

# THE HOMEOPATHIC APPROACH TO HEADACHES

## *Full Circle Healing*

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### **Introduction**

Several precipitating factors may contribute to headaches occurring, including head injuries, hypertension, tumors, as well as many diseases of the eyes, ears, nose, throat, and teeth. The majority of headaches are said to be the result of muscle tension, migraine, pressure on cervical vertebrae, or head pain for which no structural cause can be found but which are often associated with stress, and how one reacts emotionally to it..

While treatment of headaches is determined by diagnosis, it is most often directed at the pain, in the form of pharmaceuticals. Once a diagnosis has been made, everyone with that diagnosis is treated more or less the same way, with individual distinctions being mostly overlooked. Should the person suffering from headaches also have other conditions such as eczema, or diarrhea, or depression, these conditions are treated separately, with no correlation made.

### **The Whole Person**

Homeopathic medicine views headaches in the context of the whole person, physical as well as emotional. In the homeopathic understanding of health and disease, headaches and other symptoms are viewed as a coping strategy, a defense response that the body produces. Painkillers not only mask the symptoms, they interfere with our body's method of coping!

Homeopathic headache-management requires that we understand our headaches in a broader context, namely as a reflection of our defense mechanism in action. Our intent is not to oppose the headaches with pain killers, but to help the body develop **resistance** to our headaches. Homeopathic theory implies that to cure our condition, including head aches, we must develop immunity. By enhancing vitality, a well chosen homeopathic medicine helps the person with headaches become less vulnerable to what is often an inherited weakness that results in a predisposition toward headaches (for a more complete explanation of the principles on which homeopathic medicine is based, please read my article, *"The Patient, Not the Condition"*).

The following cases from my practice demonstrate how three different people suffering from a similar condition differ one from another both in temperament, and in the manifestation of their headaches, and how we can use these differences to arrive that respects individuality.

## **Case 1: Decent People Don't Show Anger**

John, a 29-year-old computer analyst, has been suffering from migraines since childhood. His headaches used to recur every few months. Recently, however, he has been suffering daily from these overwhelmingly painful headaches, which are made worse with any activity, so that he can no longer exercise. Moreover, he has developed food sensitivities, which aggravate his condition. As a consequence, he is fearful of eating almost anything, and has lost 10 lbs. in the past two months. Lean to begin with, John can't afford to lose weight, and is worried about where his health is headed.

Asked if anything unusual occurred two months ago that may have contributed to this crisis, John finds it difficult to believe that his emotions should have anything to do with it. He describes a stressful relationship with his mother-in-law, whom he calls dominating, and verbally abusive. He feels particularly angered at what he perceives as his mother-in-law's abusive behavior towards his wife, and at how helpless and hurt his wife has been in her relationship with her mom.

Although married for several years, John has managed successfully to keep his mother-in-law out of his life. His wife is welcome to visit her mother if she wants, as long as he is not expected to go with her, which has helped him to keep his anger at bay. However, in the past two months, a death in his wife's family has forced a more frequent exposure to his mother-in-law.

As a result, he has felt a lot of anger, an emotion with which he has particular difficulty. He expresses it this way: "I don't like to be uncivil. I'm a decent person. Decent people don't show their anger. So, although I hate my mother-in-law, I remain polite." Meanwhile, his anger is at boiling point, and he feels himself shaking from it! He even has dreams, of beating up his mother-in-law or of hearing a word that starts with the letters 'SCR.' On waking, he realizes he is dreaming of the word 'scream', which is what he would like to do at his mother-in-law, but what his civilized nature suppresses.

I ask him how he learned to cope with his anger the way he does. He thinks it stemmed from his childhood. He grew up feeling dominated by his father. "My father had high expectations. No matter how hard I tried, I could never live up to what my father expected of me. Once I got older, we fought a lot. I'm tired of fighting now."

## ANALYSIS

What is the above patient suffering from? On the surface, it looks like any other case of migraine. Underneath, however, we see suppressed anger/rage as his main dilemma. Whatever the homeopathic medicine, it must be known to produce this kind of inability to cope with anger, when given to healthy volunteers.

In the proving of *Staphisagria* (commonly known as ‘palmated larkspur,’ a type of delphinium flower frequently found in our gardens), the following symptoms were experienced by the provers:

- Sensitivity, oversensitive to rudeness
- Indignation
- Wounded honor
- Fear of anger
- Suppressed anger
- Fear of losing self-control
- Injustice, an overwhelming sensitivity to
- Hatred, of those who have offended
- Headaches from anger and grief

Immediately after the prescription, and for the next two weeks, John experienced no headaches. During this period, each time he felt on the verge of a headache, a dose of the medicine would alleviate any further problem. His headache relapsed during a confrontation with his mother-in-law. After a stronger dose of the medicine was prescribed, John’s headaches stopped. He has been headache-free for over a year, and has needed no more homeopathy! Equally important, he has felt more comfortable in expressing his anger. He no longer suffers from allergies, and he has regained his normal weight.

## CASE 2: Insecurity & loneliness

Jane, a 46-year-old technician, suffers daily from frontal headaches. Her headaches began at the age of 12, when her menstrual cycle started. Then they would occur only once/month, at the time of her period. Frequency has increased in the past several years, ever since a man she was in love with committed suicide. She has lived alone ever since, and often feels acutely lonely.

Her headaches are now daily. Because of the pain, if she could, she would be lying down all the time. She cannot afford this, especially since she recently bought a house in the country, and must work overtime to pay the bills.

Jane comes from an abusive family background. Her father was verbally and physically abusive towards her and especially towards her mother. As a child, she used to feel insecure. To this day, the time she feels most secure is in her own home, “my shelter from the cruelties of the outside world.”

She tends to be a loner, though, as mentioned earlier, she feels lonely. She worries that people will notice how vulnerable she feels. Her move to a country home was based partly on avoiding people, and partly on wanting to be closer to nature, which has a soothing effect.

Early in life, Jane took on the roll of protecting her mother. Throughout her life, she has taken care not to upset her father, to prevent him from taking his anger out on her mother. To this day, she feels very burdened by her parents’ relationship: “I carry the weight of my family.”

She is sensitive to being criticized. If confronted by authoritarian men, though she keeps a courageous external appearance, she wants to break down and cry. “Growing up, my father often put me down, calling me ‘stupid’, making me feel worthless.”

## **ANALYSIS**

What struck me about Jane’s story was how courageously she had learned to cope with her insecurities. Raised in fear, she has created stability and security for herself, purchasing a home in the country, far from people, even at the expense of her loneliness.

To be homeopathic, whatever medicine I chose had to be associated with the kind of insecurity Jane has experienced throughout her life. **Calcarea carbonica** (made from the oyster shell, the external covering known for its toughness, inside which is protected the extremely soft and vulnerable oyster) has an affinity to this kind of vulnerability. In the proving of Calc-carb, many symptoms were elicited. Pertinent to this case were the following.

- Ailments from grief
- Headache from grief
- Ailments from mortification.
- Anxiety about one’s family
- Fear of being observed, of having their emotional vulnerability revealed to others
- An aversion to company, with a desire to live in the country
- Loneliness
- Headache during menses

Jane's headaches were better within 2 weeks of the homeopathic prescription. During her menstrual cycle, her headache relapsed for one day. Then, a whole month elapsed without a headache, again relapsing, but more mildly for one day with the onset of her next menses. This pattern repeated itself for the next several months, each time with lesser intensity. Each relapse required that the homeopathic medicine be repeated. Eventually, the headaches stopped entirely, and she's been headache free for the past year. Like John, she has no further need for homeopathy. Her energy has improved, as has her attitude. She has felt more confident, going out dancing on a weekly basis, something she had not done in years. She now has plenty of friends, and her loneliness is a thing of the past

### **CASE 3: Excess Responsibility and Guilt**

Mary, a 43-year-old marketing research analyst, has suffered from monthly migraines for the past 20 years. They started shortly after a tragic automobile accident, in which her fiancé was killed.

Her headaches are worse with changes of weather, especially from hot to cold. They are worse with noise and light. They last a few days, during which time she is out of commission. She cannot drive or work when she has her headaches, and they prevent her from sleeping. She paces the floor all night long during her migraines.

Beside migraines, she also suffers from night-sweats, ever since she gave birth 16 years ago.

Since the death of her fiancé, she has had difficulty participating in the pleasures of life. She keeps a distance from her loved ones, for fear they too will die.

She is also experiencing work stress, which concerns job security. "It's not for myself I'm worried about, but for my staff. I feel for all of them. They're all worried about losing their job." She empathizes so much that she cannot relax. Although the problem has to do with the company downsizing, she feels personally responsible, as if she has failed her staff.

To cope, she piles on more work, never stopping her working; as if this will spare her from the guilt she suffers. Between stress at home, and work stress, she has no time for herself, and often feels suicidal depressed. For her, life is too serious. "I've forgotten how to play, how to experience the lighter side of life. It's as if I can't give myself permission to have fun."

She has a recurring dream of saving a child who has fallen through ice, and nearly losing her life in the act. She feels responsible for the child's near-fatal accident, and also a lack of gratitude from others for having saved it . . . "a thankless job."

## **ANALYSIS**

The central feeling in this case is an overwhelming sense of responsibility, coupled with a long history of grief. It seems as if her survival depended on taking on more responsibility, which, to her, never seems to be enough. Otherwise, she feels guilty, and a failure.

In the proving of *Aurum* (otherwise known as gold), some of the symptoms produced in healthy volunteers were:

- Grief, and a deep sense of sadness
- Excessive feeling of being duty-bound
- Industriousness, created by a feeling of guilt over having neglected their duty
- A feeling of failure in everything they undertake
- Headaches during changes in weather, from warm to cold
- Headaches from grief

For three weeks after *Aurum* was prescribed, Mary's depression became more acute. Her sadness increased, as did her feeling of being a failure. During this time, she did a lot of crying, reliving a lot of her old grief. On the other hand, her headaches stopped within one week of the prescription, as did her night-sweats!

Not until the second month into the treatment did she realize that she was not only feeling better physically, but that she felt "clean" emotionally too, as if her previous three weeks had been a "detoxification" of her emotional depression. Since then, she has started enjoying herself more, going out socializing with friends. Her guilt has improved, and she feels less "shoulds" in her life, and more relaxation.

Over a year later, she continues to be headache-free, and needs no more homeopathy. She says, "I was so skeptical about ever getting better, and about homeopathy's ability to help. It's too good to be true!"

## **CONCLUSION**

Homeopathic medicine really does at times seem too good to be true; a gentle and effective holistic approach which, when used properly, has no harmful side effects!! When tailored to the individual, it can provide all-round, long-term relief for people who would otherwise be sentenced to a lifetime of suffering and medication. It is only effective when prescribed accurately, and is accurate only when based on a thorough understanding of the person with the condition. Only then does it stimulate our own defense mechanism, the most powerful, yet least recognized (being the least glamorous) medical tool at our disposal.

When approached holistically, symptoms provide a glimpse into a person's unique way of coping. As my colleague Robin Logan so aptly puts it, "holistic medicine should mean more than 'treating everything'. It does not simply infer the application of a separate therapy, or in the case of homeopathy a different remedy, for every individual complaint. Nor is it sufficient to define holism as an approach that addresses the mind, body, and spirit of the person. In its deepest sense...we recognize the need to heal mind, body, and spirit and pay attention to all the patient's symptoms, but additionally *perceive the inter-relatedness of all aspects of the person and seek to make connections between seemingly disparate signs and symptoms.* Good homeopathy takes into consideration the inner world of the patient, attempting to make sense of their emotional make-up and its often-important part in the disease process. (From 'The Homeopathic Approach to Eczema')."