

P is for Potency

by Dr Fergie-Woods

In June 1995 Dr Fergie-Woods visited the Raystede Animal Rescue Centre in Sussex where he had been invited by Miss Raymonde-Hawkins to give a talk on an aspect of Homoeopathy. Here he tells us about the talk.

As members will know, Homoeopathy is such a vast subject that I was a little at a loss as to what Raysteders would most like to hear about. Miss Raymonde-Hawkins felt that few people understand 'potency' and so we both agreed that this should form the basis of my talk.

Principles of Homoeopathy?

I would like to begin by concentrating on the definition of 'Homoeopathy,' as some of you may be new to it. 'Homoeopathy,' is based on the idea that if you give a substance to a well person it will produce the same sort of symptoms that you expect it to help in someone who is unwell. A 'turning everything on its head' situation. It works rather like a vaccine if you look at it in that way, although the Homoeopathic Research Group found that it does not affect the antibodies, they are unaffected by homoeopathic treatment, although something obviously does happen. A lot of people dismiss homoeopathy by saying 'it's all in the mind' or that it is the interest the doctor takes in a patient and so forth, or that it is a placebo. But how can Homoeopathy be placebo when it works on babies and animals and has also been shown to work on plants!

With homoeopathy we try and reinforce the body's defence mechanism against illness to help the patient to overcome it. What we are interested in, when working out which remedies to give, is work done in the past called 'Provings,' where the effect of different substances is tried out on healthy subjects in groups, over a certain period, all taking a substance two or three times a day for a set period and everyone making notes of any symptoms which are new to them. At the end the co-ordinator will add up the symptoms and see which ones come out from that particular

medicine. In this way some medicines are being proved most of the time, somewhere someone is trying something out.

This idea was first brought to the world, so to speak, by Dr Samuel Hahnemann himself when he noticed the effect of quinine. He took quinine when he wasn't ill and found he seemed to have symptoms similar to malaria, which he knew it cured. So he went on from there to look at other aspects, trying out things mainly on himself and also on his family.

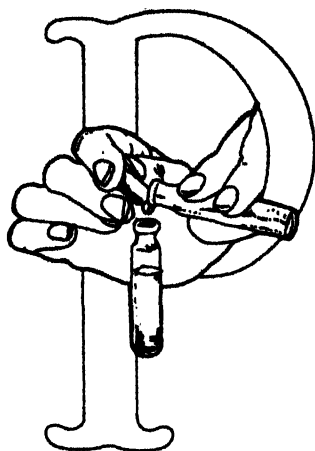
Principles of Potency

I looked up 'potency' in my dictionary and I couldn't find it! What I did find was 'potent,' which of course is the noun, meaning powerful or strong. I looked it up in a Thesaurus as well, which gave a whole lot of the same words. This is a word picked up by homoeopaths, and has been used to work out the strength or the power for the remedy. We don't call it 'strength' because in orthodox medicine strength means the amount of crude substance that is in a given medicine or mixture. With 'potency' we are looking at the opposite because the more you dilute, homoeopathically speaking, the more powerful the medicine becomes. Again it is rather like standing it on its head.

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Mother Tincture

What the pharmacists do is get hold of a substance they want to make into a homoeopathic medicine and dissolve it, after grinding it up. When it comes to mineral substances this is sometimes difficult because so many don't dissolve easily in water or alcohol, so they really have to be ground right down. If you are talking about animal extracts or plant extracts it is much easier to make up a tincture. In both cases we end up with a 'Mother Tincture' from which the medicines are made. From here we go into a series of serial dilutions. You have probably seen the medicines listed as either 'C,' 'X,' or 'M,' occasionally the number is by itself which means it is a 'C.' On the continent you will sometimes see a 'D' which is just their way of saying 'X.' These letters 'X,' and 'C,' and 'M,' really follow the Roman numerals, so X is diluted one in 9, ie one tenth, at a time; C is one is a hundred at a time, (and M is one in a thousand at a time).*

Making the Potency

To make a 3x potency I take the mother tincture and add one drop to 9 drops of the diluent (usually alcohol and water) and vigorously shake it and that is 2x. I repeat this to get the 3x. If you think about it you very soon end up with a number with an enormous number of noughts on the end, especially if you are using the C or 1 in 100 scale. You can think of it in the way of the old convention they put down for medicines in dilute concentration or even raw sewage off the beach, parts per million. It is the same idea but it is important that we do the 'succussion,' that is, the vigorous shaking between each stage. Thankfully, nowadays the dilution and the shaking is all done by machine. Otherwise it would take someone a very long time to make up a high potency and it is just not worth a pharmacist spending time like that.

The common potencies in use now would be an 8x (one in ten eight times), then 6C, a 12C, a 30C and a 200C, and perhaps a 1M and a 10M. They can go higher than that, 50M and CM; the mind boggles at the amount of dilution there. I did once hear of an MM potency which I had not met before, this was used by a doctor who professed to be a homoeopath but who had had no real training, and he was giving this MM potency to somebody with severe skin disease three times a day for 10 days. In a lower M potency I would have probably given at most two doses, and probably only one. My motto is: 'Light the touch paper and retire immediately.' I don't find it at all helpful to persist in prescribing very high doses in case a patient gets a severe reaction to the remedy. Although I may find the reaction interesting, the patient will probably find it alarming! I prefer a softly softly approach to homoeopathic prescribing rather than the 'big bang!'

Memory

We are not sure how the potencies actually hold their curative properties but one of the leading theories is what is called the 'water memory.' Water is a very interesting substance although it looks so simple chemically. It is believed that it holds a memory in its structure of the molecules it has had there before. That is why, even in the very high dilutions, chemists will tell you that there is nothing of the original substance left and it couldn't possibly work, it still has an effect and the more you dilute with succussion the better effect you get.

A scientist in the past, a Mr Avagadro, had a little number and this was the number of dilution where the original substance was said not to exist anymore, it had got below one molecule in the glass of water or whatever. But WE do know that beyond that number the remedies work and even more so the higher you go.

With this potentisation, this dilution and succussion, we seem to lose many of the crude properties of the original substance, they just disappear, and other properties, often very useful ones, do appear, which makes the potentised substance very different from the original. The books make a fuss about *Lycopodium*, which is a homoeopathic medicine made from one of the mosses. In orthodox medicine this moss is

see over ...

completely inert in that you can take fistfulls of it, eat it, do what you like with it, and it won't have any effect on you at all that we are aware of. Make it up into a homoeopathic medicine and it has a very useful effect indeed.

Often, with a homoeopathic medicine we get an aggravation or reaction. This often means that you have the right remedy, perhaps in a slightly higher potency than you need. The patient gets slightly worse before he gets better. Here you can think of a parallel with vaccination in that you often feel unwell after it. However, it is a superficial parallel because it is really not the same at all. It does not work in the same way.

Pathology versus constitutional

Potencies are prescribed with reference to pathological conditions as well as constitutional situations. I will try to examine them.

A example of a pathological condition is arthritis. This is a specific complaint and is a chronic ongoing condition in that you can assess and monitor changes in the body which have gone on for quite a long time. For a person suffering from arthritis I, personally, would use a low potency and perhaps repeat it. So I am looking at a 6X or 8X or a 6C, something in that order, and perhaps go on for a few weeks if necessary, although always telling the patient that if things get better take it less frequently, if they get really well, stop!

With a constitutional situation you are treating somebody as a complete whole rather than individual bits of them. I then look for a higher potency but repeat it much less often. I have a favourite way of doing things with a constitutional remedy, giving say a 30C once a week for three or four doses - giving infrequent pushes to the system. Reaction occurs and may begin to wane, we can then give another dose so the reaction continues or even intensifies.

Latin names

One of the things we also use homoeopathically is the Latin name, which sounds very odd. You have heard of Natrum Muriaticum which is common salt prepared homoeopathically. When the salt is diluted and succussed it adopts homoeopathic qualities and is no longer ordinary salt.

So these Latinised names for chemical compounds brought into homoeopathy are to distinguish them so you don't make a mistake and everyone knows what we are talking about. I might want to talk to someone about salt, and I might want also to talk about the use of Natrum Muriaticum, and the use of the Latin will distinguish what I am talking about.

Hypericum case study

I would like to mention very briefly the use of Hypericum which is a remedy used for two main things, one is grazed injuries where the skin has been taken off, gravel rash and that type of thing. It is also of use in injuries to nerves, so anything where nerves are injured Hypericum helps them to recover. Now I picked this remedy out because I want to share with you a case I saw a few years ago when I used Hypericum. It is quite interesting because it illustrates the idea of the potencies.

A patient came to me about 14 years ago, a Mrs C who was then 48, and her story was that she had whiplash in the neck some 4 years before when falling off a horse out riding. She was not concussed, and although her face felt bruised it did not show much bruising at the time, and later on she got a headache between her two temples, which then went to her jaw. She had her neck stretched by a Homoeopathic physician but this unfortunately made her worse. She then very sensibly went to an osteopath who made her rather better but did not cure her by any means otherwise she would not have come to me.

When she came to me she had been getting a neuralgic shooting pain into her arms and legs from her back and a raw pulling feeling in her limbs. Her arms felt absolutely red hot, to her, her feet went hot and cold and she suffered cramps. These symptoms came in bouts, perhaps a little worse at night, but nothing in particular seemed to bring it on except that she was fairly stressed and had marital problems at home. She also felt a bit tingly down her back. Because of other factors I gave her Natrum Mur 1M dose, but I also gave Hypericum 6C twice a day for two months and told her to give me a call if she got better.

Pain better

I saw her again two months later when the pain was very much better but had not gone, and it

had stopped improving. So I gave her the same again, Hypericum 6C twice a day for two months. I saw her again two months later when she had no pain but was having a little trouble with her lower tummy and bladder which her orthodox doctor was sorting out for her. Two weeks later she phoned and said she was completely well, no pain, quite all right.

Unfortunately two weeks after that she was worse again. Before she phoned me she had increased the Hypericum to 6 tablets a day. She was getting trouble with her back, her wrists and her elbows, and down to her feet and legs as she did before. She described it as 'a million aggravated nerves trying to get out' which sounds horrible! So I thought it was time for the big guns to come out and gave her a few doses of Hypericum 30C spread over a shorter time.

Higher Potency

Ten months later she came back to me and said that she hadn't improved for about the first 6 weeks and then it had very quickly got better and she had remained perfectly well until 6 weeks before she came back. So I decided to go up the ladder one more and give a higher potency, I gave her Hypericum 1M dose, and told her if the pain persisted to take one or two doses of Hypericum 30c at weekly intervals as a back up.

Five months later she came back and said she had been fine until a week before her visit. So I repeated the Hypericum 1m with the 30c back-up, and told her to take another dose of 1M if really necessary. She did not need to. Three weeks later, she felt a 'clawed' feeling, her skin looked rather raw and she had itchy feet. All very different from what she had had before. I gave her two different remedies in different potencies, and I didn't see her again for a year.

She came back and told me her right leg was giving a bit of trouble but everything else seemed to have settled. So I gave her one Hypericum 1M and waited to see what would happen, and she was perfectly OK for a further 14 months. She came back again having got worse as before and we did the same thing again, one dose of Hypericum 1M. Two months later she came back saying things were pretty good but she couldn't sleep, it was not the pain she just could not sleep.

Ongoing process

Eight months later she came back again with a little story that she was numb in different places and had pins and needles in her feet and hands. It was so long since she had had Hypericum 1M that I decided to go back to the 30c and gave her two or three doses of the Hypericum 30. A few months later she came back again with no more pain, she had a few eye problems which we dealt with separately of course.

It is an interesting story I feel because of the effect of Hypericum at intervals over a space of about 5 1/2 years, each time it had worked on her nerve symptoms, sometimes for over a year at a time before it had come back again with no apparent reason at all.

BHA

Ed. note (M is a convenient code for 1000C, hence 1M. Thereafter 10,000=10M, 50,000=50M, 100,000C=CM. Such potencies are achieved by machine often using a single vial repeatedly filled, succussed and emptied with a dilution factor of 1:100 at each stage).

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Government and Complementary Medicine

Baroness Cumberlege talks to the Parliamentary Group for Alternative & Complementary Medicine

It was standing room only in the Committee Room when Baroness Cumberlege, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health, with responsibility for complementary medicine addressed the PGACM. Determined not to be wrong footed, she brought a strong team from the DoH with her and began by asking whether medicine was an art or a science and spoke of the difficulty in defining complementary medicine, not least because of the vast number of therapies on offer.

Government attitude

She stated that the Government's position towards complementary medicine was "benevolent neutrality". There was freedom to practise and choose a practitioner and the Government had no plans to restrict these freedoms. She felt that the 1993 BMA report (Complementary Medicine - New Approaches to Good Practice) was a huge breakthrough and the DoH recommended people to follow the advice given in the report with regards to finding a practitioner.

Place within the NHS

Lady Cumberlege confirmed that complementary medicine was already available on the NHS, citing as an example the fact that homoeopathy had been a small but integral part of the NHS since 1948. NHS reforms had enabled complementary medicine to be more widely available with purchasers (District Health Authorities, GP Fundholders) now able to meet local health needs and buy in their health care accordingly, thus having the freedom to purchase complementary medicine if required. Furthermore, GP fund holders were now able to employ complementary medicine practitioners in their practices.

The DoH had commissioned a study by the Medical Care Research Unit, Sheffield University, into the use GPs are making of complementary therapists. The draft report had just been received and it showed that just over 40% of GPs provide access to some form of complementary medicine. The question arises 'Should the DoH speed things up by telling purchasers to buy complementary medicine services?' The answer, according to Lady Cumberlege, is NO because at the DoH they believe that they have provided a fair and even basis for complementary services to be provided.

Regulation

The DoH believes that the decision to move towards statutory regulation should be made by the professions themselves. However, the Government is willing to support Private Member's Bills which do this as had happened recently with the bills to recognise osteopathy and chiropractic. Lady Cumberlege stated that while the Private Member's Bill used to be the only way to achieve statutory regulation, the DoH had commissioned a review of the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act and this could result in the proposal of a new approach that would provide groups within complementary medicine with an entry point to statutory regulation.

Homoeopathy has been recognised since the Faculty of Homoeopathy Act 1950 which covers the practice of homoeopathy by doctors who have undergone post-graduate training and passed the examination for Membership of the Faculty (MFHom). The Society of Homoeopaths, which represents a number of non medically qualified homoeopaths, is beginning the process to seek recognition.

Europe

Lady Cumberlege acknowledged that some anxiety had been caused about the possibility of EC legislation affecting the way in which complementary medicine is currently provided in the UK. She assured everyone that homoeopathic and herbal medicines had been safeguarded. She stated that the DoH would look critically at anything being proposed by Europe and would consult fully on it.

Conclusion

To conclude she stated that she firmly believed that complementary medicine could be well established within the NHS, as long as certain steps to change were fulfilled. These were: added value, efficacy and cost-effectiveness, high standards of education, training, clinical practice and professional conduct. It was her belief that the NHS reforms had provided the mechanism for change which had enabled complementary medicine to become further integrated within the NHS.

Enid Segall General Secretary - BHA

Chairman's Message

The highlight over the last two months has been the opening of the Homoeopathic Centre at the Raystede Animal Welfare Centre. This, as you may know, is situated not far from the East Sussex County town of Lewes and is run by Miss Raymonde Hawkins and a band of dedicated helpers. It was a glorious Saturday afternoon in which I had the privilege of undertaking the opening ceremony of the new facility that has been created to promote homoeopathy. You will have read a fuller report within the Journal but I must congratulate all concerned on such a wonderful enterprise.

For those of you who have not had the opportunity to visit there, I strongly advise you to do so. Here you will see how animals of all kinds can be looked after and treated and helped. The programme of education through our schools both in East and West Sussex is exemplary. This should help the next generation to look after their animals properly and also to guide them on the right lines for homoeopathic help when needed.

I was so pleased to see so many of our members present on that afternoon and again I would like to thank Ray for allowing the BHA to share their special afternoon. It was very kind of her and greatly appreciated.



Photo E. Segall

Above: BHA Chairman, Martyn Long, Photographed at Raystede. Familiar face behind? It's stalwart member Graham Clarke.

Below: Miss Raymonde-Hawkins pays tribute to Jock, whose wonderful carved woodwork has contributed so much to the display centre.

Photo E. Segall.



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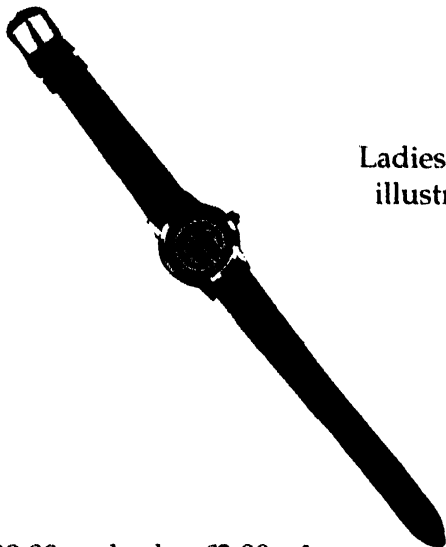
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Homoeopathic Display Centre Opens – Enid Segall Was There

Raystede is to me a restful place. As an animal rescue centre they see cruelty and neglect but there is an atmosphere of loving care about the place which somehow overcomes the ugly side of life. One of their aims is to educate as a means of preventing cruelty to animals by going out to schools and many of the displays at the centre educate while entertaining. Newly acquired land brought some farm buildings, including a 400 year old granary which has been lovingly restored and turned into a display centre for homoeopathy.

BHA Patrons

On a perfect summer afternoon the Official Opening took place with a wonderfully relaxed programme which went like clockwork. Visitors were warmly welcomed on arrival by BHA patrons, actress Jean Boht (Ma Boswell in 'Bread') and her composer/conductor husband Carl Davis.

The festivities began with Dobinson, Raystede's Shire Horse mascot, coming in to be greeted and patted on his 23rd birthday. Miss Raymonde-Hawkins told how he had spent the first night of his life on her bedroom floor. She spoke of the influence of homoeopathy in her life. Her birth, 93 years ago, had been attended by a homoeopathic physician and she had used it throughout her life for herself and the animals in her care. Jean and Carl both spoke about the benefits of homoeopathy and Jean laid special emphasis on the need to raise money for the BHA so that it could expand its work still further and give more to much needed research.

Tribute

BHA Chairman, Martyn Long paid tribute to Miss Raymonde-Hawkins who, as the founder of Raystede, is a truly remarkable woman. He recommended everyone to purchase the video about her life. He then unveiled a plaque to mark the official opening of the centre and unfurled a flag with the BHA's Coat-of-Arms so that it flew majestically over the centre. Miss Raymonde-Hawkins also unveiled a plaque which marked the dedicated work by Jock Ball who is wonderfully skilled at wood carving which has enhanced the Display Centre.

There followed the unveiling and presentation of a portrait of Miss Raymonde-Hawkins by Priscilla Kennedy who has captured dear Ray on canvas exceptionally well. The portrait was commissioned by Mr Jack Allmond, a keen supporter of Raystede. After all this excitement it was time for tea on the lawn before being entertained by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

The Centre

The Display Centre shows a variety of items of historical interest, including Hahnemann's bed and chair on loan from the Hahnemann House Trust. It also has material on other practitioners and celebrities with numerous reference books and information on the various remedies used in homoeopathy. Some can be seen growing outside in the Physic Garden. The centre will be open two afternoons a week with someone to accompany visitors. Combined with a visit to the animal sanctuary at Raystede, it makes a delightful afternoon out.

All the animals at Raystede benefit from a resident homoeopathic veterinary surgeon Mr Jeremy Edwards who gives some of his precious time to the Display Centre and the newly formed group The Raystede Friends of Homoeopathy which is fast gaining members. They enjoy regular meetings in the Pest House which is a perfect venue with a stunning mural of the Sussex Downs by Priscilla Kennedy.

BHA

See page 113 for more photo's...



Photo: G. Clarke

Above: Part of the ceremony was the unveiling of a portrait of Miss Raymonde-Hawkins, commissioned by one of her staunch supporters, Mr Jack Allmond.

Pennies from Heaven

An Appeal from the Secretary General

Caring for Homoeopathy in the future

When it comes to asking for money in the form of a legacy, homoeopathy is not an emotive subject except to those people who already know of its enormous value and the struggle it has had, is having and no doubt will continue to have to get its rightful place in medicine recognised. We can't put a dog with a bandaged paw or a sick child on our posters in the hope of reaching hearts and cheque books.

The BHA was founded in 1902 to raise awareness about homoeopathy and money for research (without vivisection), the training of doctors and the setting up of clinics. It has worked steadfastly towards these goals ever since, supported by its membership and legacies left by people sufficiently convinced of the value of homoeopathy to leave part of their estate to the BHA. The work of the Association has continued to expand and respond to the ever growing demand on its resources thanks to the generosity of people making bequests in their Will.

We often postpone making a Will but it has been shown that people who do actually live two years longer on average than those who do not! Ideally a Solicitor should be consulted when making a Will and to encourage people to get their affairs in order **MAKE A WILL WEEK** is held every October when many Solicitors offer a reduced rate for this service. This year it begins on October 16th - please make a note in your diary to remember the BHA.

The BHA has helpful leaflet on making a Will - we will gladly send you a copy.

The British Homoeopathic Association - Registered charity number 235900

... *Raystede continued from page 112*

BHA patrons, actress Jean Boht and her composer/conductor husband Carl Davis.

Photo: E. Segall

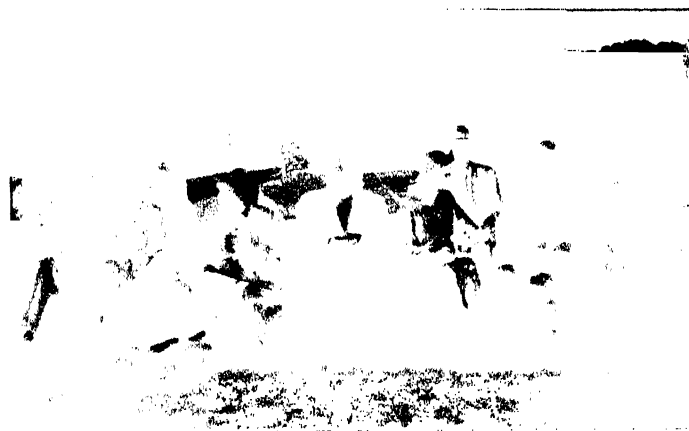


Photo: E. Segall

*Above: An informal study just before the ceremony begins.
Left to Right: J. Edwards, Resident Hom. Vet, Mrs Davey,
Jean Boht, Carl Davis, Mrs V Long, Mr M Long talking to
G. Clarke (seated behind), Miss Raymonde-Hawkins,
seated on grass - Samantha Long.*