



For Members

from *Homeopathy Today* December 2002

Never well since the flu

by Amy Rothenberg, ND, DHANP



Elaine first came to see me in the fall of 1992. She had been sick for eight years, she said, ever since a bad case of the flu. In the winter of 1985 she had had the worst case of flu imaginable: fever, body aches, sore throat, utter exhaustion, and seemingly endless amounts of mucus. She'd spent weeks in bed, trying many over-the-counter and home remedies to little avail. She crawled her way back to functionality, but ever since that time she had been plagued with numerous health problems.

I have more than a few patients who have developed chronic complaints after a bout with the flu. In the course of their healing via homeopathy, some of these patients go back through a flu-like episode; others do not. Sometimes their current symptoms are similar to those that they had when they had the flu—and sometimes not. In Elaine's case, her symptoms were mostly different from the symptoms she had with her original flu.

Sinus infection and zero energy

Elaine said she had a constant, chronic, low-grade sinus infection, terribly bad breath, frequent headaches, a hoarse voice, and zero energy. She told me that she used to be an energetic and upbeat person but that since her bad case of the flu, she had lost much of her enthusiasm for life. She is a stay-at-home mom who used to love the job. Now she felt unable to offer the creative touch to homemaking or motherhood. She merely got through the day, feeding and clothing her three children.

Understanding every symptom

As any homeopath would, I asked her to describe each of her above-mentioned complaints so that I could understand how she experienced them. It is not enough for the homeopath to hear "sinusitis." We must know: Which side? What does the pain feel like (burning, stabbing, pressing)? Is there anything that makes the pain better (pressure, hot application, cold application)? Or is there anything that makes the pain worse (going outdoors, motion, stooping, etc.)? There is no such thing as a simple symptom to the homeopath—we seek to understand each and every symptom in all its glory. New patients sometimes are at a loss for answers to some of our questions, but as they get the hang of visiting their homeopath, they learn what kind of information is not only valued, but essential.

After gleaning that information from Elaine about her main complaints, I also wanted to see her physical symptoms in the context of the rest of her overall health; I needed to understand about her digestion, urination, sleep, musculoskeletal system, respiration, skin, menstrual cycle, etc. This "review of systems" offers the homeopath a wonderful opportunity to scan through the person's health history, to turn up any problem areas that may have gone unremembered by the patient.

As it turned out, Elaine had had a terrible problem with constipation since her bout with the flu; she could go days without a bowel movement, and there was often mucus in her stool. In addition, she complained of calluses on her feet, and her nails broke and chipped with little provocation. Her hair was thin, fell out freely, and she described it as "limp and lackluster."

The homeopath also seeks to know the general physical aspects of their patient. Elaine was very chilly, wore a hat except in summer, and though she was so cold, she sweat easily, especially on her feet. She had no particular food cravings or aversions, but was partial year-round to warm drinks.

Observing her demeanor

As I moved through her interview, I observed Elaine to be a quiet, reserved woman with a carefulness about her. She chose her words intentionally and did not embellish her answers. She was soft-spoken and receding in her manner. I mentioned this observation and she agreed, "Yes, I don't take up much space in my family, I'm the peacemaker, I don't like discord. I am insecure and often feel inferior to those around me. I apologize constantly, even if it's not my fault."

Since her bout with the flu, her whole demeanor had shifted, she told me. She felt overly dependent on her husband, which made her feel weak and unable to fend for herself. She often became overwhelmed with the role of taking care of the children and keeping house.

A remedy to strengthen from within

I felt I had a good homeopathic remedy for her, a remedy that could help address the physical concerns she was experiencing since she'd had the flu—but also a remedy that could help strengthen her from within, to shore up her spirits and enable her to embrace life, her family, and her own interests more fully.

I prescribed the remedy *Silicea* based on the type of sinusitis she suffered: she had thick mucus which was difficult to dislodge, she experienced pinpoint pains to the face, and she felt better with warm applications and warm drinks. Also reminiscent of *Silicea* were the bad breath and the chronic constipation—without the urge to go and with a sense of a lump in her rectum—which she had endured for years. These physical discomforts were woven together in my analysis with her yielding, conscientious nature and her self-esteem issues, leading me to *Silicea* as a constitutional remedy. It should be noted that any remedy can be used to treat a person who has never been well since a flu—the whole person must be considered, with all of their symptomatology.

I asked Elaine to return six weeks later. I also asked her to call me if she became ill during that time so that together we might try to help her fight off any acute illness.

"I'm back!"

Sure enough, she returned six weeks later, elated and bursting with gratitude—she felt she was "back." This is a wonderful report to a homeopath's ears. When patients say that they feel they are "back to their old selves," we know they are moving in the right direction. Even if some of Elaine's physical symptoms had not gone away—and most of them had—I would've stuck with this remedy after a good report like that, trusting that she was on the healing path and her vital force would continue the work it had begun.

Indeed, I did not give her another dose of *Silicea* until some eight months later when she seemed to have relapsed a bit (the first inkling of that was a return of the constipation).

I have seen Elaine periodically over the last decade, through the many trials and challenges that life offers up. Sometimes she gets another dose of *Silicea*, sometimes we talk about diet and exercise or particular home remedies she might try. She remains thankful and even incredulous that those little pills could finally take ahold of that old flu and put it where it belonged.

About the author:

Amy Rothenberg, ND, DHANP, practices in Enfield, Connecticut. Her upcoming book, *The Homeopathic Treatment of Autism*, which she has co-authored with her husband Paul Herscu, ND, DHANP, is due to be published in the spring. She teaches for the New England School of Homeopathy (<http://www.nesh.com/>) and the NCH.

Sidebar:

A tale of two flus by Eileen Isison

Once upon a time there was a house full of relatives gathered for a holiday. Tensions were high as everyone stepped on each others' toes. The son was clearly out of sorts with the "flu." He was tired and droopy, eyes half closed with chills and fever. The homeopath among them suggested to the mother that she give her son some *Gelsemium*. The next day the son was all better, no fever, no chills—basically wide-eyed and bushy tailed. "A miracle the mother and the other relatives exclaimed." "A coincidence," the non-believing son proclaimed. "Maybe it wasn't the flu at all."

A week or two later his sister got the "flu." She had a high fever and a painful cough that made her feel like her head was about to split. "Try the *Gelsemium*," the brother said, and she did since she happened to have some on hand. The homeopath said it was probably not what she needed because the symptoms were not the same as the brother's had been, but the sister took it anyway. Of course the *Gelsemium* didn't help.

The sister called the doctor and got some codeine cough syrup, which made her throw up. The brother said he knew the Gelsemium didn't work for the flu. The homeopath brought the sister (who was bedridden) some Bryonia. The sister fell asleep and woke the next morning feeling much better. It had been 14 hours since she had taken the cough syrup (it was only supposed to have lasted for 12) and she began a coughing spasm. One dose of Bryonia and the cough instantly subsided. Now the sister was truly impressed and declared the homeopath a miracle worker. The sister had spent three days in bed with no improvement in her symptoms until she took the Bryonia. Within 24 hours she was able to use theater tickets and go back to work.

What can we learn from this true tale? Homeopathic remedies work the way they're supposed to when individually selected for the presenting symptoms. This is a clear example of the importance of the law of similars—"likes cure likes." It is very difficult for those not involved in homeopathy to understand that there is no single remedy for the flu. Any remedy can work to treat the flu (or any disease) if that remedy's symptom picture matches the symptoms of the sick person.

Eileen Isison is the New England Volunteer Regional Coordinator for NCH Affiliated Study Groups and Vice-president of the New England Homeopathic Academy. She works with Indian homeopath Dr. A.U. Ramakrishnan treating difficult cases in the U.S.

Copyright 2007 © National Center for Homeopathy. All Rights Reserved.