



For Members

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Homeopathy heals a boy with Lyme encephalitis

"It's a miracle!"

by Susanne Saltzman, MD



Although the following case is one of the earliest in my career, the main rule that I applied for finding the simillimum (i.e., the most appropriate homeopathic remedy) still applies today: "treat the patient, not the disease." This case demonstrates the awesome power of the simillimum to cure even deep-seated, serious disease.



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In 1996, I received a call from a distraught mother whose 13-year-old son had been diagnosed with Lyme encephalitis—a neurological complication of Lyme disease that causes inflammation of the brain. Neither he nor his mother recalled a tick bite or rash, but the Lyme diagnosis had been confirmed one month earlier by a lumbar spinal tap. Matthew was now nearing the end of his third week on strong intravenous antibiotics (rocephin) but had not shown much improvement. This mother, a health care practitioner, knew nothing of homeopathic medicine, but in her desperation to help her son she was willing to give it a try.

A lethargic teen

When the pair arrived in my office the following week I was immediately struck by how lethargic and tired the boy looked. As Matthew sat next to his mom, his eyelids were slightly drooping, he seemed weak, and although he was alert and oriented enough to answer my questions, his speech was slightly slurred, and he complained of severe mental fogginess, spaciness, memory loss, and apathy. His mother said that he was usually an extremely alert and energetic child who got up at 6:30

a.m. to go to the gym before school. Since coming down with Lyme, however, he had not been to school, and he spent most of the day sleeping and watching TV. Normally an avid reader, Matthew now said he couldn't focus enough to read a page of a book: "They are just words on a page that have no meaning." In addition, he had optic nerve edema, a complication of neurological Lyme disease that was affecting his vision.

As I observed this boy, I thought of remedies such as *Gelsemium* (droopy eyelids, weak, head feels heavy), *Opium* (spaced out, drowsy, sleepy), *Nux moschata* (sleepy, forgetful, confused), and *Helleborus* (mental dullness, weak memory, poor concentration, apathy). However, I knew that most of the symptoms he complained of were common symptoms for Lyme encephalitis. That is, there was nothing particularly remarkable or unique about apathy, poor concentration, or memory loss for someone with his diagnosis; so these symptoms alone would probably not be very helpful in pointing me to his *simillimum*.

The phrase "treat the person, not the disease" was running through my mind as I continued to

take his case and hunt for any strong characteristic (strange, rare, peculiar) symptoms. I could not elicit any such physical symptoms. Yet, throughout the interview, I was struck by a slight and unexpected cockiness to Matthew's demeanor. I asked the mother to tell me what her son was like before coming down with Lyme disease.

She described a child who was highly intelligent, top in his class, intensely competitive in sports, extroverted, gregarious, and extremely popular with friends. This description was in direct contrast to the boy now sitting in front of me. At the time, my own son was 7 years old, also active and gregarious, and I was moved to even more compassion for this mother who was probably worried that her son would never be the same.

A revealing question...

After taking a medical history (which was unremarkable as he had always been healthy before Lyme), I began asking Matthew questions about fears, worries, etc. He described none. The mom said that he had always been relatively fearless and was never afraid to try new things.

At this point, I asked Matthew if he was sensitive to what others thought about him—and the way he responded made me think immediately of a certain remedy. He looked at me quizzically, as if wondering why I would ask such a silly question, clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth, and shook his head from side to side—a clear no to my question. But what was so striking to me was the edge of arrogance and self-assuredness in that gesture. It confirmed the cockiness I'd been sensing all along in his manner.

There was only one remedy I knew that could produce such self-confidence in one so young, and that remedy was *Sulphur*. Except for the fact that Matthew was a hot child, liked sweets, and was fairly messy, I could find nothing else in his case that specifically confirmed the choice of *Sulphur*. So this would be a prescription based squarely on the essence of this child's personality. What fascinated me was how clearly his personality came through, even with his severe neurological symptoms.

I noted that *Sulphur* appeared in all the repertory rubrics covering this child's neurological symptoms: (1) Mind, memory, weakness, loss of; (2) Mind, apathy, indifference; (3) Mind, forgetfulness; and (4) Speech, slurred. However, even if this had not been the case, I still would have given the remedy without hesitation. When clear characteristic physical symptoms are lacking in the patient, a constitutional remedy prescribed based on the "essence" of the personality will often cure physical symptoms that are not part of the remedy's known indications. I prescribed *Sulphur* 12c to be taken three times a day. (Usually I would prescribe a higher one-time dose, but I was concerned about the possible negating effects of the high doses of antibiotics he was receiving.)

The remedy tries to act...

Matthew's mother called me one week later to tell me something very unusual. Each time she would give her son a dose of *Sulphur*, he would almost immediately "perk up." She would notice a definite improvement in his energy, and he would become more alert and clear mentally. However, within an hour after taking his antibiotic, all effects of the homeopathic remedy seemed to be negated. I told her that the antibiotic was likely interfering with the remedy, and that it might be necessary to discontinue the drug to allow the remedy to have its full effect. This was obviously risky because the optic nerve edema and encephalitis could worsen, so the mother was naturally very hesitant, especially with her background in conventional health care. I, too, knew this was a potentially perilous plan, but I felt confident that Matthew's positive response to each dose of *Sulphur* was a clear sign that *Sulphur* had the potential for cure. The mother said she would think about it, discuss it with her husband, and call me back.

One week later, she phoned to say that it was obvious to her and her husband that the homeopathic remedy was acting positively, only to be antidoted by each dose of the antibiotic. So they chose to discontinue the conventional drugs and give the homeopathic treatment a chance. I decided to mail her a higher potency dose—*Sulphur* 200c, to be given to her son when he was completely off the drugs. "Only one dose?" the mother asked incredulously. "That may be all he needs," I responded.

A miracle

What happened next was nothing short of a miracle. From the moment he took the *Sulphur* 200c, Matthew began to come out of his stupor. His energy returned, he became much more alert and cognitively sharp, and his memory greatly improved. The mother called me two weeks later to

say that her son was in school again and 90% back to normal. The only remaining Lyme symptom was some tiredness by the end of the day. He was striving now to catch up on all the work he had missed while out of school. His focus was excellent and his motivation was back.

Unfortunately, I never saw Matthew again after that! His mother entered a new hospital program and was too busy to bring him back to me. But I ran into her several years later at a crafts fair, and she told me that her son was now in college and doing very well academically. He had never had any more Lyme symptoms, had absolutely no lasting ill effects from the disease, was in perfect health, and was "sharp as a whip." "It was a miracle!" she exclaimed.

The power of homeopathy

This truly remarkable case illustrates the power of the *simillimum*. Now, 12 years and thousands of patients later, I can say that finding the *simillimum* has not always been so easy. But though my style as a homeopath may have evolved and changed, the same rules that I used then still apply today. The principles of "like cures like," "a case well taken is a case half-cured," and "treat the patient not the disease" are all still the foundation of my practice. So are the polychrests (commonly used constitutional remedies such as *Sulphur* that have many uses) whose breadth and depth of treatment possibilities still abound today.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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