

THE HOMOEOPATHIC TREATMENT OF CHOLERA

A HISTORICAL STUDY

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The history of the homoeopathic treatment of cholera starts with its very discoverer—Samuel Hahnemann who took up its treatment with the help of his homoeopathic medicines and created a revolt against the existing method of treatment of that time which consisted of blood-letting, leeches, cupping etc., as it was found that the blood vessels of cholera casualties were gorged with blood in the right ventricle of the heart and the vena cava, also in the lungs, liver etc. This was a period of very scientific insanity and the poor victim persisted in dying. Disgusted by this turmoil in the field of treatment of cholera, Hahnemann denounced blood letting and it was his intuitive faculty of apprehending that made Hahnemann to ever make the most remarkable hit or that ever was made in medicine i. e. his recommendation of camphor in cholera. He could understand the type of disease by its description only and found its resemblance in the action of a drug. He laid down three main remedies that would be curative in that disease; in early and simple cases camphor; in later stages with excessive cramping, cuprum or with excessive evacuations and profuse cold sweat, veratrum album. This is remarkable also historically as homoeopathic system in general and the treatment of cholera by it were put to test in hospital under the inspection of a despotic government.

In the year 1831, the cholera first invaded Europe proceeding from the East, where the delta of the Ganges is said to be the seat of cholera where it is known to have existed in 1629. In 1817 it spread in India and committed terrible destructions. In July, 1821 it had reached Arabia and in 1823 touched the Georgian frontier of Russia. From there it extended towards North and in July 1831 to St. Petersburg and Constadt and in October to Berlin, Vienna and Hamburg and in October 1831 it struck Sunderland, England.

The followers of homoeopathic school began to treat this fell cholera according to the principles of their system which was safe, sure and gentle. Dr. Petersen of Pensa treated from July 9th to 30th, 68 cases, of whom 14 died. He used ipecac, Chamomilla and Arsenic. Dr. Arnold of Russia treated cholera cases successfully. Dr. Schubert of Liepsia in 1830 recommended veratrum, ipecac, arsenic and chamomilla. Dr. Preu of Nuremberg recommended arsenic and veratrum.

Dr. Bakedy a homoeopath of Raab in Hungary treated 154 cases of real cholera and lost only 6, while of 1501 cases treated allopathically, 640 died, a remarkable gain over the allopaths.

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Dr. Seider in Russia treated 109 cases homoeopathically and lost only 23. Of 93 treated by allopathy 69 died. Thomas Count Nadasdy from Daka said in his report that of 161 cholera patients at Daka to whom spirits of camphor were administered only 14 died who had called for assistance in the last stages.

In Asterwetingen, near Magdeburg, of 800 inhabitants 80 were attacked. Without a physician they treated each other by camphor and cold water according to Hahnemann's instructions and 60 of the patients recovered.

Hahnemann after he had studied his Sibylline books, sent, on the 10th of September 1831, a note to the editor of a homoeopathic journal saying that "every one, the instant any of his friends take ill of cholera, must immediately treat them with camphor, and not wait for medical aid, which, even if good, would be too late." It will be observed that, in the adoption of camphor for the treatment of cholera, there was no violence done to the feelings or prejudices either of medical practitioners or of druggists. Hahnemann advised that it should be given several drops at a time for a dose.

In the same year 1831, Dr. F. F. Quin along with Dr. Gerstel and two surgeons was engaged in the treatment of cholera in Moravia and the nearby places of Tischnowitz. He wrote his experience of the efficacy of camphor to Hahnemann who wrote back to Quin; "I am much obliged to you for the details of your researches upon the nature of the cholera and of the appropriate homoeopathic treatment. You are right in the opinion you express, and it is one borne out by my own observations, that the worst form of cholera is presented by cases of degenerated chlorine..... I have already heard from Dr. Gerstel of your attack of the epidemic, and your cure by camphor. I congratulate you on your restoration, and I render thanks to Almighty God for having preserved you to give aid to unfortunate victims who so sadly require your assistance. Your success in the treatment of cholera is more remarkable from your ignorance of the Moravian language....."

"May the gracious God conduct you safely to your own home, and bless your efforts to instruct your countrymen in the art of healing in conformity with the laws of nature.

Your sincere and affectionate friend

Coethen, 4th February, 1832.

SAMUEL HAHNEMANN".

The Chief Magistrate of the Tischnowitz M. Dieble sent Dr. Quin the following letter:

"At the time of Dr. Quin's arrival here for the purpose of observing the epidemic of cholera, it had reached its greatest malignancy in the villages that surround the town and castle; this was shown, not only by the numbers who fell ill, but by the shortness of the interval between the commencement of the attack and its fatal termination—often only a few hours. It happened that at the time Dr. Gerstel and surgeons Han-

ush and Linhart were all three confined to bed by illness." These were the only medical men in the place. "Although you yourself, upon your arrival, were attacked with cholera, you nevertheless, during your convalescence, with the most humane zeal, undertook the treatment of those ill of cholera during the period when Dr. Gerstel was obliged to keep to his bed, and this you did with such success that not one patient died. The authorities feel themselves under the obligation to make their respectful acknowledgements to you for the assistance you afforded, with such generous humanity, to the inhabitants of this district.

ERNEST DIEBLE, Chief Magistrate.

Tischnowitz, 30th November, 1831".

The following table carried the letter just quoted.

	Inhabitants.	Cases of Cholera	Cured.	Died.
	6671	680	540	140
Under Allopathic treatment		331	229	102
Under Homoeopathic treatment		278	251	27
With Camphor alone		71	60	11

The same cholera epidemic advanced upon Vienna. Among the hospitals ready to receive cholera patients, there was one hospital started by the Sisters of Charity of the order of St. Vincent de Paul. In this hospital the physician Dr. Maychofer was very much impressed to hear the efficacy of homoeopathic medicines and he used them only partially.

In 1835, Dr. Fleischmann was appointed physician to this hospital and in the year 1836 when the cholera returned, he decided to give the treatment as recommended by Hahnemann, a fair trial. He started his treatment under the observation of a Government Inspector. The total number of patients treated was 732 out of which 488 recovered and 244 died. As per the desire of the government he prepared a report of his observation and presented personally to Count Kolowrat. Mr. Wilde who went through the report said,

"Upon comparing the report made of the treatment of cholera in this hospital with that of the same epidemic in other hospitals in Vienna at a similar time it appeared that, while two-thirds of those treated by Dr. Fleischmann recovered, two-thirds of those treated by the ordinary methods in the other hospitals died"

Since the year 1818, the practice of Homocopathy had been forbidden to Austrian physicians and the fetters were dismissed at one blow as Dr. Fleischmann writes:

“In 1836 the cholera broke out, and the Hospital of the Sisters of Charity was required by the Government to be opened for cholera patients. A requisition was made to me to undertake their treatment. I gladly accepted the charge, but previously obtained from Count Kolowrat, the Home Minister of the day, a permission to employ Homoeopathy openly in the hospital. Out of 732 of the patients 488 were cured and 244 died. When the epidemic was over, I prepared a report upon its treatment. This report I presented to the Minister, and I petitioned at the same time for the abolition of the prohibitions against the practice of Homoeopathy, which had very much fallen into disuse. Very shortly afterwards, there appeared an ordinance, signed by the Emperor granting to every duly qualified physician the right of freely practising according to the Homoeopathic method. Thus, at one blow, were struck off the fetters which had for eighteen years confined the Homoeopathic physicians in Austria. From that time, young physicians began to study the new system more, and to attend the hospital. The number of pupils so increased, that on account of want of room they had to be limited; and there is scarcely a province in Europe where there is not some one Homoeopathic physician now in practice, who first learned to appreciate the truth by seeing its results in my hospital.”

Wylde in his work, ‘Austria and its Institutions,’ affirms, that during the prevalence of Asiatic Cholera in Vienna in the year 1836, the mortality in the Homoeopathic hospital was 33 per cent, contrasted with 66 in the general. In London, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and Newcastle, during the prevalence of Cholera in 1849 the comparative mortality was about the same, as appears from Dr. Macloughlin’s report. He was an allopathic physician to the Government, and one of the inspectors of the Board of Health, and says: “I saw many cases that must have sunk under any other than Homoeopathic treatment; and should it be the will of Providence to afflict me with Cholera, I would rather be in the hands of an Homoeopathic than an Allopathic adviser.” His report was shamefully suppressed, until demanded by the House of Commons.

The cholera statistics of all countries of Europe where there were homoeopathic physicians prove Hahnemann to the hilt. It will be found interesting to note that the medicine which was started to be given in cholera at the time of Hahnemann continues to be effective in that disease till today and it is further interesting to note that to this day the spirits of camphor of the chemists bear Rubini’s name—Dr. Rubini of Naples who was a homoeopath and who obtained amazing results in Italy during cholera epidemic.

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SUMMARY

Hahnemann created a revolt by denouncing the then existing method of blood letting for treating cholera and by recommending camphor. From 1831 cholera first entered and gradually spread in Europe from the East. Followers of Homeopathy treated cholera with great success while the results of the cases treated allopathically were far less successful.

सारांश

हैजे का होम्योपैथिक उपचार—एक ऐतिहासिक अध्ययन

ले० नन्दराज

हैजे की चिकित्सा में उपयुक्त तत्कालीन रक्तमोक्षण की पद्धति का बहिष्कार कर तथा कपूर के प्रयोग की संस्तुतिकर हैनिमान ने चिकित्सा जगत में एक क्रान्ति उत्पन्न कर दी थी। सन् १८३१ में हैजा पहली बार पाया गया था जो शनैः शनैः सारे यूरोप में फैल गया। होम्योपैथी चिकित्सा पद्धति के अनुयायियों ने हैजे की अभूतपूर्व सफल चिकित्सा की थी इसके विपरीत एलोपैथिक चिकित्सा के परिणाम सफलता की दृष्टि से सर्वथा असन्तोष जनक थे।