



Epidemics Revisited: The 2007-2008 Influenza Epidemic

I am writing this short note to first wish you all a Happy New Year, and sending you the hope that all your wishes come true.

As is common, in this season of joy and merrymaking, people are getting sick with the flu. I have been following this flu for 2 months now. I am going to keep this short and to the point. I am making the assumptions that you have read the **Letters** that refer to epidemics and that you have been part of this group that has received the Influenza updates for the past 7 years. With this assumption, I am forgoing all of the philosophical elements related to these thoughts. If you need to, review the past Epidemics updates and especially Herscu Letters # 33-38 on Epidemics. However, please do not take these thoughts out of context. Follow the descriptions delineated over and again in previous Updates.

The current Influenza and Influenza-like-illness is currently characterized by three basic remedy pictures, at this point: *Phosphoric acid*, *Phosphorus*, and *Sulphur*. The differential is as follows:

When the main symptom, the predominant presentation is intense weakness, and weariness, where the patient is totally out of energy, then *Phosphoric acid* seems to be the remedy of choice. I should add the differentiation with *Gelsemium* here. The *Phosphoric acid* patient is weak, has loose stools, is dehydrated, and develops a easy tendency towards a cough. In fact the ease of this cough to turn to pneumonia is why I am writing this note now. The patients' fevers run around 101-103. Most interestingly, the classic flat emotions that the remedy is known for is also found, flat all the way to feeling depressed.

When weakness and fatigue is not the presenting symptom, then *Phosphorus* seems to be of benefit. Here the symptoms will be similar to *Bryonia*. The patient is extremely

dehydrated, with the lips dry and cracked. The fever is high 102-104. The cough is severe and painful, and may also lead to pneumonia. Interestingly enough, the lung fields most impacted are the bottom fields.

Sulphur fits in the story in two ways at this point. First, some of the *Phosphoric acid* and the *Phosphorus* patients needed *Sulphur* to finally get over the influenza. And second, it looks like the *genus epidemicus* is shifting towards *Sulphur* in the last week or so. This remedy is uniquely warm-blooded, as opposed to the three others.

In all three cases, the patient needing one of these remedies will be very thirsty. The *Phosphoric acid* will be thirsty for juice and have loose stools; the *Sulphur* patient will have excoriation around the anus.

As you may recall, many patients during last year's epidemic responded well to *Antimonium tartaricum*. It was a bear of a time, for those that got sick. In this particular year, we are having a more widespread effect, though many are having lighter cases, where the underlying constitutional remedy is all they need. Please review your past Letters to remind you how to tell the difference and do not routinely give one of the above described remedies; take a good case and prescribe for the whole patient. Keep your patients safe, do all the things you are supposed to, but also consider one of these remedies.

I will send a slightly fuller description of what has been occurring, but I would also love to hear from you. Have you been treating the flu? Have these remedies shown up in your practice? Did you run into the problem of trying to differentiate *Phosphorus* from *Bryonia* and *Gelsemium* from *Phosphoric acid*?

Until next time,

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