
HOMEOPATHY

A Theoretical Framework and Clinical Application

Miranda Castro, FSHom, RSHom (NA), CCH

ABSTRACT

The use of homeopathic remedies for the treatment of mastitis is described. The basic principles of homeopathy are discussed, including the simillimum, the minimum dose, the single remedy, the whole person, the vital force, susceptibility, and constitutional treatment. Homeopathic research trials and papers are examined and discussed. The author explains how homeopathy can be incorporated into midwifery practice and applies this to the treatment of mastitis. Specific indications in the application of 19 homeopathic remedies for mastitis, breast abscess, and lactation difficulties (including problems with supply and painful nipples) are cited. Keynote symptoms are presented in an easy access repertory. General guidelines for potency and dosage protocol are given. © 1999 by the American College of Nurse-Midwives.

“The highest ideal of cure is the rapid, gentle and permanent restoration of health . . . according to clearly realizable principles.”

Samuel Hahnemann, *The Organon of Medicine*, 1810

Homeopathy is an effective and scientific system of healing that assists the natural tendency of the body to heal itself. It recognizes that all symptoms of ill health are expressions of disharmony within the whole person and that it is the individual person who needs treatment, not the disease. The homeopathic principles constitute a unified hypothesis whose validity is tested empirically: cured patients confirm the hypothesis. Homeopathic medicines are prepared in a pharmacy or a laboratory, using a technique subject to precise and clearly stated controls. The preparation and administration of homeopathic medicines does not involve mysterious processes.

Homeopathy is an increasingly popular alternative system of medicine whose basic philosophy is viewed

skeptically by the orthodox medical profession because it is difficult to understand within accepted scientific theories. Its success with patients, however, has led to its continual growth and development over the past 200 years, culminating in a resurgence in recent years partly owing to increasing dissatisfaction with the side effects of modern medicines.

Homeopathy is based on the principles of similars. The standard medical assumption is this: if the body produces a symptom, the appropriate treatment is an antidote, or opposite medicine, whose purpose is to overcome that symptom. For example, a conventional doctor will treat constipation with a laxative, which produces diarrhea. The premise of the law of similars is this: any substance that can cause symptoms of disease in a healthy person can cure a sick person who manifests a similar symptom profile. A homeopathic practitioner treats constipation by giving a homeopathic medicine that has produced symptoms of constipation in a healthy person.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Treating “like with like” was described by Hippocrates in the 5th century BC; the “father of medicine,” and people throughout the world have employed this principle of healing with “similars” for many hundreds of years. It was the German doctor Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843), however, who discovered this basic approach through an experiment he conducted on himself, in an attempt to understand how medicines worked. Questioning the basis for treating malaria with quinine, Hahnemann ingested Cinchona bark (from which quinine is derived) in order to find out how it might affect a healthy person. After a number of days, he started to experience symptoms of fever (typical of malaria), which cleared up once he stopped taking the medicine (1).

Hahnemann next experimented with Cinchona bark on family and friends, with similar results. This led him to experiment with many other substances in order to discover what symptoms of illness they could produce in healthy individuals. He called these tests *provings* and meticulously recorded individual reactions as well as any common themes or patterns of illness produced by each substance—including sensations and feelings. These provings formed the basis of a new system of healing Hahnemann called homeopathy, from the Greek *homo-*

Address correspondence to Miranda Castro, 2024 S. Dearborn Street, Seattle, WA 98144.

DISCLAIMER: This article reflects the experience and research of the author. Every effort has been made to provide accurate and complete information. The reader should be aware, however, that homeopathic research and clinical experience are ongoing and differences in opinion exist among authorities with regard to this modality. In addition, each individual is unique and there may be unexpected responses to any intervention, including homeopathy. Thus, it is advisable for open dialogue to occur between the patient and her health care provider regarding the potential benefits and risks associated with homeopathy. The author and editors of this journal do not accept responsibility for any consequences of the use or misuse of the information in this article.

ios (similar) and *pathos* (suffering or disease), in order to differentiate it from orthodox medicine, which he called “allopathy,” meaning “opposite suffering” (1).

Hahnemann then used the “symptom pictures” he assembled as the basis for his prescriptions. He gave a single medicine at a time, as opposed to the medical practice of his time, which involved mixtures containing many medicines. His departure from “accepted” medical practice attracted much derision, especially from the apothecaries, but the successes he achieved with patients verified his theory, and he continued to develop his system (1).

Hahnemann experimented with diluting his medicines to minimize side effects but found that simple dilution (with stirring) caused the medicine to lose its efficacy altogether, so he developed a new method of dilution whereby he diluted the substance in carefully measured steps, shaking it vigorously in between each dilution. This shaking he called “succussion” and the resultant liquid a “potentized remedy.” He found that this new remedy lacked side effects and had a stronger curative reaction. In fact, he discovered that the more he diluted and succussed a substance the stronger it became. This dilution-and-potency issue has become “one of the main areas of controversy in the homeopathic system” (2).

This process of dilution consistently incurred skepticism from the medical establishment which could not explain, and therefore could not accept, how anything so dilute could have an effect. Despite such opposition, homeopathy survived because it worked, and patients who were helped spread the word. Some of those patients were doctors and many of them, having experienced the gentle yet effective healing power of homeopathy themselves, then trained under Hahnemann and took his teachings out into the world, to South and North America, India and Europe.

THE PRINCIPLES

Simillimum

The homeopathic remedy is selected on the basis that it causes similar symptoms in a healthy person, as documented in experiments that are called *provings*. This remedy is known as the *simillimum*.

Miranda Castro is a fellow of The Society of Homeopaths (UK), president of the North American Society of Homeopaths, and certified by the Council for Homeopathic Certification. She has been practicing homeopathy since 1983 and authored the best-selling *The Complete Homeopathy Handbook*, *Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth and Your Baby's First Years*, and *A Homeopathic Guide to Stress*. She lectures and teaches extensively in the UK and the United States on homeopathy, ethical issues, and the care of the practitioner—as well as the patient. She is on the faculty at Bastyr University in Seattle, Washington, where she lives.

Minimum Dose

Dilution with succussion releases the strength or “potency” of any substance and makes it a more effective medicine while eliminating potential side effects. Homeopathic medicines are made from a wide variety of substances—animal, vegetable, and mineral. Because a homeopathic remedy is diluted beyond the point where there is anything measurable of the original substance—at a molecular level—absolutely anything can be used, including some which are toxic at a material dose, such as acids and snake venoms.

The starting remedy—a *tincture* or *mother tincture*—is made by steeping soluble substances in alcohol and then straining them. Insoluble substances are ground for several hours with a pestle and mortar until they are rendered soluble. This process, called *trituration*, is used for metals and other substances that do not dissolve easily in order to prepare them for dilution and succussion.

There are two scales for diluting substances: the decimal and the centesimal. For the decimal scale, one tenth of the tincture is added to nine tenths alcohol and shaken vigorously; this first dilution is called a 1X. The number of a homeopathic remedy reflects the number of times it has been diluted and succussed: for example, Sulphur 6X has been diluted and succussed six times.

The centesimal scale is diluted using one part in a hundred of the tincture and the letter C is added after the number. Paradoxically, a 6X is called a low potency and 200C a high potency; the greater the dilution, the greater the potency, the stronger the curative potential of the medicine.

The most commonly used potency in the decimal scale is the 6X, although the 9X, 12X, 24X, and 30X are used by some. In the centesimal scale, those potencies most commonly used are the 6C, 12C, 30C, and 200C.

Single Remedy

Remedies are tested, or proven, one at a time and prescribed on an individual basis. Combination remedies (including several remedies that are strongly indicated in a particular disease) are widely available in this country, although results are likely to be disappointing if the single remedy a person needs is not included in a particular mixture.

Whole Person

Every human being should be viewed as a unique individual, whole and complete, functioning as a totality in relation to the surrounding environment; in this context, the only way to cure illness is to increase the health of the afflicted person (3). Based on this philosophy, alternative treatments look at the disease within the “whole person

context.” They take into account the person who has become ill, and their treatment is designed to stimulate that person’s own self-healing abilities. Alternative health care practitioners believe it is important to explore both *how* a person has become ill, as well as the known stressors in their lives, especially those that have led up to illness and will take these into account when planning a course of treatment. Many people find this a relief and are grateful to be treated as a whole rather than having to separate themselves into “parts” to be handed over to a host of “experts.”

Vital Force

The human organism has a unique relationship with its environment, which biologists refer to as “homeostasis.” As such, a healthy living being is self-regulating, with an innate (protective) tendency to maintain its equilibrium and compensate for disruptive changes. Hahnemann believed that an energetic substance, independent of physical and chemical forces, exists and that this “vital force” gives life and is absent at death. It is also known as *chi* or *prana* by Eastern medical practitioners. This vital force acts in predictable ways and operates both in sickness and in health, by producing coping mechanisms to counteract stressors. Disease is the body’s way of coping with stress. Homeopaths credit this balancing mechanism for the maintenance of health, provided that the stresses on the mind and body are neither too prolonged nor too great.

Susceptibility and Constitutional Treatment

Susceptibility is simply the degree to which a person is vulnerable to an outside influence. Not everyone who goes for a walk in a cold wind will be affected, but some are “susceptible.” Their predisposition is due to an underlying constitutional weakness, which is either inherited or due to past and/or current stress (mental, emotional, or physical).

Many people consult a homeopath to receive “constitutional treatment” for chronic complaints that have not been alleviated through other forms of treatment. The value of such treatment is that it boosts the weak constitution and decreases its susceptibility to disease. This type of intervention requires specialized education and training.

HOW DOES HOMEOPATHY WORK?

Although homeopathy has been compared to vaccination, they are very different practices. Vaccines stimulate the immune system directly to produce specific antibodies to a particular disease. They are tested on animals and then on humans to verify their safety; even then side effects are

common. Most vaccines are introduced directly into the bloodstream, bypassing the body’s natural defense system and stimulating it in a way that is not fully understood.

Homeopathic medicines are administered orally in safe, diluted, and succussed doses; they are tested on healthy humans (not on animals), and when used correctly have no side effects. They work on an individual’s energy patterns, by stimulating the immune system generally.

Research

Homeopathy has long been viewed with skepticism and largely regarded as having inherent implausibility. Critics maintain that it is little more than faith healing, despite the fact that homeopathic medicines are particularly effective in babies and animals, neither of whom are susceptible to placebo effects. The idea that a medicine is operating at a “sub-molecular” level (ie, without one measurable molecule of the original substance) is definitely a stumbling block for those trained in a Western scientific tradition of physics and molecular biology. Because of this, little research contributing to the body of homeopathic knowledge has been conducted within the mainstream scientific community. Nevertheless, research trials have been repeatedly shown that homeopathy *does* work. In 1991, the British Medical Journal published a meta-analysis of 107 clinical trials of homeopathy; of the 22 best-quality studies, 15 showed positive results in conditions such as hay fever, influenza, migraine headache, trauma, and length of labor (4).

Homeopaths themselves have conducted many studies. Most have taken place in clinical settings and have sought mainly to compare the effects of homeopathy to placebo. Clinical research is currently being conducted—in vitro, and in vivo—using a wide variety of homeopathic prescribing techniques, including constitutional (or classical) homeopathy, acute prescribing, complex or combination remedies, and isopathy (which uses small doses of the “same” substance that caused the disease; for example, grass pollens in a homeopathic potency are given to a person with an allergy to grass pollens).

Homeopathy has been shown to be more effective than placebo. A meta-analysis of 89 double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled studies (5) found results *incompatible* with the hypothesis that the clinical effects of homeopathy are due completely to placebo. The authors cautioned, however, that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that homeopathy is clearly efficacious for any single clinical condition. They recommended that further research on homeopathy be conducted, provided that it is rigorous and systematic.

Other researchers (6) described the difficulties of conducting clinical trials in homeopathy, and suggested that the debate about efficacy should focus on reproducing evidence that patients can detect an effect from homeo-

pathic medicines over and above any placebo action. Patients should be carefully selected with clearly defined diagnoses and investigators should control for any change in conventional treatments. Double blinding and randomization would rule out observer or patient bias. Using conventional Western research standards, it was thought that this body of evidence might be adequate for establishing homeopathy as a regular treatment for certain conditions.

Clinical trials demonstrating the efficacy of homeopathy have consistently been disparaged as unscientific. Homeopathy is a treatment modality and how it works is not understood; but, this should not hamper a rational review of research that confirms plainly that it *does* work. Clinical outcomes research is an area that is currently being explored, although history has not been fair to homeopathy in this area either.

In 1854, during a cholera outbreak in London, the UK General Board of Health “omitted” the success of homeopathic treatments in their statistical returns to Parliament. They suppressed the fact that deaths at the Homeopathic Hospital were under 30%, compared with a 60% average for other hospitals. When challenged, the Board explained, “The figures would give an unjustifiable sanction to an empirical practice opposed to the maintenance of truth and the progress of science” (7).

These dilemmas have stalled practical research in homeopathy. Many think that finding the mechanism for the effectiveness of minimum dose is an especially appropriate area of investigation. There are a number of theories currently being discussed that describe how a medicine that has apparently none of the original active substance may have specific biologic activity. The following three theories each put forward the similar notion that water molecules act as transmitters of information.

Ic Crystals. An Ic crystal is a novel stable structure made from water molecules. Dr. Shui-Yin Lo, Associate Professor at the California Institute of Technology, has discovered that when a solution of a particular chemical is diluted to about ten parts chemical to one billion parts of water (about a 4C homeopathic potency), the water molecules in closest proximity to the chemical molecule harden into solid water, or ice or Ic crystals: I for ice and e for the fact that they are formed through electromagnetic forces (through a similar mechanism to the one that forms ice) rather than by temperature. These stable structures can be filtered, concentrated, and photographed using a transmission electron microscope (8).

Each solid water cluster takes a different shape depending on the original chemical. Once formed, these clusters are remarkably stable. If they are diluted and vigorously shaken, the concentration of clusters actually increases. If the solution is diluted beyond the point where there is any molecular trace of the original

chemical in the water, the solid water clusters combine to form and increase in concentration—while maintaining the unique shape determined by the original chemical (9).

Theory of High Dilutions. In 1996, a theory of high dilutions was published that described a theoretical phenomenon called a white hole. In contrast to a black hole, which contains extremely dense matter, a white hole occurs when a molecule disappears—as in a substance that is being repeatedly diluted. The researchers theorized that when the white hole phenomenon occurs, the water molecules around it form a shape specific to the substance that is no longer present. They further postulated that biological activity of these structures occurs when the substance is shaken (10).

Water Memory. A controversial theory of water memory was presented in 1994 in a paper that was published in the prestigious magazine *Nature* (11). The researchers examined the effects of immunoglobulin E (IgE) immunogens when they were succussed and diluted down to a 10-120. The dilutions no longer contained any of the original immunogen and, yet, they still had the power to incite basophils with IgE antibodies on their surface to release their histamine granules. It was hypothesized that this phenomenon was the result of the transmission of biological information by the organization of water in the solvent. The paper was accompanied by an editorial that questioned its credibility and a team was sent to investigate them for fraud. It appears that when any proposed mechanism for the action of a homeopathic medicine is in direct contradiction to current thought, its acceptance continues to face an uphill battle.

Recent Homeopathy Trials

New studies are adding to a growing body of research on homeopathy. In 1994, *The Lancet* published a randomized double-blind clinical trial showing that homeopathic preparations were effective in the treatment of allergic asthma (6). That same year, *Pediatrics* published a randomized double-blind clinical trial of the homeopathic treatment of acute childhood diarrhea (12). This study, conducted by epidemiologist Dr. Jennifer Jacobs at the University of Washington, was the first on homeopathy to be published in a mainstream peer-reviewed American medical journal. Dr. Jacobs treated half of the subjects with a placebo and the other half with one of 18 homeopathic remedies. The homeopathic treatment group recovered between 15% and 25% faster than the control group (12).

Animal studies conducted in Germany and the UK have shown homeopathy to be effective in the treatment of mastitis (13–15). The homeopathic remedy was added to the drinking water for cows, which makes these

studies even more interesting, because there is little possibility of a placebo response.

In spite of skepticism and disbelief, research into homeopathy continues to be pursued and many clinical trials are being undertaken around the world. Indeed, “. . . the sum of the clinical observations and the experimental findings is beginning to prove so extensive and intrinsically consistent that it is no longer possible to dodge the issue by acting as if this body of evidence simply did not exist” (16). In the United States, the National Institutes of Health Office of Alternative Medicine has a current budget of \$50 million and has recently funded a study on the homeopathic treatment of mild traumatic brain injury.

HOMEOPATHY AROUND THE WORLD TODAY

Despite countless barriers, homeopathy is growing in popularity today in almost every country around the world. It is popular in much of Asia, from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal to Sri Lanka. In India, homeopathy is officially recognized as a separate branch of medicine and flourishes with full support of the government. India has the largest number of homeopathic hospitals in the world, over 100,000 homeopathic doctors, and over 120 homeopathic colleges with 4- to 5-year training programs (17).

Homeopathy is also becoming popular throughout Europe. In England, France, and Germany, for example, homeopathic medicines are now available in most pharmacies. In England, homeopathic hospitals were opened in Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow, Tunbridge Wells, and London throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In 1948, homeopathy was incorporated into the National Health Service as an officially approved method of treatment (18). This means that every British citizen has the right to request a referral to a homeopathic practitioner for treatment.

Homeopathy has become more widespread over the past decade in many other nations, including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Israel, and Greece. In addition, homeopathy is highly respected in many South American countries, especially Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, each of which has tens of thousands of homeopathic practitioners.

HOMEOPATHY AND MIDWIFERY

Homeopathy is ideally suited to women in their child-bearing years when concern about the side effects of orthodox medicines often leads them to suffer rather than seek medical help for their health problems. For midwives, homeopathy provides a safe and convenient tool for helping women during pregnancy, labor, and the postnatal period for a wide variety of complaints. Ho-

meopathic remedies are low cost, over-the-counter, approved medicines that can be used by midwives, doctors, and consumers alike.

“A midwife trained in homeopathy can be a powerful ally to mothers and infants.” The art of midwifery involves the ability to “see” each woman as a whole person and support her in her unique path to motherhood. In this respect, midwives are ideally suited to explore homeopathy further, since a holistic approach is basic to homeopathic practice. It must be underscored, however, that a working understanding of the principles of homeopathy is crucial to successful prescribing.

INCORPORATING HOMEOPATHY INTO MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

Many health care practitioners, including midwives, have learned to use a select number of remedies effectively within the perimeters of their own specialty; others seek specialized training that equips them to treat chronic disease using homeopathic remedies. It is important to distinguish between the various ways that homeopathy can safely and effectively be used, and to work within those boundaries.

There are three major ways to use homeopathic medicines. In the first instance, they lend themselves to home-prescribing for common first aid and acute situations. Self-prescribing handbooks and homeopathic kits for home use have been popular for 150 years. People are able to alleviate their minor aches and pains and complaints, such as bruises and strains, colds and flus, without recourse to stronger medications and their potential side effects.

Classical or constitutional homeopathy deals with the treatment of chronic disease. This is always complex and involves a lengthy homeopathy training. Patients presenting with chronic disease have a lengthy case history taken (usually 1½–2 hours) and their remedy selection and subsequent case management is beyond the scope of the home- or primary care-prescriber.

Primary care homeopathy involves the use of homeopathy as an adjunctive treatment by health care professionals who have a working knowledge of a limited number of remedies (19). This method of using homeopathy has been successfully developed and widely taught in Scotland over the past 12 years. David Reilly and Bob Leckridge, Scottish physicians, and their colleagues have trained 20% of primary care physicians in Scotland in how to use a limited number of homeopathic remedies in their everyday, general practices. Eighty percent were still using homeopathy after 2 years, and a number have gone on to take further, constitutional training. The Scottish homeopaths have shown that health care professionals with a basic knowledge of homeopathic principles and practice and a manageable

range of remedies can help many patients, especially with complaints such as viral infections that do not respond favorably to conventional medications.

Midwives who wish to incorporate homeopathy into their practices would do well to first study the principles and methodologies as outlined in a book that is aimed at those new to homeopathy (20). Those who wish to learn more can do so by independently studying the process in some depth (21). Appendix A provides some useful additional resources.

The Summer School Programs at the National Center for Homeopathy are particularly popular and useful for those new to homeopathy to find out more and to network with others with similar interests. Some of their courses are aimed specifically at those integrating homeopathy into established medical practices. Those who want to study homeopathy in depth will need to do so at a school that teaches an integrated curriculum. There are many available, including some home study programs as well as 4-year integrated programs in classical homeopathy that involve only one weekend a month in the classroom. The Council on Homeopathic Education has a list of the programs available in this country. See Appendix A.

A CLINICAL APPLICATION OF HOMEOPATHIC PRINCIPLES

Mastitis is a common problem that responds favorably to homeopathy. This acute disease can start out simply as a blocked (lactiferous) duct. Prompt treatment can prevent a more serious breast infection or abscess from developing. Once a duct has become blocked, hot and cold compresses (alternating), bed rest, and gentle breast massage (especially while the baby nurses) as well as more frequent feeds can sometimes clear the ducts without needing to resort to a homeopathic remedy.

Homeopathic treatment is highly effective at dealing with breast infections and abscesses and is a safer (and often faster) option than antibiotics. Although the following remedies are those that are most commonly needed, this is not a complete list. If the mother's symptomatic picture does not fit one of the remedies listed, then *Phytolacca* can be given while help is sought from an experienced homeopathic practitioner.

Phytolacca is almost specific for mastitis and will help about 50% of women suffering from inflamed breasts. It is needed for breastfeeding women so often that many practitioners make the mistake of giving it routinely. As with *Chamomilla* for teething babies (which will only help about 50% of teething babies), *Phytolacca* will primarily help those women whose mastitis fits the *Phytolacca* symptom picture.

The prescribing guidelines outlined in Appendix B should be used to select a potency and dosage protocol.

With an acute or recent mastitis, improvement should be relatively speedy with symptoms resolving within a day or two at the most.

Homeopathic remedies can safely be taken alongside conventional medications, as they both work on different levels; however, some women will want to try homeopathy first (if they can) especially if they are breastfeeding. Because the homeopathics are not acting on a physiologic or biochemical level, they cannot interact adversely with conventional medicines. Quite the contrary, since they are designed to stimulate the vital force of an individual they can only enhance a person's capacity to heal themselves—including their general ability to deal with the effects of other medications.

"SIDE EFFECTS"

Although homeopathic remedies are entirely nontoxic, it is possible to conduct an unintentional proving through the long term use of a homeopathic remedy that isn't needed or indicated. These "proving" symptoms will usually disappear on discontinuing the remedy.

Some individuals experience a slight worsening, or aggravation after their treatment. This usually occurs within the first 2 weeks of starting a constitutional remedy and is a good sign. Aggravations mostly do not last long, are manageable, and are usually accompanied by an increased sense of well-being. They are rare in the treatment of acute disease—such as mastitis.

MATERIA MEDICA

The homeopathic *materia medica* lists the symptom pictures of each remedy (as elicited in the provings and then confirmed through clinical experience). The professional homeopath works with a number of *materia medica*s compiled by different homeopaths, each grounded in the provings with additions that reflect their own personal experience. Many midwives new to homeopathy start out with Boericke's small but comprehensive *materia medica*, using it alongside Yingling's small but specific *materia medica* aimed solely at those working with pregnant and birthing women. See Appendix A.

From the vast amount of information ascertained, certain patterns emerge, and it is these patterns with which the homeopath becomes familiar. At first glance, remedies may seem to be inaccessible lists of apparently unrelated symptom data. The information has been organized as follows:

- The therapeutic (physical) symptoms relating to the breasts and nipples (ie, abscess, mastitis, lactation, etc)
- Any pertinent accompanying symptoms (ie, fever, exhaustion, headache)

- General symptoms (ie, appetite, thirst, and response to temperature)
- Emotional symptoms (ie, irritability, anxiety, weepiness, and so on)

When selecting a remedy, it is not necessary for all the symptoms to match, but the more that match the better. It is preferable if there is one from at least two or more of the above categories. Those new to homeopathy often make the mistake of giving a homeopathic remedy based on therapeutic or physical symptoms alone. These prescriptions are less reliable than those based on a larger picture, one that takes more of the person into account.

At first glance, the materia medica can seem difficult to approach, but with use, these listings come to life. Once they have been successfully matched with patients presenting with similar symptoms, they become unforgettable. It is not possible to memorize this information and that is why a small repertory, or list of symptoms, has been included as Appendix C to make this process of remedy selection for mastitis more accessible.

REPERTORY OF MASTITIS SYMPTOMS

A *homeopathic repertory* is an index of symptoms from the materia medica. The most important homeopath to systemize the vast amount of data from the materia medica was an American by the name of J. T. Kent (23). His repertory is still in use today, although computer programs are fast replacing books as a faster and easier method of accessing this information. Murphy's modern repertory (24) has translated Kent's somewhat archaic layout and language into something much more accessible and includes a separate section on pregnancy and birth. See Appendix A. It isn't possible to memorize the enormous number of symptoms listed in the remedies themselves, so a repertory provides an easy and quick reference guide. Appendix D presents a mini-repertory for mastitis symptoms; however, it does not address the general or emotional symptoms that may accompany this condition.

A repertory is used to cross reference symptoms in order to verify which remedies run through each of the symptoms chosen. For example, in a mastitis that is accompanied by fever and great exhaustion and when the axillae glands are swollen and the breasts are hard and hot, *Calcarea carbonica* is listed in each symptom. *Belladonna* and *Bryonia* are included with fever and hard, hot breasts, but are not in the symptom "with debility." *Mercurius* is listed in two of the four symptoms. These four remedies can now be cross-referenced in the materia medica to develop a fuller picture. It is important then to elicit and confirm any other symptoms—either general and/or emotional symptoms and any others pertaining to the mastitis itself—and match them to the

remedy that fits their whole picture best. With experience, and as this process and the remedies become more familiar, the repertory acts as a quick reminder.

CONCLUSION

A homeopathic remedy doesn't cure as such—it acts as a catalyst for healing. Homeopathy works rather like throwing a pebble into a pond: the prescriber's job is to throw that pebble into the middle of an individual's pond so that it sends out healing ripples to every part of that person. The correct homeopathic treatment not only alleviates symptoms of disease, but also brings about a sense of well-being.

Women have been especially eager to use homeopathy to help them with a wide variety of common complaints through puberty, menopause, and their child-bearing years. Conventional doctors struggle to help with dysmenorrhoea and other menstrual problems, including PMS, as well as the menopausal discomforts. Hormonal therapy can cause unpleasant side effects and leave women feeling not quite themselves. Although homeopathy cannot help all clients all of the time, those it does help experience a feeling of wellness and a return to their former vital selves that is most welcome.

Homeopathy is an inexpensive healing modality that can complement other therapies, including conventional medicine. It is an alternative discipline that resides at the edge of modern scientific belief symptoms. Having won the hearts of so many grateful patients, it deserves further investigation.

REFERENCES

1. Haehl R. Samuel Hahnemann: his life and work. London: Homeopathic Publishing, 1922.
2. Jonas WB, Jacobs J. Healing with homeopathy. New York: Warner Books, 1996.
3. Vithoulkas G. Homeopathy: medicine of the new man. New York: Thorsens, 1979.
4. Kleijnen J, Knipschild P, ter Riet G. Clinical trials of homeopathy. *BMJ* 1991;302:316–23.
5. Linde K, Clausius N, Ramirez G, et al. Are the clinical effects of homeopathy placebo effects? A meta-analysis of placebo-controlled trials. *Lancet* 1997;350:834.
6. Reilly DT, Taylor MA, Beattie NG, et al. Is evidence for homeopathy reproducible? *Lancet* 1994;344:1601–6.
7. Leary B. Cholera and homeopathy in the nineteenth century. *Br Homeopathic J* 1987;76:117–21.
8. Lo S-Y. Anomalous state of ice. *Mod Physics Lett B* 1996;10:909–19.
9. Quinn M. Are Ie crystals the missing link? *Homeopathic Links* 1998;11:126.
10. Conte RR, Berliocchi H, Lasne Y, Vernot G. Theory of high dilutions. Paris: Polytechnica, 1996.
11. Davenas E, Beauvais J, Amara J, Belon P, Benveniste J. Human basophil degranulation triggered by very dilute antiserum against IgE. *Nature* 1998;333:816–8.

12. Jacobs J, Jimenez LM, Gloyd SS, et al. Treatment of childhood diarrhea with homeopathic medicine: a randomized clinical trial in Nicaragua. *Pediatrics* 1994;93:719-25.
13. Egan J. Evaluation of a homeopathic treatment for subclinical mastitis. *Vet Rec* 1995;137:48.
14. Spranger J. Prophylaxis and therapy in ecological animal farming especially of mastitis in dairy cows corresponding to the guidelines. *Deutsche Tierärztliche Wochenschrift* 1988;105:321-3.
15. Day C. Clinical trials in bovine mastitis. *Br Homoeopathic* 1986;75:11-4.
16. Bellavite P, Signorini A. Homeopathy: a frontier in medical science. Berkeley (CA): North Atlantic Books, 1995.
17. Ullman D. The consumer's guide to homeopathy. New York: Tarcher/Putnum, 1996.
18. Kayne SB. Homeopathic pharmacy, an introduction and handbook. New York: Churchill Livingstone, 1997.
19. Hanafin MJ. An introduction to homeopathy. Presented at the ACNM Meeting, May 1998, San Francisco, CA.
20. Leckridge B. Homeopathy in primary care. New York: Churchill Livingstone, 1997.
21. Castro, M. Homeopathy for pregnancy, birth and your baby's first years. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
22. Vitoulkas, G. The science of homeopathy. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1980.
23. Kent JT. Repertory of the homeopathic materia medica. New Delhi, India: B. Jain Publishers, 1996.
24. Murphy R. Homeopathic medical repertory. Pagosa Springs (CO): Hahnemann Academy of North America, 1993.

APPENDIX A HOMEOPATHIC RESOURCES

Recommended Reference Materials

- Boericke W. Pocket manual of homeopathic materia medica. New Delhi, India: B. Jain Publishers, 1997 [reprint].
- Castro M. Homeopathy for pregnancy, birth and your baby's first year. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- Perko SJ. Homeopathy for the modern pregnant woman and her infant. San Antonio (TX): Benchmark Homeopathic Publications, 1997.
- Yingling WA. The accoucheur's emergency manual. New Delhi, India: B. Jain Publishers, 1994 [reprint].

HOMEOPATHIC ORGANIZATIONS

- Council for Homeopathic Certification (CHC)
1199 Sanchez Street, San Francisco, CA 94114
Phone: 408-789-7677; www.healthy.net/chc
The CHC offers a professional certification for all homeopaths, those who are unlicensed as well as those with licenses in another health care profession. The role of the CHC is to establish specific standards of competency for the profession and act as an umbrella organization for all homeopaths. It publishes a directory of certified practitioners who are entitled to use the designation CCH after their names.
- North American Society of Homeopaths (NASH)
1122 East Pike Street, Suite 1122, Seattle, WA 98122
Phone: 206-729-7000; Fax: 206-329-5684; e-mail: nashinfo@aol.com; www.homeopathy.org
NASH is the organization that represents a growing group of professional homeopaths. Most NASH members are not medically licensed, but have demonstrated the highest level of proficiency in homeopathic prescribing and therapeutics. Open to anyone interested in homeopathy, NASH publishes a quarterly newsletter, a highly respected annual journal, and a directory of registered homeopaths who are entitled to use the designation RSHom(NA).

- Homeopathic Academy of Naturopathic Physicians (HANP)
12132 SE Foster Place, Portland OR 97266
Phone: 503-761-3298; Fax: 503-762-1929
The HANP is the organization that certifies naturopathic physicians who practice homeopathy. The HANP publishes a quarterly, professional journal and a directory of certified practitioners who are entitled to use the designation DHANP.
- American Board of Homeotherapeutics (ABHT)
801 North Fairfax Street, Suite 306, Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: 703-548-7790; Fax: 703-548-7792
The ABHT certifies medical doctors who practice homeopathy and are then entitled to use the designation DHT.
- National Center for Homeopathy (NCH)
Phone: 703-548-7790; e-mail: nchinfo@igc.org; www.homeopathic.org
One of the oldest homeopathic organizations, the NCH is a nonprofit, grassroots, membership organization that promotes homeopathy through education (including introductory and professional seminars), research, study groups, and membership services. It publishes a monthly newsletter as well as an annual membership directory.
- Council on Homeopathic Education (CHE)
Clock Tower Building, 3 Main Street, Chatham, NY 12037
Phone: 518-392-7975; Fax: 518-392-6456; e-mail: teleosis@igc.apc.org; www.chedu.org
This organization is in the process of establishing formal accreditation for all homeopathy programs. On request, the CHE will send a list of the homeopathic educational programs (including schools and seminars) currently available in North America.

APPENDIX B GENERAL PRESCRIBING GUIDELINES

SELECTING A REMEDY

The first step is to gather as many symptoms as possible and identify any that are unique or unusual or marked. Then match as much of the patient's picture (including any unique symptoms) with a homeopathic remedy.

SELECTING A POTENCY

Generally, the lower potencies (ie, 6X, 6C, 12X, and 12C) are gentler and the higher potencies (ie, 30X, 30C, 200X and 200C) are deeper acting. The 30C is an ideal potency to start out with, and there are many homeopathic kits available in this potency—some have been tailored specifically for the midwife's special needs.

DOSAGE GUIDELINES

Remedies should be taken according to the urgency or seriousness of the complaint:

- One dose every 15–30 minutes if the complaint is *extremely serious*
- One dose every 1–2 hours if the complaint is *moderately serious*
- One dose every 4–8 hours if the complaint is *not an immediate cause for concern*

Ideally, no food or drink (apart from water) should be taken 5–10 minutes before and after taking a homeopathic remedy. Some homeopaths advise their patients to wait for longer (up to half an hour) and to avoid various substances (eg, coffee, menthol, and eucalyptus) while they are taking their remedies.

Remedies should be stopped once they have started to work; in other words, once there is a marked improvement, they must be stopped. A homeopathic medicine acts as a catalyst, stimulating the body to heal itself. Only the “minimum” dose or amount is needed to stimulate that healing response, and further doses are not necessary at this point. In essence, less really is more with homeopathy!

If a remedy helps and it is discontinued, and then the same symptoms return, it can be repeated—starting and stopping until there is significant and lasting improvement.

If six doses of a remedy have been taken and there has been very little or no improvement, then it may be the wrong remedy (or the incorrect potency). It is wise to seek advice from a professional homeopath if a remedy that is well indicated does not help at all or only alleviates symptoms temporarily. Midwives who are new to homeopathy should not attempt to treat symptoms that are recurring or long standing.

APPENDIX C MATERIA MEDICA FOR MASTITIS

APIS (Honey Bee)

Mastitis or breast abscess
The breasts are hard and swollen
The pains are burning and stinging and are much worse for touch and heat
The nipples may be inverted
Lactation: milk is slow to come in
Generally thirstless, warm-blooded and craves fresh air
Mother is restless and weepy and doesn't know why

ARNICA (Leopard's Bane)

Mastitis after an injury to the breast or after a prolonged labor
The pains are sore, bruised and much worse for touch and jarring movements
The nipples are sore, cracked and inflamed
The soft tissues may be generally bruised and overstrained after a prolonged labor
Mother says she feels OK (when she plainly isn't; ie, she refuses help and doesn't want to be touched or to discuss how she feels)

BELLADONNA (Deadly Nightshade)

Mastitis with fever, especially if it develops suddenly
The breasts are engorged—especially after the milk first comes in or after weaning
Breasts are red or have red streaks which radiate out from the nipples to the edge of the breast
Breasts feel hot and heavy and hard and are extremely sensitive to touch and jarring movements

The pains are throbbing or pulsating and come and go quickly
Lactation: breasts fill up with milk and it spurts out involuntarily (milk is “over-abundant”), or has difficulty building up milk supply
With the fever the skin is dry and radiates heat especially the head (limbs may be cooler)
Generally thirstless in spite of a dry mouth
Mother is generally restless and angry with the pains

BORAX (Sodium Baborate)

Breasts ache (and feel disagreeably empty) after nursing. The mother is obliged to compress the breast with the hand after nursing
Contractive pains in the opposite breast to the one the baby is nursing on
Nipples are sore and hot because of a thrush infection (baby may also have thrush in the mouth)
Mother feels generally anxious and irritable

BRYONIA (White Bryony)

Mastitis when milk first comes in (engorgement) or after weaning—with fever that is accompanied by a bursting feeling in the head
Breasts are swollen, stony hard (or have stony hard lumps), inflamed and heavy
Breasts are hot but pale and nipples are hard
The pains are stitching and are worse for the slightest motion. They may be better for firm pressure
Lactation: milk oozes out, or has difficulty building up milk supply
Complaints (mastitis and fever) develop slowly

Generally extremely thirsty but for large quantities at infrequent intervals

Mother feels extremely irritable and touchy, and wants to be left alone

CALCAREA CARBONICA (Oystershell)

Mastitis/breast abscess in women who are low in vitality and feel generally debilitated

With fever and sweating (especially around the head, especially at night)

Breasts are inflamed, hard, and feel hot

Breasts remain small in spite of breastfeeding—or become even smaller than normal

Nipples are hard, hot, and swollen and ulcerated

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Glands may be swollen (axillae and elsewhere), especially with fever

Feels the cold (chilly) and may also be anemic

Feels generally weakened from trying to breastfeed and health deteriorates

Mother feels melancholy and also anxious—especially about her health and her children

CHAMOMILLA (German Chamomile)

Mastitis after anger

Breasts are hot and hard and sensitive to touch

Pains are drawing and may be severe (unbearable)

Nipples are sore, hot, and cracked and tender to the touch

Lactation: milk is bloody or mixed with pus with mastitis. Difficulty building milk supply

Mother feels angry, especially with the pains

CROTON TIGLIUM (Croton Oil Seeds)

Breasts abscess threatens and is often accompanied by a sore throat

Breasts are hard and inflamed

Very sore nipples, with excruciating pain running from the nipple to the scapula and back on nursing. Pain only while nursing

Nipples may itch and are so sore and sensitive she cannot bear even the touch of clothes

LAC CANINUM (Dog's Milk)

Mastitis is often accompanied by a sore throat

Breasts are engorged, sore, and tender, full of hard lumps

Pains are constant and are worse for the slightest jarring movement (has to hold breasts firmly when going up or down stairs)

Right ovary may be painful at the same time (with sharp, darting pains)

Constant pain in the nipples

LAC DEFHORATUM (Skimmed Milk)

Lactation: great difficulty building up milk supply without any other symptoms (ie, of pain, soreness or inflammation). This remedy is a specific for increasing milk supply

Breasts (shrink) decrease in size

Mother may be weepy, depressed, chilly and constipated—and allergic to milk

MERCURIUS SOLUBILIS/VIV (Ammonio-Nitrate of Mercury)

Mastitis/breast abscess with fever and swollen glands

Breasts are hard, sore, and inflamed

Nipples are sore, raw and hard. They become cracked and ulcerated

Lactation: has difficulty building up milk supply

Discharges smell strongly (urine, saliva, and sweat, etc)

Sensitive to extremes of temperature: hates both heat and cold

Burning thirst with easy, profuse sweating

PHELLANDRIUM AQUATICUM (Water Dropwort)

Intolerable pain in the milk ducts after nursing, which causes great distress and hysterical weeping and a sudden "loss of strength"

Pain in the nipples as the child latches on, which radiate inwards and backwards to the scapula, the sacrum, and down into the abdomen

PHOSPHORIC ACID

Nursing causes a deterioration of health (no inflammations)

Lactation: has great difficulty building up milk supply

Pains in breasts are sharp, itching, and pricking (like flea bites)

Feels generally weakened from trying to breastfeed and health deteriorates

Mother feels depressed and apathetic (indifferent to everyone and everything)

PHOSPHORUS

Mastitis/breast abscess or threatened abscess/inflammation in women who are low in vitality and feel generally debilitated

Large, hard nodule in breast—the size of an egg

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in

Nipples are sore and cracked

With cramps in stomach from nursing

Very thirsty for ice cold water

With flu-like symptoms: feels exhausted, achy, stiff, and feverish (low grade fever) with chills

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

Lactation: has too much milk after milk comes in or has difficulty building up milk supply

APPENDIX D
A HOMEOPATHIC REPERTORY FOR MASTITIS

Mastitis/Breast Abscess

Develops slowly	Bryonia
Develops suddenly	Belladonna
After injury to breast	Arnica
After prolonged labor	Arnica
With fever	Belladonna, Bryonia, Calcarea carbonica, Mercurius solubilis/viv, Phytolacca
And sweating	Calcarea carbonica, Silica
And swollen glands	Calcarea carbonica, Mercurius solubilis/viv
And bursting feeling in the head	Bryonia
With flu-like symptoms	Phytolacca
With sore throat	Lac caninum
With debility (low vitality)	Calcarea carbonica, Phosphoric acid, Phosphorus, Silica, Sulphur
With sudden weakness	Phellandrium
When milk comes in	Belladonna, Bryonia, Pulsatilla
After weaning	Belladonna, Bryonia, Pulsatilla

Breasts

Engorged	Belladonna, Bryonia, Lac caninum
Hard	Apis, Belladonna, Bryonia, Calcarea carbonica, Chamomilla, Croton tiglium, Mercurius solubilis/viv, Pulsatilla
Heavy	Belladonna, Bryonia
Hot	Belladonna, Bryonia, Calcarea carbonica, Chamomilla
Inflamed	Bryonia, Calcarea carbonica, Croton tiglium, Mercurius solubilis/viv, Phytolacca
Itchy	Sulphur
Lumpy	Lac caninum, Phytolacca, Silica
Full of hard lumps	Lac caninum, Silica
Large, hard nodule	Phosphorus
Pale	Bryonia
Red	Belladonna, Sulphur
Red streaks radiating	Belladonna
Small (or shrink in size)	Calcarea carbonica, Lac defloratum
Swollen	Apis, Belladonna, Bryonia, Pulsatilla

Breast Pains

Aching after nursing	Borax
Empty feeling after nursing	Borax
Bruised	Arnica
Burning	Apis
Changeable	Pulsatilla
Constant	Lac caninum
Contractive	Borax
In the opposite breast	Borax
Drawing	Chamomilla
Itching	Phosphoric acid
Pulsating	Belladonna
Severe	Chamomilla, Phellandrium, Phytolacca
After nursing	Phellandrium
Sharp, pricking	Phosphoric acid, Silica
Sore	Arnica, Lac caninum, Mercurius solubilis/viv, Pulsatilla
Stinging	Apis
Stitching	Bryonia

Breast Pains (continued)

Tender	Lac caninum
Throbbing	Belladonna
Worse for	
Heat	Apis
Jarring movements	Arnica, Belladonna, Lac caninum
Slightest movement	Bryonia
Touch	Apis, Arnica, Belladonna, Chamomilla
Better for firm pressure	Bryonia
Radiating to whole body	Phytolacca
Radiating to different parts of the body	Pulsatilla
With pains in uterus or back	Silica
With darting pain in ovary	Lac caninum
With stomach cramps	Phosphorus
With increase of lochia flow	Silica

Lactation

Difficulty building up supply	Belladonna, Bryonia, Calcarea carbonica, Chamomilla, Lac defloratum, Mercurius solubilis/viv, Phosphoric acid, Phytolacca, Pulsatilla, Silica, Sulphur
Milk slow to come in	Apis
Milk "over-abundant"	Belladonna, Calcarea carbonica, Phosphorus, Phytolacca
Oozes or spurts involuntarily	Belladonna, Bryonia
Milk is bloody	Chamomilla
Milk is mixed with pus	Chamomilla

Nipples

Bleeding	Sepia, Silica, Sulphur
Burning	Sulphur
Constantly painful	Lac caninum
Cracked	Arnica, Chamomilla, Mercurius solubilis/viv, Phosphorus, Phytolacca, Pulsatilla, Sepia, Silica, Sulphur
Excruciatingly painful	Croton tiglium, Phellandrium, Silica
Hard	Bryonia, Calcarea carbonica, Mercurius solubilis/viv
Hot	Borax, Calcarea carbonica, Chamomilla
Inflamed	Arnica, Calcarea carbonica, Silica
Inverted	Apis, Silica
Itching	Croton tiglium, Sepia
Raw	Mercurius solubilis/viv, Phytolacca
Sore	Arnica, Borax, Chamomilla, Croton tiglium, Mercurius solubilis/viv, Phosphorus, Phytolacca, Pulsatilla, Sepia, Sulphur
Tender to touch	Chamomilla, Croton tiglium
Radiates to scapula/back	Croton tiglium, Phellandrium
Radiates to uterus/abdomen	Phellandrium
Only while nursing	Croton tiglium
Thrush infection of nipples	Borax
Ulcerated	Calcarea carbonica, Mercurius solubilis/viv