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# REPORT FROM THE MEDICAL PRACTICE

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## An Overview of Disorders of the Digestive System

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by David Riley, M.D.

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*Disorders of the digestive tract are some of the most common medical conditions that bring patients to see a physician. Due to the widespread prevalence of gastro-intestinal disorders, digestive disorders and their anti-homotoxic and homeopathic treatment have been chosen by HEEL and BHI for the 1991 roundtables and scientific seminars.*

Although there are many diseases that fall under the heading of digestive disorders, for many people these problems are typified by gastritis and constipation, conditions that almost everyone has experienced at one time or another. The digestive system seems to be particularly susceptible to dysfunction in the fast-paced, high pressure society in which we live. Successfully treating patients with disorders of the digestive tract often requires a recognition by the patient that life-style changes may need to be made in addition to treatment with medication. Of course some of the homeopathic remedies that are prominently used in the treatment of gastro-intestinal disorders seem to facilitate this recognition by the patient. Some of the keynotes of *Nux vomica* for example are spasm, extreme sensitiveness, and irritability, all symptoms that are frequently found in patients with digestive disorders. This remedy is found in many of the complex formulations that are used to treat both gastritis and constipation. From a homeopathic viewpoint the wide range of unrelated symptoms that may respond to a given homeopathic remedy is accepted but from an allopathic point of view it is often difficult to understand the wide-ranging actions and effects of a single homeopathic remedy.

Digestive disorders, regardless of whether gastritis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, constipation, etc. do share some features in common that may be related to the effectiveness of some remedies for a variety of gastro-intestinal disorders. These digestive disorders all share an inflammation of the mucous membranes of the gastro-intestinal tract as part of their patho-physiological picture. Once again the process of inflammation plays a key role in the body's attempts at detoxification. If the detoxification process (as represented by the inflammatory response) is successful, a cure takes place and health is restored. If the detoxification process is blocked, a focal lesion results at the place where the inflammatory process is unable to move forward to completion in its task of detoxification.

The digestive system is one of the first systems of the body to encounter toxins. It is no accident that this system is also well represented with lymph nodes and other components of the immune system. In homotoxicology, the inflammatory process is considered to be the process by which the body attempts to detoxify itself, regardless of the location of the toxic deposition. It is important to remember that the inflammation is a physiological process that is ongoing in the body. When a

patient develops symptoms related to inflammation it is an indication of the severity and wide-spread nature of the inflammatory process. Stimulation of the inflammatory process so that there can be a gradual detoxification of the body is one of the key differences between homotoxicology and allopathic treatments. Allopathic treatments attempt to block the inflammatory process. Although this frequently results in the resolution of the acute symptoms, the problem may be driven deeper into the body, where subsequent attempt at detoxification will inevitably be more difficult.

Why should practitioners consider using homeopathic and anti-homotoxic therapy to treat digestive disorders? The 1991 HEEL roundtables and scientific seminars will explore this topic in depth. In this article I would like to give an overview of the homeopathic and anti-homotoxic treatment of digestive disorders by looking at the treatment of two digestive disorders, gastritis and constipation. There are many allopathic regimes available for the treatment of gastrointestinal disorders. However, there are some limitations; they frequently are not curative and long-term therapy is required, side effects may limit therapy, and the treatments are expensive (uncomplicated gastrointestinal endoscopy can cost over \$400.00 for a 15 minute procedure). In addition it should be noted that one of the major causes of gastropathy today is the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Homeopathic therapy, in contrast, can often be curative, side effects can usually be avoided, and the entire cost of treatment from beginning to end is often less expensive than a single endoscopy. (It is interesting to note that homeopathic Salicylicum Acidum can be used to treat abdominal distention when ulceration is present.)

Let us take a more in depth look at the treatment of gastritis, beginning with a look at the etiology of gastritis. The most common cause of gastritis today is related to the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID). NSAID's (both salicylates and aspirin) are the most common class of drugs used for the treatment of musculo-skeletal disorders and chronic pain. Aspirin, derived from the bark of the willow tree, is undoubtedly the most frequently used drug in the world and has a long history of usage. Nonetheless, gastric and duodenal ulcers associated with the usage of NSAID's are common, occurring in approximately 20% of all patients. Gastritis is of course also associated with many other causes: over-indulgence in coffee, alcohol, or nicotine, a family history of gastrointestinal disorders, etc. (We will assume that gastric carcinoma has been excluded.) All of these conditions can result in a direct accumulation of toxins in the gastro-intestinal tract. Several of the main complex remedies that are indicated for this and other conditions of the digestive tract contain Nux vomica. Nux vomica-Homaccord, Gastricumeel, and BHI Stomach all contain this and, additionally, other homeopathic remedies. Nux vomica-Homaccord contains Nux vomica, Bryonia, Lycopodium, and Colocynthis. All of the individual ingredients of this complex formulation are known for their effect on the digestive tract. Nux vomica has been mentioned above. Bryonia has an effect on mucous membranes, Lycopodium is known to act on the gastro-intestinal tract, par-

ticularly the liver, and Colocynthis is indicated for conditions of colic where there are stabbing pains. All of these symptoms are frequently seen in conjunction with gastritis. BHI Stomach and Gastricumeel are very closely related complex formulas, containing six ingredients in common (Antimonium crudum, Carbo vegetabilis, Nux vomica, Pulsatilla nigricans, Argentum nitricum, and Arsenicum album.) BHI Stomach has an additional ingredient, Natrum phosphoricum, designed to ameliorate heartburn. These remedies can be used in conjunction with other preparations such as Mucosa compositum, to stimulate the normal function of the mucosal tissue, and Lymphomyosot or BHI Lymphatic, to stimulate detoxification. By using some of these remedies together one can initiate a cycle of healing and begin the search for the final constitutional similimum.

Constipation is another condition that can be treated homeopathically. It has been said by some that regardless of the condition being treated, if bowel function improves, the treatment is heading in the right direction. Constipation can have many different causes: improper diet, medication, dysfunction of the autonomic nervous system, etc. Dietary changes and physical exercise are important components of many successful therapeutic regimes for the treatment of constipation. Some of the main complex remedies for this condition are Graphites-Homaccord, Nux vomica-Homaccord, and BHI Constipation. Sulfur is, of course, a classical remedy that can be indicated for the treatment of constipation. This key homeopathic remedy is found in the remedy Schwef-Heel which contains sulfur in a potency chord (4X, 6X, 12x, 30x, and 200x.) Sulfur is also found in Sulfur-Heel in combination with Mezereum, Arsenicum album, Pix liquida, Caladium seguinum, and Capsicum.

Heel's roundtables and seminars in 1991 will focus on these and other conditions, including gastric and duodenal ulcers, colic, pancreatitis, liver disease (hepatitis, cirrhosis), cholangitis, ulcerative colitis, and Crohn's disease. Various therapeutic approaches for these disorders can be found, utilizing many different therapeutic modalities. Regardless of the therapeutic strategy chosen, they are all directed at hastening the resolution of the inflammatory process and reducing the toxic burden. This can be done homeopathically by using one or more remedies designed to treat the acute problem, stimulate normal mucosal function, and facilitate detoxification. Once this has been done or during treatment, a constitutional similimum can also be chosen; it may in fact be part of the acute therapy as well.

Address of the author:

David Riley, M.D.  
P.O. Box 9080  
Santa Fe, NM 87504  
(505) 989-9018