

# Provings

Jonathan Shore, MD, DHT; Judy Schriebman, Anneke Hogeland

Excerpted from the book *Birds* by the authors above.

**Abstract:** The authors' experience in conducting provings raised some profound questions regarding the nature of the data collected and information revealed, suggesting the importance of adopting a new, more inclusive proving methodology. It seemed clear that not only those participating who actually took the remedy being proved developed symptoms, but also that there was an amazing congruence with the symptoms that arose in very sensitive "provers" who did not actually take the medicine. Consequently, the authors concluded that for a proving to reveal the full potential of a remedy the following information should be included: data gathered from journal provings, data gathered from a group setting where there is direct involvement with the process of remedy preparation, and especially data gathered from those who are so sensitive to the process as to produce symptoms even at a distance.

**Keywords:** proving methodology; sensitive provers

Homeopathy as a science stands as a bridge between the visible and the invisible; between the laws governing the matter of this world and those that rule a world we can only guess at. One doorway into this other world is the proving experience, which provides a framework through which that other world may be penetrated.

Long understood as the primary foundation of our materia medica, the proving lies at the heart of the homeopathic system. Thus a dynamic investigation of not only the recorded symptoms arising out of provings (the totality of symptoms or remedy image) but a delving into the nature of the process itself is essential for a fully rounded understanding of this unique science.

As a discipline arising in the West, homeopathy is (most certainly in its earlier stages) considered a science of the mind. The essential data recovered in the anamnesis upon which the prescription is based is organized mentally by the practitioner. This occurs almost always in the abstract. By this we mean that the prescriber neither participates directly in the experience of the patient nor in the vital life that has created the unique configuration of the remedy. This is not to say that no one does this, but rather that it is not the norm; nor do most even experience this as a limitation.

The sense that something is missing, that life cannot be lived by the mind alone, may well be the hidden current that is surfacing in what is an increasingly widespread desire to conduct provings. It is our hypothesis that while the external reasons appear as a need for more remedies, the underlying moving force is one that arises from the feeling or the desire for the actual, visceral, concrete experience of the mystery of homeopathy. For although there are many who deny the mystery and make great efforts to explain in everyday and scientifically accepted terminology exactly what the remedies are and what they do, there are others who feel the wonder when confronted with the penetration of the everyday world by forces we cannot see or quantify or measure. Hahnemann himself strongly recommended that homeopaths conduct provings on themselves, in addition to making their own remedies, in an endeavor to meet this mystery full on.

By way of illustration, we can pose the question: At which point in time does the proving begin? Or, to regard the question from a slightly different angle, which symptoms are to be considered admissible? It has been our repeated experience that the moment the group sits down in a quiet fashion, the feeling in the room subtly changes and begins

to reflect the quality of the substance to be proven. The main threads of apparently random chatter amongst participants are seen on later review to reflect both the general and often rather specific themes of the remedy. What is really remarkable, however, is that there exists definite evidence that the proving can begin quite some time before the official commencement. This has been observed not only on every occasion in which it was searched for, but it also, initially, impressed itself on our awareness without any expectation.

One instance in particular stands out. In a trituration proving, one participant who spoke little English and through a set of unique circumstances was co-opted into the proving group only some thirty minutes before we began, who had absolutely no foreknowledge of homeopathy or provings, reported having had significant dreams the previous night which were inexplicable to her until the proving was underway. During the process it became clear to her that the dreams were directly related to the substance of the proving.

As an isolated incident this event would have limited meaning. However, the validity of the experience was later substantiated by additional data collected by the senior author in two significant experiments designed to investigate this phenomenon. The first was done at a five-day residential seminar in Eastern Germany in 1996. The decision to prove *Radium bromatum* was made by the senior author some four to six weeks before the seminar date. Although some of the participants may have anticipated that a proving would take place, only two German colleagues and the author knew the exact substance. At the start of the seminar it was announced that a proving experiment would be conducted and the form it would take was explained. The entire group of some 50 people was divided into three sections. The first or "sensitive" group would be those self-selected individuals who felt that they had already begun to experience proving symptoms. The second or "proving" group consisted of those who indicated that they wished to participate in the proving by actually taking the remedy. Those remaining formed the third group, which was given literature on plutonium and asked to imagine what it would be like if they had taken this substance.

The participants were specifically requested not to communicate their experience to anybody outside of their specific group. Each group then met together for one hour a day for three days. On the fourth day, a general meeting was held at which representatives from each of the groups presented a summary of their experiences. A video recording of this meeting was made.

One of the reasons for the selection of *Radium bromatum* was the wealth of existing literature describing the physical symptomatology and the paucity of information regarding the emotional state. It was anticipated that if the provers accurately reproduced the known physical picture, then the image that emerged on the mental/emotional plane could likewise be trusted, and, indeed, this proved to be the case. Especially interesting was the clear and indisputable fact that the most accurate representation of already recorded symptomatology was to be found amongst the first or "sensitive" group, those who had not even taken the remedy and yet had begun to experience symptoms before arriving at the seminar. The video record of this was presented at the Homeopathy for the World Congress in Berlin 1997.

The second experiment was conducted in Paris in 2003. The form was of a similar but more complex construction with a little over 100 participants. *Lac equinum* was the proving substance. A standard 30C preparation was distributed to 30 people one month prior to the seminar while an additional 17 received placebo. At the beginning of the seminar, the remaining participants were divided into five groups: a self-selected "sensitive" group that had already begun to experience symptoms (some 10 people), two groups who then prepared a 3C potency by succussion from mare's milk; and another two groups who prepared a 3C potency by triturating the tail hair from a stallion. It can be seen that not only was the vital substance of "horse" being tested, we were also looking for any differences that might play out between "male" and "female" against an already proven remedy.

The groups met individually for an hour the following day and then together in a large general meeting at which a summary of the experiences of each group was presented. There was a remarkable overall correlation between the diverse groups with respect to the main themes (which correlated well with the previously published proving by Nancy Herrick), with the most precise and subtle of the symptoms arising in the "sensitive" group. It is also noteworthy that in discussion with the members of this group, after the nature of the substance was revealed, at least four members had a significant relationship with horses.

The main conclusion arising from these experiences is that the best provings are those that are constructed to include the collection of data from different proving conditions and levels of materiality. These include:

- Data gathered from journal provings, in which the symptoms have an opportunity to express themselves under the ongoing conditions of

everyday life and are recorded in detail,

- Data gathered from a group setting where there is direct involvement with the process of remedy preparation,
- And especially data gathered from those who are so sensitive to the process as to produce symptoms even at a distance.

This totality gives a more complete picture than any single method by itself. There is one further point that involves opinion rather than fact. It is the contention of the authors that the proving master has an obligation to bring out the central theme(s) of the proving. While provings in which all the symptoms generated are listed without any attempt to arrive at an organizing principle are excellent sources of information for the repertory, they have much less value for practical work. The distant observer, who has not had the privilege of directly experiencing the energy of a substance, often cannot bring order to the mass of symptoms by mental analysis alone, and thus is left to the chance recognition of some peculiar symptom or other which has stuck in memory in bringing the remedy into practice.<sup>1</sup>

[Note: The authors' review of current proving methodologies follows.]

### **Additional information regarding the appearance of proving symptoms prior to the commencement of the proving.**

I would like to make the point that these phenomena are well known to those actively involved in the realm of provings provided they admit to the possibility of this occurring and do not dismiss the evidence as irrelevant and distracting as I was wont to do in my earlier years. Examples of this phenomenon as it occurred in my proving experience follow.

### ***Radium bromatum* Proving**

This following record is from the proving of *Radium bromatum*, which took place in West Germany in September 1996, and began my investigation of this quite unexpected and inexplicable phenomenon. The results were all recorded on video and were presented in Berlin in 1997 at the Congress "Homeopathy for the World," attended by some 1,500 people. This same presentation has

<sup>1</sup> It is not enough just to ask about sensation, or to think about sensation. What is suggested here is the necessity for the practitioner to experience the sensation in his/her own organism.

been given in the USA at a number of conferences and seminars. I finally stopped presenting it, not because it had ended its usefulness, but rather because the presentation produced intense physical and emotional symptomatology in certain sensitive members of the audience, and I did not want to deal with nor subject unsuspecting people to this kind of experience.

The record below is abstracted from the notes of Elizabeth Schulz, a colleague whose sensitivity to proving energies I have verified on a number of occasions.

### *Personal experiences in the pre-run phase* 7-31-96

Dream: I walk upwards on a glass bridge. I am afraid of falling and see how an atomic bomb is ignited in a beautiful old house. Everything glows red! I am very afraid to be radiated. After the supervision session, I took a very hot bath. It was impossible to get rid of the cold. It was deeper than any other time I experienced coldness. It went through the bones.

Dream: The next night, I didn't wake up because of thunder but because of a fear of cancer: I am at a gynecologist's office. She says that I have millions of cancer cells in my womb, and they need to be taken out immediately, but I don't want that and wake up in great fear.

The nights are restless; all my bones and muscles hurt. Do I need *Rhus tox.*? Pain in the back as if someone stabs into it with a knife. Feet are burning, legs are restless, stomach pain. I am continuously awakened by dreams with a strong fear of an unknown threat. People die, friends die, cancer patients that I take care for or have taken care of come up.

My hair is still falling out; one tooth crumbles away without much external influence. Four more days until the seminar. I absolutely need new bed linen before then; so I drive quickly into downtown Hamburg to find the store burning. Later I learn that the fire was caused by a welding torch. So much conspicuousness - and next to my daily notes, I start with the proving report. I don't know the remedy and that energy. The exact date of the beginning of the proving I can only determine at the seminar. Contrary to other provings, I don't have as many physical symptoms.

A day before the seminar, I worked during an hour of supervision on the theme of the unknown remedy. It is about frostbite of the childlike soul. Is it easier to heal a burn caused by hot water than a frostbite that also leaves blisters behind? Themes of not being acknowledged, not being precious and important, not having any space, not being desired,

rejected! Neglect, decrepitude, being betrayed for one's life.

### *Arriving at the Seminar*

Fear rolled towards me like a huge tidal wave, when we reached the hotel in Bad Stuer. I wanted to turn around and run away, but it was too late... no way out! We were three people driving through the former German Democratic Republic. Uneasiness was only one feeling. Fear, horror - I cannot exactly describe what it was that crept slowly through all my cells. The mood ranged from worried, sad, tired and irritated. Also, suddenly intense physical symptoms appeared. Freezing cold the day before.

The seminar was organized with love and care. The needs of the participants were considered. However, I was caught in that remedy and experienced my own story like a cruel film.

During the night, a nickel-sized ulcer at the palate. The suffocated scream manifests in the body. The sleep was deep and dark. I woke up exhausted. Remembered all the ugly dark faces that emerged before I fell asleep. It felt as if I had an intense flu. All muscles were painfully swollen. Within a few hours I became stiff. Tonsillitis developed. The lymph nodes around the neck were painfully swollen. The mucus membranes of nose and throat were dry and painfully infected. Coughing with a tickling in the larynx. I don't understand the others and don't comprehend what they want to tell me. I am quickly touched and cry easily when hearing sad stories.

### *Record of another participant*

This is another prover whose sensitivity to proving energies has been repeatedly verified. I believe it was because of our prior experience with these two women that my colleagues and I who organized this seminar decided on the format which the investigation was given.

She describes how on landing at the local airport en route to the seminar the airplane gave a small jolt on landing (nothing unusual). She immediately felt this stabbing pain in her neck and remembering that as a child she had had many x rays to her head and neck became absolutely convinced that she had cancer of the bones in her neck.

*Here are some symptoms from the actual proving:*  
Deep seated pains in the bones. Feeling now I have cancer.

Burning pains in throat chest and skin.  
Isolation separated from group-forsaken, left alone.

Isolated and separated from everything, no com-

munication anymore. "That is why my whole existence is taken from me"

Always one group and somebody or something that was prevented either from the outside or by his or her own desire from belonging to group  
Coldness. Icy cold, deep feeling to the bones.  
Extreme stiffness and rigidity in the neck. Cannot turn the neck  
Dry cough arising from throat

### *Correspondences:*

Beside the above proving symptoms that bear close correspondence with the pre-proving symptoms mentioned above, the similarity of the pre-provers' symptoms to radiation poisoning is striking; similarly striking is the association of radium (and the effects of radioisotopes) with the pre-provers' images of fire, 'glowing red,' and an atomic bomb.

## **Anhalonium Proving**

*Los Angeles 2007 (Unpublished)*

### *Prover 1:*

Before proving:

Completely blocked left nostril – this was frequent in the proving. (And verified by other provers subsequently). She had rarely had sinus issues before. During the whole proving she couldn't breathe.)

I feel unusually careless and have tripped; hit my head twice. (*Anhalonium* has awkwardness in its recognized symptomatology.) That is not like my normal self.

I have a bad back and the last two weeks it has been feeling unusually stronger. (Nancy Herrick's proving of *Anhalonium* demonstrates a number of back pain symptoms.)

Melt down. Not a person who has ever experienced depression. She watched a movie and felt, "What the f\_ k; just give up." Hopeless. Crying. Existential anguish. (Sadness factored strongly in Nancy Herrick's proving.)

(Prover x, during the actual proving, broke down; felt he had no purpose, wept. Prover xx, also during the proving - experienced profound depression also.)

During the proving Prover 1 continued to display the intense depression.

Prover 1 had a history of migraine headaches. Before the proving she suffered a severe headache preceded by nausea. Cervical pain was intense. She had not had a migraine for one year. Normally her headaches were located at the right occiput and extended over the head to the right eye. In this instance it was located on the forehead.

The cervical pain made her feel “5,000 years old.”

*Prover 2*

Week prior to proving:

She usually takes Magnesium oxide to keep her bowels moving, but she didn't need to. She wondered if she was doing a detox? Felt really good. (*Anhalonium* has diarrhea in its symptomatology.)

*Prover 3*

Two weeks before proving:

High productivity; could do anything. So great. Felt she could do anything; so she scheduled too much the second week. (The Herrick proving contained several symptoms under the theme “energetic/productive.”)

One week before the proving she couldn't meet the demands of that schedule and felt so irritable. She felt, though, that time didn't matter – whatever was fine. There was never any pressure, even though she had to help. (“Calmness/quiet” is yet another theme identified in the Herrick proving.)

Her blood pressure had been high for two years. It was totally normal the previous week.

“It's a good ADD remedy.” She made eggplant parmesan; after removing it from the oven, she put it on top of a stove burner that was on. The dish burned it up. She felt so mad, stupid. (*Anhalonium* is, of course, well-known for making mistakes and confusion.)

*Prover 4*

The day before time expanded for me, and I had lots of time to do things. (The materia medica, of course, confirms a disordered time sense.)

For those interested, I recommend the research done at the Princeton Engineering Anomalies

Research Laboratories - *Margins of Reality: The Role of Consciousness in the Physical World* by Robert F. Jahn and Brenda J. Dunne (Hardcover - Dec 1987).

*About the authors: Jonathan Shore, MD, DHT, studied medicine at the University of Cape Town Medical School in South Africa. After examining many forms of alternative healing, he settled into the practice of homeopathy. He has lectured widely throughout the world and was an instructor at the Hahnemann College of Homeopathy. He has conducted numerous proving in his career, most notably on bird remedies. His book, “Birds: Homeopathic Remedies from the Avian Realm” is the authoritative text on bird remedies. He practices classical homeopathy in the San Francisco area. Judy Schriebman, CCH, CHT, is a graduate of the Hahnemann College of Homeopathy and a master clinical hypnotherapist.*

*Anneke Hogeland, MS, MFT, is a licensed psychotherapist; she studied homeopathy at the Pacific Academy of Homeopathy. She is the founder of Homeopathy West, which organizes homeopathic seminars.*

**Editorial Note:** The reader should be aware that the above article contains some highly controversial observations. The editorial committee of the AJHM believes that homeopathic provings should be held to high standards and such apparent phenomena as symptoms arising before provings in sensitive individuals, symptoms arising in placebo recipients, etc. should be viewed with circumspection and, if listed in the proving report, be noted as provisional symptoms which might, on further clinical corroboration, enrich the image of the remedy. AJH