

The Concept of Mind and Treatment of Mental Diseases in Homoeopathy

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Abstract

Homeopathy treats the patient as a whole in mental and physical plane together based on symptom similarity. Homoeopathy rejects mind-body duality. According to Homoeopathic principles, mind and body are dynamically interconnected. Mental diseases are not separate from so called physical diseases. The classical texts of Homoeopathy have given detailed description of importance of mental symptoms in prescribing suitable similar medicine as well as case taking of mentally ill patients; and classification and treatment of mental diseases. According to Homoeopathic principles- all chronic diseases, if studied carefully, will show decided and characteristic mental symptoms long before physical changes can be discovered in the body by any laboratory test now known. The symptoms of mind including patient's subjective feelings, emotions, thought, sensations and reactions to various life stressors reflect the deepest aspect of the patient. These symptoms are considered characteristic symptom of the patient as they reflect the deepest aspect of the patient. Thus, in Homoeopathic prescribing, the symptoms of mind take precedence over general and local symptoms and help in individualization of the case. When these "symptoms of mind" are correctly selected and matched according to the principles of Homoeopathy, they can lead to a right selection of Homoeopathic medicine, the "similimum" and lasting cure.

Keywords: Mind, Mental disease, Mental health, Homoeopathy, Interconnection

INTRODUCTION

Homoeopathy is a scientific system of medicine that offers individualized medicinal care with great emphasis on treating patients as a whole. Therefore, homoeopathic treatment is not only holistic but also individualized to suit each person. As ultra-diluted medicinal substances are used, Homoeopathy is completely safe, non-toxic and free from side-effects. The homeopathic understanding of health is intimately connected to its understanding of the mind in general. Homoeopathy out rightly rejects mind/body duality, recognising that there is no inherent distinction between the symptoms and diseases we describe as somatic and those we describe as mental/emotional. Homeopathy believes that body and

mind are dynamically interconnected and that both directly influence each other. Thus, Homeopathy treats the patient as a whole in mental and physical plane together based on symptom similarity [1–4].

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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Dr. Hahnemann, the founder of Homoeopathy; was one of first physicians to see the mentally ill patients as "Sick Individuals" requiring empathy and proper medical care in the 17th century. He criticised medical men of his time for cruel methods and physically punishing mentally ill patients. He says that such violent methods have no place in

Homoeopathy (Footnote to aphorism 228). He said- "it can be confidently asserted that the vast superiority of the Homoeopathic system over all other conceivable methods of the treatment, is nowhere displayed in a more triumphant light than in mental and emotional diseases of long standing, which originally sprang from corporeal maladies or were developed simultaneously with them (Aphorism 210) [1, 5]."

Dr Hahnemann gave a detailed description and treatment of "Mental Diseases" in the homoeopathic classic text Organon of Medicine as follows:

- i. Mental diseases are a class of disease not separated from other diseases as in so called physical diseases; mental condition of the patient is always altered in physical sickness (Aphorism 210).
- ii. The mental diseases are like other diseases where both the symptoms of body and mind are present but while the physical symptoms have declined; the symptoms of mind and disposition have increased till they appear one sided disease of mind and disposition (Aphorism 215).
- iii. To trace an accurate picture of the so called one-sided mental diseases and treat it successfully with homoeopathy; the physician must note the individual disposition of the patient along with the totality of the symptoms (Aphorism 210, 211) [1, 5, 6].

IMPORTANCE OF "SYMPTOMS OF MIND" IN HOMOEOPATHY

Homoeopathy gives more importance to patient's subjective feelings, emotions, thought, sensations and reactions to various life stressors in prescribing medicine. These symptoms of mind are considered characteristic symptom of the patient and help in individualization of the case. This process of individualization helps the Homoeopath to select the most suitable similar remedy to achieve the highest ideal of cure [6].

Dr. Hahnemann had very early on recognized the central importance of the mental or emotional state of the patient in determining the curative remedy. According to Homoeopathic principles- all chronic diseases, if studied carefully, will show decided and characteristic mental symptoms long before physical changes can be discovered in the body by any laboratory test now known [6].

In the classic Homoeopathy text- Organon of medicine, Dr. Hahnemann has clearly elucidated the importance of symptoms of mind:

- i. "In all the so-called somatic diseases as well, the mental and emotional frame of mind is always altered" (Aphorism 210).
- ii. "In all diseases, the patient's emotional state should be noted as one of the most pre-eminent symptoms, along with the symptoms complex, if one wants to record a true image of the disease in order to be able to cure it homeopathically" (Aphorism 210).
- iii. For the right homoeopathic prescribing, we have to not merely look for a collection of mental/emotional symptoms in our patient, but rather for a mental/emotional state (Aphorism 210 to 214).
- iv. "This pre-eminent importance of the emotional state holds good to such an extent that the patient's emotional state often tips the scales in the selection of the homeopathic remedy. This is a decidedly peculiar sign which, among all the signs of disease, can least remain hidden from the exactly observing physician" (Aphorism 211).
- v. "...one achieves cure homeopathically when one attends to the symptom of the mental and emotional alterations, together with the symptoms of the body, in every case of disease, even acute ones, and select the most similar remedy that is of itself capable of engendering a mental or emotional state similar to that of the disease" (Aphorism 213) [1, 5].

Dr. Hahnemann also advised a simple elimination method based on the mental state of the patient to select the right remedy. For example- eliminating Aconite from the choice of remedy "if the patient's emotional state is quiet and uniformly calm," and eliminating Pulsatilla "if the patient's emotional state is glad, cheerful and stubborn," etc (footnote to aphorism 214) [5].

Dr James Tyler Kent has said that prime importance must be given to the man himself who is constituted of body, mind and emotions. These mental and emotional aspects are the internal of man. “Man is the will and the understanding and the house which he lives in is his body”. A man is sick prior to the localization of disease. Symptoms of the man which are the language of sickness must be studied at the levels of mind, emotions and body. Tissue changes are the results of the disease, they are not the disease. Thus, according to Dr. Kent the mind symptoms occupy central importance in constitutional prescribing [7].

HOMOEOPATHIC CLASSIFICATION OF MENTAL DISEASES

In Homoeopathy, the mental diseases are further classified into four types described below:

Mental diseases of somato-psychic type: Mental diseases of somato-psychic type are those in which during the course of a chronic or serious life-threatening disease; the symptoms related to physical body have declined while the symptoms pertaining to mind like depression or anxiety become predominant. These are described in aphorism 216, 217, 220.

Mental diseases because of exciting cause: Mental diseases such as insanity or mania can break out suddenly like acute diseases usually when an exciting cause (fright, vexation, abuse of spirituous liquors etc.) acts upon the latent psora in patients. These can be called mental diseases of acute origin. These are described in aphorism 221, 222, 223.

Mental diseases of doubtful origin: Mental diseases of doubtful origin are those in which it is difficult to find out whether the mental disease is arising from bodily disease or as a result from faults of education, bad practices, superstition or ignorance etc. These are described in aphorism 224.

Mental diseases of psycho-somatic type: Mental diseases of psycho-somatic type are those that arise as a result of prolonged emotional disturbance, continued anxiety, worry, frequent occurrence fright etc. Such diseases may be of recent origin and may not have fully developed symptoms on physical body. But if left untreated “they make great inroads on the corporeal (physical) state”. These are described in aphorism 225, 226, 227 [1, 5].

CASE TAKING OF MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS

Dr Hahnemann has emphasized that- “Psychic trauma, emotional stress of varying degrees and insistence are factors that we as homoeopathic prescribers should understand and weigh thoroughly in view of the patient’s symptomatology”. He also mentions that difficulty in eliciting the mental picture of patient- “...frequently the patient does not consider his private affairs the business of any outsider, even the physician, and keeps these important things to himself. Or he may be so used to bearing his own burdens that he does not recognize them as having any weight in the case; or he may (consciously or unconsciously) distort the picture of his own mental stress so much that even if he reveals the difficulty under which he is laboring”(Aphorism 95) [8].

In his essay "Use of the Repertory", Dr Kent has described the hierarchy of mental/emotional symptoms. Primary importance is to be given to symptoms relating to the loves and hates, or desires and aversions. Next are those belonging to the methods of reasoning, memory, causes of mental disturbances, etc. and lastly those belonging to the memory.

Dr. Hahnemann has given special guidelines for the case taking of mentally ill patients in aphorisms 228, 229 and 230 in the Organon of Medicine. He described these guidelines as “appropriate psychical behaviour” by the physician during case taking of such patients:

- i. The physician must resist the abnormal behaviour of the patient in a cool, calm yet firm resolution in case of violent mania.
- ii. The physician should silently display his feelings of sympathy in his looks and gestures in cases of “miserable, irritable sorrow”.

- iii. The physician must maintain silence, yet with good attention towards the symptoms of the patient in cases of “senseless chattering”.
- iv. The physician is to exhibit his inattention in a controlled manner when the mentally ill patient is using abusive, bad, unpleasant language and conduct.
- v. The physician while case taking of a mentally ill patient should avoid “rude corrections, contradictions, eager explanations, and use of insulting language” as such methods are harmful to the patient.
- vi. The treatment of the violent manic and melancholic patients can take place only in an institutional set up specially arranged for their treatment and not within the family circle of the patient [1, 5].

In the mental diseases of somato-psychic type, the physician must gather accurate description of symptoms of so-called corporeal disease before it became one-sided with increase of mental symptoms from the patient. As the patient in such cases might not be able to narrate the full description himself, observations in change in behaviour elicited from attendants becomes very important. Some physical symptoms may re-appear become more prominent during lucid interval. These should be taken into account to complete the picture of the disease. The physician's own observation and patience during case taking of such cases is crucial [9].

In the mental diseases because of exciting cause(s) such as sudden fright, grief or vexation all prominent symptoms at the mental plane along with physical symptoms present as concomitants are taken into account. In case of mental diseases of doubtful origin, that result from faults of education, bad practices, corrupt morals, neglect of mind etc, the physician should conduct case taking in such a manner as to give insight to the patient. Mental diseases of psycho-somatic type, are often precipitated by continued anxiety, worry and other stressors and these environmental factors also act as a maintaining factor in this type of mental diseases. Therefore, a detailed understanding of patient's environment is necessary in such cases; including family, work and social circumstances to which the patient is reacting and failing to adapt to. Thus, patient's environment, his disposition and his mental and physical reactions that reflect in symptoms form the totality of symptoms in such cases [10].

TREATMENT OF MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS [1, 5]

In the mental diseases of somato-psychic type, where the symptoms related to physical body have declined while the symptoms pertaining to mind like depression or anxiety become predominant; the homoeopathic physician needs to find a remedy with greatest possible similarity to both physical symptoms as well as the mental and emotional state of the patient. The complete picture of the case by noting accurately the physicians own observations as well as inputs by attendants to select a suitable anti-psoric medicine for the case.

In the mental diseases because of exciting causes such as fright, vexation, abuse of spirituous liquors etc, initially, acute medicines like Aconite, Belladonna, Stramonium, Hyocyamus etc should be prescribed based on acute totality of the case. Once the acute presentation has subsided; anti-psoric medicines must be given along suitable with diet and regimen. Dr. Hahnemann cautions that, anti-psoric treatment if omitted, may lead to either a periodic or continued mental derangement which is then more difficult to be cured by anti-psoric medicines.

In case of mental diseases of doubtful origin, that may have arisen from faults of education, bad practices, superstition or ignorance, the physician should offer encouragement, consolation, sensible advice which will enable such patients to overcome disease. However, if the mental disease has arisen from somatic disease, the patient will become more dejected, inconsolable and reserved by such a method. In this case, the disease is to be considered mental diseases of somato-psychic type and treated accordingly.

Mental diseases of psycho-somatic type have a fundamental cause in psoric miasm. In such cases, the physician should work to build confidence of the patient by friendly encouragement supported by

good diet and regimen. Further, mental diseases of psycho-somatic type require anti-psoric treatment to avoid any type of recurrence.

CONCLUSION

Homoeopathy believes that mind and body are dynamically interconnected. Mental diseases are not separate from so called physical diseases. According to Homoeopathic principles- all chronic diseases, if studied carefully, will show decided and characteristic mental symptoms long before physical changes can be discovered in the body by any laboratory test now known. The classical texts of Homoeopathy have given detailed description of importance of mental symptoms in prescribing suitable similar medicine as well as case taking of mentally ill patients; and classification and treatment of mental diseases. The symptoms of mind including patient's subjective feelings, emotions, thought, sensations and reactions to various life stressors reflect the deepest aspect of the patient. These symptoms are considered characteristic symptom of the patient. Thus, in Homoeopathic prescribing, the symptoms of mind take precedence over general and local symptoms and help in individualization of the case. This process of individualization helps the Homoeopath to select the most suitable similar remedy to achieve a lasting cure.

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