

33 years of “three weeks good three weeks bad” – a case of *Aristolochia clematitis*

Aristolochia clematitis is one of the oldest medicinal plants, used in ancient Egypt, the Americas and Europe for snake bites, injuries and to aid childbirth and has been proved by Mezger. Commended by Whitmont as a polycrest-in-waiting it has similarities to *Pulsatilla* and *Sepia* and is in Vermeulen’s *Synoptic Materia Medica 1* pp38-39.

This is the case of E – a 72 year-old lady, her face deeply lined by suffering who is depressed. Her 33 years of suffering express the essence of the medicine.

Consultation September 1993

I have been depressed since I was 39. My husband almost died in a car crash and I thought that I would be left with my children... I have a good three weeks then a bad three weeks... yes, for the whole 33 years that I have been depressed I have a good three weeks then a bad three weeks... when I first got depressed I got really constipated... I just had no urge to go... I was taking five senna tablets and still nothing was happening... I was taken into the psychiatric hospital for a while... they put me on hormones first but they had to stop them because my blood pressure went up... I felt that I was under a thick grey blanket and was crying all the time and I felt as if I was afraid of something... then they put me on phenelzine and I have been on it since... my sister has been in the psychiatric hospital for years.

When I was told about my husband’s car crash, I went to the accident and emergency department. The nurses were changing shift and it was just chaos. I saw my husband’s friend die on the next trolley and I was terrified – I thought my husband would be next... my husband recovered but now he is very bad with emphysema and is on oxygen.

I didn’t cry for three weeks while my husband was in hospital... when he came home I had this terrible fear that something was going to happen and I would cry a lot then... then I would feel ashamed and try not to cry, but I still had this sinking feeling.

When I am constipated I have a heavy feeling as if I am swollen but I have no urge to go... eventually I force myself to go and I pass little dark balls... it has been like this since I was a little girl.

I have had two repairs of vaginal prolapse and once for a rectal prolapse and I had a hysterectomy... I have had arthritis of my hands since after my first pregnancy.

I am always chilly. I have the heating on full blast all winter and even put the heating on in the summer if the morning is cold.

Sometimes I can be awake all night... I just feel wide awake and full of energy – during the good weeks... I don’t like consolation, my husband knows not to make a fuss and to leave me alone.

I feel guilty and ashamed... as if I have let myself down... I am quiet. I would just hide behind my husband if we went to a party... I am scared of snakes – if there was a picture of a snake in here I would have to leave the room.

First case analysis, prescription and outcome

The most striking feature of the case is that throughout her illness of 33 years she has had three good weeks and three bad weeks, but I did not know which medicine this was typical of at that time. I recognized keynotes of Opium in her constipation without urge eventually producing dark balls of stool and ailments from fright. Opium 10MK one dose and placebo daily produced no change after six weeks.

Second case analysis, prescription and outcome

I try and emphasize the alternation of her moods every three weeks and collect a few rubrics together:

- Mood changeable and alternating (212)
- Mind; CHEERFULNESS, happiness; general; alternating with; sadness (69)
- Mind; REPROACHES; himself (45)
- Mind; REMORSE; general (79)
- Rectum; INACTIVITY of rectum (151)
- Stool; BALLS, like (52)
- Mind; TIMIDITY (159)

But I am still a bit lost in the woods, so use the “for goodness sake don’t forget Aurum as she is depressed” heuristic and prescribe Aurum metallicum 200CH one dose daily for three days and placebo daily which produces no change after 6 weeks.

Consultation November 1993

During the good three weeks I have so much energy... I do so much housework... I can take everything out my kitchen cupboard and wash the cupboards and put all the stuff back in... I don’t sit down from morning till night... I have so much energy I just have to do things... I can even go round to my daughter’s house and give that a spring clean too... I seem to think quicker and talk quicker and move quicker. I can keep working 15 hours a day nothing bothers me. I just feel happy.

It’s not exactly three weeks good and three weeks bad, sometimes it varies by a day or two either way... during the bad three weeks I am really depressed and my energy is so low all the time... I still do my housework but I have to force myself and time passes slowly. During the good weeks time just flies by... all this happened when my husband had the accident but it got even worse after the menopause... I had been bleeding every day for a year so they said I needed a hysterectomy.

Third case analysis and prescription

Now the picture is clear and I was able to use the recognition heuristic after reading Whitmont’s *Psyche and Substance* pp173-177 and prescribed *Aristolochia clematitis* 200CH one dose and placebo daily. The rubrics below were gathered later for teaching purposes from van Zanvoort’s *Complete Repertory 2005* – it was only several years later that the repertories listed the first two key rubrics shown below:

- Mind; EXHILARATION; alternating with; sadness (11) **
- Generalities; WEAKNESS, exhaustion; alternating with; activity (5) **
- Mind; MOOD; alternating (109)
- Mind; MOOD; changeable, variable (200)

Consultation January 1994

I have been good... the depression phase didn’t arrive. I have just stayed in the good phase for the first time in 33 years... I got flu and it went to bronchitis and I had two lots of antibiotics... I got tired with the flu but I didn’t get depressed... My daughter has noticed the change in me.

This joint (*shows R thumb MCP joint*) has been sore recently and got



Photo: courtesy of Vilma Bharatan

Overall effect of three years of homeopathic treatment:

- 6 months amelioration from 200CH occasional dose
- 5 months amelioration from 1MK occasional plus 12CH daily
- 4 months amelioration from 10MK drops occasional leading to relapse when stopped Phenelzine
- 6 months amelioration from 30CH drops daily (plus restarting Phenelzine)
- 4 months amelioration from LM6 drops daily

Then she died suddenly at home aged 75 (post mortem showed myocardial infarction).

Essential materia medica

Classification: Plant; Angiospermae; Dicotyledon; Polycarpicae (Magnoliidae); Aristolochiales; Aristolochiaceae.

Essence: changeability and alternation of extremes of moods and energy: a marked depression with tiredness or exhaustion *plus or alternating* with a rather forced or unreasonable exhilaration and cheerfulness with unusually high energy, activity and ability to perform.

Modalities: amelioration from motion in cool open air; aggravation from suppressed discharges and after menses. The physical expression is mainly through the urogenital tracts with: delayed menarche, scanty menstruation, amenorrhoea (especially after oral contraceptive), decreased fertility, failure to progress in labour, menopausal arthritis, cystitis and pyelitis, prostatitis and epididymitis.

Clinical: Whitmont commends it for skin blisters from mechanical causes (for example poorly fitting shoes) and non-descript cystitis in women with few symptoms suggestive of another medicine (I can confirm the usefulness of both indications). With the keyword of *changeability* the associated bowel nosode appears to be Mutabile.

Raymond Sevar

Dean

raymondsevar@aol.com

www.raymondsevarhomeopathy.com

worse in the frosty weather... three warts have appeared in my right armpit and a skin tag thing I had on my neck has come back.

Given a dose of Aristolochia clematitis 200CH to keep for relapse

Consultation April 1994

I have been depressed for the last two weeks... I was OK for almost five months... I took the 200c five days ago and nothing has changed yet... I feel sad but I cannot cry... I force the tears back down so I don't upset my husband... My energy has gone down again.

If the depressive phase lasts the full three weeks as usual take Aristolochia clematitis 1M one dose

Consultation June 1994

I took the 1M on 8 May and felt good within three days and I have had no depression till ten days ago. My energy was good. I was very pleased but the depression came back ten days ago... It is not as bad as it used to be before the medicine but it is back... I get a tight feeling here (*epigastrium*) when I stop myself crying... I want to be alone to hide from everyone.

The skin tag on my back has gone away but my thumb joint is still sore.

Prescribed Aristolochia clematitis 1MK one dose then 12c daily

From August 1994 to January 1995 the improvement held but for a partial relapse in October when I prescribed 10MK drops daily for three days and occasionally if required.

Consultation January 1995

I have been fine and have only had the remedy once on 8 December... I just feel marvellous... my joints have been better as well... I would like to decrease the Phenelzine.

She had been on Phenelzine 15 mg t.d.s for 30 years. I thought it unwise to decrease them but she was determined to try.

Outcome

The first reduction to 15 mg b.d. was ok, the depression began to relapse with the second reduction to 15 mg o.d. but she remained determined to stop Phenelzine which precipitated a total relapse. She restarted Phenelzine 15 mg tds plus 10MK drops daily for ten days which did not help but 30CH drops daily did.