

Editorial for the month of November 2008

Septicemia in newborns and Homoeopathic approach

I have had, in the past and present, vast experience treating newborns, as many of my patients were aged a few days to a few months. A large number of them had confirmed diagnosis of septicemia due to various causes. Newborns have increased risk of septicemia especially in the first seven days of the life. Newborns that develop infections can deteriorate very rapidly and they need to be observed very carefully because the symptoms of septicemia in newborns can be subtle and atypical.

I have mentioned below symptoms that are subtle and should raise a suspicion in the mind of a Homoeopathic physician that the child is suffering from septicemia.

1. Sleeping excessively
2. A sudden change in the feeding behavior (has to be repeatedly awaken to nurse or cannot stay awake for feeding)
3. Inability to sustain sucking or nursing
4. Sweating during fever
5. Change in muscle tone (decreased or limp)
6. Decreased activity or moments
7. Change in color (pale, bluish or gray arms and gray legs)
8. Fever above 100° F or 38° C rectally
9. Low temperature that is 96° F or 36° C rectally.
10. Unusual crying, unusual moaning and unusual grunting.

Now I shall describe you some cases which I had an opportunity to treat when I was working in Cooper Hospital,

K.E.M. hospital as I had good references from pediatricians from all over Bombay.

My first case was of a newborn whose parents came to Bombay to deliver the child from Calcutta. It was the first child in the family. The family had a big jewelry business in Calcutta. Immediately after the delivery the child became sleepy and stuporous. There was poor movement in the child; the movements were very floppy and the child would take very little breast feeding. The child had a temperature which was around 96-97 °F. There were some phases when child suddenly became awake for few seconds and again fell into stuporous condition but most of the time the child was sleepy.

The oxygen saturation of the child was very poor. The pulse rate around 90 per minute, and the doctors were suspecting septicemia due to *Pseudomonas* infection. For me, the semiconscious state, the constant sleepiness, respiration getting affected, the heart getting affected with condition where the temperature has become lower than the normal is a clear cut indication of a remedy *Lobelia purpurascens*. That is one remedy very nicely described in Blackwood manual of Material Medica.

It is a plant which comes from *Lobeliaceae* family, and the most important indication in my practice is whenever the heart is affected and the person is stuporous or semi comatose. Here you should see the blood count and if you see the blood count is pretty high, respiration is a little sinking, the heart is sinking, the person is drowsy then one should think of the remedy *Lobelia purpurascens*.

It comes very close to *Baptisia* and hence one needs to differentiate this remedy from *Baptisia*.

The other use of this remedy in my practice is typhoid. I use this medicine in cases of typhoid where the person sinks into semi comatose state along with threatened paralysis of lungs or heart.

Another case which I remember is of a newborn child, who was well for few days after birth. Then, suddenly, the child had a fever, and lot of antibiotics was given to the child. The child was about only 20-25 days old, but the situation did not respond to the antibiotics. Rather it deteriorated and the child started bleeding a few drops from the nose, the eyes became blood-shot, the child became cyanosed, the hands and the feet became blue, the mouth was a little swollen and the child went into a stuporous condition. The WBC showed 19,000 total counts. The history was that the child was delivered by forceps and after 6-7 days the child started refusing to take the milk. A pediatrician was called who initially called for a blood test which showed septicemia. On the above symptoms I selected the remedy *Oxyuranus scutellatus*.

This is the remedy which I have proved in my practice years back. It is the poison of the world's most dangerous snake from Australia the Taipan and since then I use this in my practice whenever I do not get very clear cut indication of using another deep acting remedies like other snake venoms which are well proved like *Crotalus horridus* and *Lachesis* but I get a superficial symptoms of the one which I have described above I think of *Oxyuranus scutellatus*.

The most important thing in this snake venom is that there has to be stupor, there has to be some bleeding either from the nose and there has to be cyanosis, there has to be discoloration of the skin and there has to be a swelling.

When you get combination of all these things, it is highly characteristic of a remedy *Oxyuranus scutellatus*.

Another case was of a newborn who presented with a low grade fever of 100 °F with blister like eruptions exuding thin water, that were oozing a fluid that excoriated the affected skin. In another place there were small pustules which were looking bluish-black in color. The child had a very high WBC counts and sucking was absolutely poor, when I examined the newborn child it was all red and inflamed. The child was on IV fluid and was not sucking at all. Furthermore, the doctors were little afraid because the pustules were spreading slowly and slowly all over the body and the child urgently needed some medicine. Along with this septicemic condition the child had watery stools which were offensive and brown in color.

If you remember *Materia Medica* by T. F. Allen, hand book of materia medica, in the very beginning he mentions about the remedy Cuban spider what we call as *Tarentula cubensis*. The first 4 lines of the book mention, 'This spider has been used for various forms of unhealthy or malignant suppuration, especially carbuncles, with burning stinging pain; with great weakness and diarrhoea.' Since then in my practice I use *Tarentula cubensis* whenever there is sepsis, or suppuration of any kind in the body. This suppuration should look purplish or bluish-black and there has to be an inflammation of the skin. The discharge has to be excoriating; if you can find ulcers that is still well and good, it is still a strong symptom and you will see that this eruption is extremely painful to touch. If you touch the child she will start crying very loudly. These are the important indications of *Tarentula cubensis*.

I gave 10M to this child, few doses and the child's whole septicemia was cleared with in 6 days.

Thank you