



A case for *Fagopyrum esculentum*

Raymond Sevar describes the medicine made from buckwheat and the success he had in treating an elderly patient

Buckwheat belongs to the polygonoaceae plant family. In the second half of the 20th century it became almost forgotten as a food in Britain although it had been one of our staple flours. In past centuries it was one of the standard British agricultural crops and was grown throughout Europe. Buckwheat is still popular in Eastern Europe where it is eaten as a “grain”, in blinis (buckwheat pancakes) and in bread and it remains a staple in Japan eaten as “Soba” noodles. In the past 20 years it is steadily gaining in popularity as a naturally gluten-free alternative to wheat and buckwheat flour is now widely available in supermarkets. The pyramidal reddish seeds contain all the essential amino acids and it is high in long-chain carbohydrates giving it a good G-I index.

As an agricultural crop it is extremely undemanding, will grow without fertilisers on the poorest of soils and, if the green parts of the plant are ploughed back in, it improves the soil and allows growth of other crops. The green matter can also be used as feed for horses. It has a short growing season of three months and despite its variable yields is gaining in popularity among organic farmers.

The remedy *Fagopyrum esculentum*, prepared from the whole mature plant,

was proved by Hichcock in 1873 who found it curative when indicated in eczema, itching without an eruption and inflammatory arthritis. It has symptoms in common with Sulphur, Sepia, Lycopodium and Thuja which are often prescribed instead.

Edith

I prescribed *Fagopyrum esculentum* with great success for Edith, a 78 year-old who made a deep impression on me. Our first consultation was in October 2002. She told me that she had suffered from a constant and terrible itch inside her skin for nine months and it was getting steadily worse, but she had no rash. Her whole body was itching and the itch got worse in waves during which she felt very hot.

When she asked her husband to feel her skin, he was most surprised to find how hot she actually felt to the touch. The itch would get worse if she wore tight clothes, especially if made from synthetic materials, and a little less if she wore cotton or silk. The itch tended to get steadily worse through the day and by evening and night-time it was terrible.

She tried very hard not to scratch but the itch was so bad she just had to. Scratching did not really make the itch

better. She tried hard not to scratch so much that she made her skin raw or made it bleed. Like many other people she'd had a tendency to dry skin since childhood and had to be careful what she put on her skin and vigilant about which detergents she laundered her clothes with or she would get a prickly heat type rash – she even took her own pillowcase on holiday or she would wake with a rash on her face.

While her itch was very severe, Edith's symptoms so far were fairly common and do not help much in showing which medicine might be best indicated – so I asked her what was the most striking or unusual thing about her itch.

“The worst thing is,” Edith told me, “that I cannot lean my back on a chair. As soon as I do the itch gets terrible and I cannot bear it – I have only been able to sit straight upright for months. I can only sleep on my tummy because if I roll onto my back the itch is just terrible and then I am awake for ages.”

This really is a most strange, rare and peculiar (SRP) symptom – one I had never come across before – and therefore highly useful in finding the best homeopathic medicine for her. Such an SRP symptom suggests one of the so-called “small” remedies – a remedy which is less frequently prescribed but

as powerful and deep acting as a “poly-crest” like Graphites or Sulphur.

At this point I looked in my computer repertory at the rubrics for itching worse from pressure and lying down, itching without eruptions, itching in old people and itching at night and at the generals chapter for pressure aggravates. A computer repertory is often useful for holding and comparing lists and looking at the small remedies within the rubrics which have her SRP symptom. I saw the remedy *Fagopyrum esculentum*. The computer repertory programs can also quickly search all the symptoms of a remedy to see whether it might cover the case – and *Fagopyrum esculentum* was listed for many skin symptoms of itching with and without eruptions.

Other factors

Now, of course, it was important to learn if there was anything else that troubled Edith and to try and understand something of her unique nature, about her life and how she has lived it. She explained she had some osteoarthritis of her hands, neck and right hip which were worse from a cold draft and better from swimming – she still swam many lengths regularly to keep supple. She had high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Her right carotid artery was narrowed and she had had a tiny stroke and one attack of angina pectoris. She had fully recovered from both without treatment, indeed she was “not one to take tablets” and had refused all medication for her conditions except the glaucoma for which she did use the eye-drops prescribed.

In the past she’d had the usual childhood illnesses, was found to have only one kidney and had several urinary infections. She “sailed through childbirth twice and the menopause” without any problem. She comes from “good old-fashioned stock” and all her family are long-lived – her parents both died aged 94 and her sister died aged 90 and she was glad to nurse them through their final illnesses.

I noticed when she spoke of “child-birth twice” there was a little falter in her voice and a slight pause and her husband looked up from reading. I chose to wait and raise the matter later in the consultation while moving onto lighter but important matters of sleep, energy and food.

The lack of sleep from the itch had gradually eroded her previously high energy and lately it had gone down to only ten out of an ideal 100. She had

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not drunk tea for 40 years as it gave her diarrhoea, hated oysters and slimy things and liked “old-fashioned good quality freshly prepared food – I like bread and butter and marmalade best”.

The most personal and private details of a person’s life are usually their sex lives and their religious faith. I could see no reason to question a 78 year-old woman about her love life, so asked about her faith.

“I have a strong Christian faith – my husband and I still go out doing Christian work every morning – we don’t preach to people, we just give practical help where required. We have a little sleep after lunch and feel better. I pray a lot and it helps me. My faith is a great comfort to me...”

Again, there was the little falter in her speech and now a tear glistened in the corner of her eye.

“My third child was stillborn and I still think of her every day. I know that I will see her again.” A tear escaped and ran down her cheek.

I believe it is important at such times for the physician to stop: stop writing, stop moving, to sit still in silence to honour the memory. Also, I have found that, when the healing sighs and tears abate, suggesting to the mother that lighting a candle on the anniversaries

appears to be beneficial whether the patient has a religious faith or not.

I prescribed *Fagopyrum esculentum* LM1 30ml, one drop in a full glass of water, one mouthful as a daily dose.

The follow-up

At the next consultation six weeks later Edith looked happy and reported, “The itch got a bit worse at first so I stopped the drops for a few days then I started again with a smaller dose as you suggested and gradually got better. For the past three weeks it is like a miracle – it is amazing. The itch has gone from my whole body. There is some itch left in the vulva where it all started but it is less than it was. I can lean back on chairs, it is so wonderful. I sleep right through the night now. I was so exhausted by the itch before but now my energy is definitely better – 50/100 – the arthritis is much the same.”

I advised her to continue *Fagopyrum esculentum* LM1 1 drop in a third of a glass of water, taking a mouthful daily as before till “well” then occasionally when required. I have found that patients who are improving with the LM potencies daily often do well to decrease the size of dose and the frequency of dose once healing is established – this avoids a later aggravation.

Comments

Edith truly impressed me. She was calm with a kind of quiet serenity despite her severe constant itching. Her religious faith was effective, quiet, unassuming, deep, warm and undemanding of others – she seemed to almost shine with grace. Since I was, at that time, struggling with my own illness and my own faith, I asked her to share with me a little of her wisdom and asked her if she felt there really was meaning to suffering. After a pause she said, “If our life really does pose us a question, then perhaps the answer is our whole life.”

I receive a Christmas card from Edith every year. Her itch resolved and her arthritis became much less troublesome. She takes the remedy occasionally whenever the itch returns or her joints are a bother and both are relieved quickly.



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