

Editorial for the month of September 2009

## Metamorphosis of Homoeopathic Posology during Hahnemannian Era

The understanding of homoeopathic posology came to Hahnemann many years after he discovered the law of cure, in fact it was a slow progressive metamorphosis. Hahnemann's view in relation to posology are important as they relate to how homoeopathy was developed and later how people have viewed and interpreted his teachings in the various editions of Chronic Disease and Organon of Medicine.

From 1784 to 1796 this is the period which represents the medical career of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann. Before discovering the law of similars Hahnemann medical practice was similar to any other allopathic physician of that time. His prescriptions were basically similar in composition weight and quantities with those of his contemporaries.

Previous to 1796 he used the remedies like Mercury, Arsenic, Belladonna, Opium etc. it was only when he started doing medical translation that he started gathering knowledge on many new botanical and chemical therapeutic hints. He started experiments on what knowledge that he had gathered and this helped him to know that exact effect of drugs on human body in health and disease. Hahnemann always argued his point by giving lots of bibliographic references or case example from his practice; hence he was not only an mechanical translator but an active experimentator.

Let's review some of his publication:

In 1784 he published an article on '**Direction of the Cure of Old Sores and Ulcers**'. In this he advises Antimony and Jalapa where he uses the dose of 5 – 50 grams of Antimony and 20 – 70 grams of Jalapa.

In 1789 he wrote an article on '**Treatise on Venereal diseases**' where he advises the use of soluble mercury in the dose 1 – 6-grams.

In 1796 he wrote an article on '**Curative Power of Drugs**' where he describes Arnica powder for a 4 years old child everyday 4 grams, for a 6 years old child 6 grams and for a 9 months old child 2 grams.

In 1784 he decides to restrict the strong dose because of its toxic effect on human organism. For many years he followed this principle only in very acute case he will use a drug in a crude form in a very small and minute dose.

In 1790 Hahnemann while translating Cullen's Materia Medica, he made a historic discovery of law of similars by experimenting on himself the effects of Cinchona bark. He wrote "Surely toxicity is nothing but the violent manifestation of the extremely powerful agent applied in too higher dose and in the wrong place". Slowly Hahnemann was getting an idea that a method should be invented where the toxicity of dose should be reduced to affect a cure.

In 1796 he made known the principle of homoeopathy in Hufeland's journal and the publication of essay on the '**New Principle for Ascertaining the Curative Power of Drugs and Some Examinations of the Previous Principles**'. In this essay he made reference to the use of small doses "but did not clarify what he meant by small". He started to select his remedies on the basis of law of similars but administered crude toxic doses. He observed that in many cases cure was associated with aggravation causing more discomfort and suffering to the patient. Slowly Hahnemann learned to reduce the quantity and hence reduce the toxic effects.

1797 – 1801: In 1797 in Hufeland's journal he wrote "**may I confess it that for several years since I never administered anything else but single remedy at a time and at once and that I never have repeated it until the action of formal dose has expired**". The prescription of diluted medicine invited huge criticism from his colleagues in an article "**What can 1/1000000 grain of Belladonna do?**" Hahnemann responded with an article "**on the power of small doses of medicine in general in of Belladonna in particular**" in 1801.

As he discovered that medicine acted better in minute dose than in crude form, he continued to reduce the size of the dose. His main aim was always to cure with minimum dose.

Let's enumerate some articles:

In 1797, in a case of colic he gives 4 grams of Veratrum album, in case of asthma he gives 4 grams of Nux vomica, in a case of remittent fever he gives 6 grams of Ledum pal and in a case of Scarlatina he gives 1/400<sup>th</sup> grain of Belladonna.

1802 – 1812: During the above period Hahnemann started mixing and vigorously shaking the medicine for a minute or so, so that the substance of medicinal value gets dispersed in the dilution medium. Reference to Hahnemann's case records point revealed that he was already using small doses of frequently used medicine. He uses different terminology in same or different books under the name of dilution or subdivision and attenuation.

1813 – 1819: In 1813 Hahnemann published in an article on “**Spirit of Homoeopathic Doctrine of Medicine**”. In this article Hahnemann describes the psycho chemical properties of drugs by virtue of which they possess a quality to produce qualitative changes in sensations and functions of the human being, he considers this as a dynamic derangement of vital character, he further clarifies that that it's not only the physical and chemical properties of the substance that is important to study but more than that it is the dynamic influence of the drug on the human body that alters the sensation in a very unique manner. He adds further by saying that by diluting and shaking the mixture in a bottle for few minutes helps to liberate the hidden energy that was lying dormant in the drug this is the crux of his dynamic theory of what later Hahnemann calls it as theory of dynamization.

Hahnemann felt that not only the property of drugs is liberated by process of dilution or attenuation but also by friction of the drug with the inert vehicle, by the process of succussion and trituration.

This vital observation of Hahnemann helped him to introduce drugs like Common salt, Lycopodium, charcoal, lime who in natural state are quite inert but when dynamised or potentized with sugar of milk or alcohol become one of the best life saving drugs in Homoeopathy.

In subsequent volume of *Materia Medica Pura* published from 1816 – 1819, there was a good deal of variation of doses and dilution suggesting experimentation to discover an optimal dose for each remedy and condition under treatment.

### **Example**

1913: Article – **Spirit of Homoeopathic Doctrine of Medicine**, he talks about dilution and friction liberates pharmacodynamical properties of the drug.

1814: **Treatment of Typhus** – Bryonia and Rhus tox, doses serially diluted one drop to 6 grams, 12 times shaken for 3 minutes at each step and use a dose of one drop.

1815: He uses Bryonia root, one drop of the pure juice.

1816: *Materia Medica Pura* 2<sup>nd</sup> volume – Causticum one drop of original.

1817: *Materia Medica Pura* 3<sup>rd</sup> volume – He talks about Ferrum 1/100 and 1/1000.

1820 – 1828: During this period of Hahnemann's career the dose of medicine varied. He yet many times used drugs in crude form strictly depending on character of the drug, disease and the patients.

In 1825 Hahnemann's infinitesimal dilutions were attacked by an article; Hahnemann refuted this in detail "**Information for truth seeker**". He stated "*by trituration the latent medicinal power is wonderfully liberated and vitalized as if, once freed from the fetters of matter, it could act upon the human organism more insistently and fully*". He very clearly in this article mentions that an inert substance found in nature enters into a dynamic reaction by the method of trituration and succussions can bring remarkable changes in the drug by producing superficial and deep signs and symptoms. This is represented in the article "**How can small doses of very such attenuated medicine as homoeopathy employs still possess great power**" written in 1827".

In introduction of Chronic Disease volume 1 in 1828 he wrote that he began with small doses of 1 grain in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> trituration but experience taught him to give preference to higher potencies. Up to this time Hahnemann had made use of the most varied degree of dilution from the original tincture or the vicious juice up to 30<sup>th</sup> centesimal potency.

1829 – 1837: In the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Organon in 1833 Hahnemann wrote about the superior efficacy of 30C. He fell only a little bit short of recommending 30C as a standard. Some of the Hahnemann's followers were exploring high potencies, example: Dr. Gross in Juterbogk; Dr. Schreter in Lemberg; Korsakoff in Russia; and Jenichen in Wismar. Korsakoff potentised up to 1,500 centesimal, Jenichen up to 16,000 centesimal potency.

Hahnemann felt in 1829 the urgent need to limit the potency to 30C. But he himself had exceeded the limit in 1825 when he recommended Thuja for gonorrhoea in the 60<sup>th</sup> potency. This suggestion of 30<sup>th</sup> C standard for potentization produced violent criticisms amongst his students.

In 1832 Hahnemann began experimenting with olfaction of remedies, having the patient smell a moistened pellet as a dose. He described this in his preface to "**Boenninghausen's List of Symptoms of the Antipsoric Medicines**" and in the 5th edition of the Organon in 1833. For several years Hahnemann employed this process for all his patients without exception. It was only towards the end of his life that he gave up the practice of olfaction.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Organon Hahnemann clearly detailed the concept of potentization in aphorism 269. He provided specific instruction on dynamization in aphorism 270 – 271.

He also advocated that provings can be carried out in 30C. A detail description of the process of trituration for the first three centesimal potencies was also given in part 2 of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of Chronic diseases in 1835. Also about this time Hahnemann began experiments giving the dose in solutions rather than a dry pellet.

In the Organon 5<sup>th</sup> edition, aphorism no. 286-287, he describes an increase in the medical action of the dose where it is fully dispersed in medical solution.

In 1835 Hahnemann wrote to Herring suggesting him the split dose method which he found very useful this is achieved by dissolving the medicated pellet in a volume of water, this reduce dose allowed for more frequent repetitions during the gradual amelioration of chronic disease. He wrote more detailed instruction on this approach in 1837 in the preface to part 3 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Chronic Disease.

In my practice I have adapted this over a decade and I can only say it works wonders.

As regard to alter the number of succussion he changed his opinion frequently. In the preface to 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Chronic Disease in 1837 he mentioned that he found it beneficial to increase the number of succussion at each step back to ten he experimented with even greater number of succussions over the following years in the preface to volume 5 of the Chronic Disease published in 1839, he used 10, 20, 50 and even more succussions.