but this is a grievous error."*

This statement by H J Eysenck justifies the concept of treating a patient in totality. The stress and personality are inseparable just as matter and energy. The very notion of stress cannot be understood without the specification of the particular organism involved in the stressful situation. This specification experienced by an individual in the form of *strain* is important, as the stress acts only as a stimulus. It counts, hence, whether an individual has produced *strain* out of stimulus of stress.

The concepts of totality in Homoeopathy posit the pattern of indivisibility where the cause and effects are merged together. The disease-the dis-stress is inseparably linked to personality in homoeopathic thinking.

6. *"The relationship between stress and strain can only be understood in terms of a system of individual differences."*

The process of discrimination as followed in homoeopathic clinical practice for the purpose of ar-



riving at similitum through individual differences corroborates the above view. One has to understand the finer shades of personality both at the sick individual and materia medica level to understand the problem, to resolve the problem and to select an appropriate homoeopathic remedy.

7. *"The structural patterns of personality; its psychological determinants; the individual's resistibility and the genetic information are the major factors that determine how to cope with stress."*

The individual is all important: for a homoeopathic physician. He needs to go right round the individual in order to know him. The science of homoeopathy demands perceiving the individual *as he is!*

To understand a patient as a PERSON, through his psyche and soma, through evolution, through stressful life experiences, through multiple layers of dispositions and temperamental traits, through all ramifications, focusing on unique individualistic pattern is the centrality of homoeopathic approach.

8. *"Disease is not mere surrender to attack but also fight for health; unless there is fight there is no disease."*

Han Selye's statement quoted from "the stress of life" is a vindication of holistic health concept forwarded by homoeopathy where disease is regarded as an adaptive effort on the part of the organism through which it expresses itself. Disease is not regarded as an enemy but as a defense posture endeavoured by the system in favour of health, to maintain the equilibrium, peace - within and without.

Incidentally, I take the opportunity to express comments on Han Selye's theory of GAS (General Adaptation Syndrome) by Edward Whitmont.

Whitmont writes, "Selye considers illness GAS to an intruding 'noxious agent'. This syndrome consists of the three stages of alarm reaction, resistance and exhaustion."

"While explaining gross invasive disorders such as infections, strain and even emotional upsets, Selye's stress theory fails to explain 'spontaneous' disorders arising in the absence of any apparent overstress. (Selye is aware that a certain amount of stress is unavoidable). What then is the origin of such spontaneously arising endogenous illness? Under what circumstances does stress lead to illness, and in what form does it constitute a 'normal' even indispensable aspect of life's tension?"

The trend in psychology today is to look at the positive aspect of stress, called 'eustress.' During the follow-up of a case with homoeopathic treatment, it is important for a homoeopathic physician to see how far the treatment is helping the patients to mobilize their resources for adjustment to the external and internal environment.

To recapitulate: The philosophical and practical implications which flow from the recent research findings on stress and its management seem to have identical dimensions with the holistic concepts of homoeopathy.

HOMOEOPATHIC MATERIA MEDICA THROUGH PERSPECTIVES OF STRESS

Hahnemann contributed human pharmacology and opened a new vista of understanding the drug effects at the human level. The exploration of the human mind yielded a wider data-base. The variable emotional feelings (psycho-pharmacology), intellectual aberrations, somatic semeiology and also symptoms at the spirit level were produced, thus synchronizing mind, body and spirit. Through the proving methodology, Hahnemann brought the illness at the forefront of our existence, at the humanistic experiential level. Can the potential action of a remedy be regarded as a stressor for a prover who gives variable expressions as a result of altered state of susceptibility? These expressions, if interwoven logically, form a synthetic whole to develop the conceptual image of a remedy where stressors, stress, strain



and consequent expressions are explained rationally. To apply the homoeopathic materia medica in its full potentiality, following points can be thought of:

1. The stressors: Its true nature; type; its full information from genesis point of view. In other words ODP i.e. origin, duration and progress.

2. The stress: Its true nature; how an individual has reacted to the stressors, what are the deviations and at what level; the aptitudes and attitudes of the individual involved; individual's temperamental / personality traits, dispositional characters / mental state-original and modified.

3. Resources: Physical /psychological, as well as familial, financial, inter-personal etc. i.e. internal and external. The hereditary stock will define the miasmatic overtone. In other words, assessment of capabilities; at the physical level - physical strength/stamina / immunological status etc, at the mental level - will /drive /motivation etc.

4. Strain: Individual's state as a whole; unique in its own way as a result of stress. Stressors, stress and resources are responsible for strain and the strain gives rise to deviations at mental and physical level. Stressors, stress, resources and strain - these four lead a homoeopathic physician to 'Problem Definition'. Unless problem is understood in its depth and extent, application of materia medica will jeopardize both patient and physician.

5. Deviations: Stressors ----- Stress ----- Strain influx bring onto the surface the latent / hidden dispositions or intensify them to make them more potentially threatening or damaging. The field of expressions in toto should be elicited from location, sensation, modalities and concomitant point of view.

6. Core / Essence / Kernel / Nucleus/ Spirit / Heart / Soul: All the components in the data as dealt with earlier should be processed from generalization method, which will reflect deeper insight to harmonize tune, rhythm and music from correspondence point of view for selection of appropriate homoeopathic remedy.

APPLYING HOMOEOPATHIC REMEDIES IN STRESS

Stress can develop through various sources and we can categorise our remedies accordingly. Only important remedies are listed.

Work	Family	Society
<i>Amm.gr</i>	<i>Acid-fl</i>	<i>Acid-nit</i>
<i>Arg.gr</i>	<i>Anac</i>	<i>Alum</i>
<i>Ars</i>	<i>Calc.gr</i>	<i>Ambr</i>
<i>Aurgr</i>	<i>Cham</i>	<i>Anac</i>
<i>Bry</i>	<i>Coff</i>	<i>Ba-gr</i>
<i>Calc-f</i>	<i>Kali group</i>	<i>Hepar-sul</i>
<i>Carbon-gr</i>	<i>Kali-iod</i>	<i>Hura</i>
<i>Carc</i>	<i>Nat.gr</i>	<i>Hyos</i>
<i>Con</i>	<i>Palud</i>	<i>Mag-gr</i>
<i>Kali - p</i>	<i>Ph-ac</i>	<i>Medo</i>
<i>Lyc</i>	<i>Plat</i>	<i>Merc</i>
<i>Nux-v</i>	<i>Puls</i>	<i>Syph</i>
<i>Ophidia.gr</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Phos</i>
<i>Sil</i>	<i>Staphy</i>	<i>Stram</i>

'Stress' as appears in some prominent remedies is presented succinctly.

Nux-v the most workaholic of our materia medica, develops the stress out of his ambitious nature and resorts to stimulants that land him more in trouble; the vicious cycle is continued. *Nux-v* can't constraint himself from the stress and abrades and abuses others being short-fused. His violent anger produces stress in all - the boss, the subordinates and the family members.

Carc is also a workaholic. It has stress from two dispositions: performance and conscientiousness. He wants to do the work perfectly and ideally. The rigid moral values have to be maintained; not to be compromised. The sensitive, soft, tender mind gets affected soon, producing guilty feelings if mistakes are done. The responsibilities produce stress, the commitments developed out of duty-bound nature motivate for work. Being a gentleman, he can't hurt others, he can't square a person. He burns inside due to strain. Rejection, depriva-

tion of love, reproaches, struggles, prolonged suppressions make him vulnerable to produce stress. Prolonged active stress leads to cancer like diseases. Unpredictable stress comes from humiliation, sexual abuse etc. **AURUM** represents high sense of duty which compels him to work as an unstoppable machine 'Robot'. He wants to be the best. Thinks that he has neglected his duty. This leads to anxiety of conscience-self-reproach—worthless feeling—disgust of life—suicidal disposition—. His violent anger stresses the concerned and suicide done secretly makes the life of others stressful.

Stressors for **ARG-NIT** are blocked exits (crowds, closed places, bridges, tunnels, high places, aero planes, precipice etc.) or stressful events where he can't find a way out. A 'trapped' person. Remains tense. The hurried behaviour coupled with anxiety leads to confusion. Impulsive, eccentric, whimsical nature and hidden irrational motives cause stress in others. His Irritable Bowel Syndrome is stressful for his wife who doesn't understand what to cook.

'Fragile' ego is the cause of stress in **SILICEA**. He can't endure for long—neither the physical stressors nor the mental ones. He breaks down and goes into neurosis. Conscientious play a major role in development of stress in **Silicea**. He is a person of 'caliber without fibre'. Routinism, dependency, conservatism, and lack of competence feeling make him defensive and withdrawing and he can't capitalize; hence remained stressed.

LACHESIS is indeed a stressor for everyone in work area, in family or in society. His vigour coupled with jealousy, vindictiveness, revengefulness and domination keeps 'nerves on edge'. Worse: whatever

restricts or enforces. Better: whatever detends, expands, radiates, stimulates or releases. **Lach** releases his stress through conversation (loquacity), creative ventilation, through seminal emissions.

ARSENIC drives everyone in all fields. His consciousness, anxiety, domineering attitude and restlessness make others to dance as per his dictation. **Ars** is always strained. A fire brigade indeed!

SYPH is a stressor nosode. He is pervert, unstrung, hooligan, cruel and a liar. He makes things more complex and produces stress. He is an exploiter, a schemer in work area, but want of idealism and perversion ruins the business. He is anti-social and creates threatening situations.

The examples could be extended but we delimit ourselves in view of space.

Hahnemann expected higher purposes of life. Homoeopathy assists the vital economy to achieve the pleasant stress of fulfillment, *eustress*, without the harmful consequences of damaging stress, *distress*. Stress is a perpetual phenomenon, no one can abolish it. One has to master it, and homoeopathy, with its holistic healing, assists in mastering it! This is attainment of higher purpose of life.

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British Airways

"This is Captain Sinclair speaking. On behalf of my crew I'd like to welcome you aboard British Airways flight 602 from New York to London.

We are currently flying at a height of 35,000 feet midway across the Atlantic."

"If you! look out of the windows on the starboard side of the aircraft, you will observe that both the starboard en-

gines are on fire.

If you look out of the windows on the port side, you will observe that the port wing has fallen off." "If you look down towards the Atlantic ocean, you will see a little yellow life raft with three people in it waving at you. That's me your captain, the co-pilot, and one of the air stewardesses.

This is a recorded message."

