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Chapter 10

Headache

CAUSES AND INVESTIGATION

When faced with a patient complaining of headache, it is important to exclude causes which may require further investigation or neurosurgery.

Extracranial

Trauma.

Myalgia and cervical spondylosis.

Eye disease.

Herpes zoster.

Tic douloureux.

Cranial arteritis.

Polymyalgia rheumatica.

Migraine.

Cranial

Dental abscess.

Otitis and mastoiditis.

Sinusitis.

Disease of skull.

Intracranial

Traumatic

Post-concussional syndrome.

Haemorrhage - extradural, subdural.

Inflammatory

Meningism and meningitis. Poliomyelitis. Abscess. Sinus thrombosis.

Vascular

Subarachnoid haemorrhage.

Neoplastic

Primary and secondary tumour.

Pituitary tumour.

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Hypertensive

Primary

Essential hypertension.

Secondary

Renal.

Vascular.

Endocrine.

Psychogenic

Anxiety, hysteria.

Skull X-ray, lumbar puncture, electroencephalogram, brain scan and occasionally arteriography may be required to make a diagnosis. Teeth and sinuses should be examined and eyes tested. If hypertension is found, this may need further investigation.

If there is a history of injury, even some considerable time before, we must consider using Arnica as a first prescription, before following up with further remedies. In cases of occipital blows on the head consider Natrum Sulph., which will often deal with the persistent headache.

Where the eyes seem to be the main cause of pain, consider such remedies as Ruta, Silica and Natrum Mur., after making any necessary adjustment to spectacles. These remedies all help in eye strain and weakness of eye muscles.

Sinusitis is of course a common source of head pain and one that is often difficult to cure by orthodox means. We have a wide range of remedies available here: Aconite, Belladonna, Bryonia, Spigelia, the Kali salts, Pulsatilla.

Apart from the conditions mentioned, many patients come with a history of migraine or of headache which has no identifiable cause, and which may in some cases be psychogenic.

In homoeopathic prescribing for headache, the modalities are most important in distinguishing one remedy from another.

ACUTE HEADACHE REMEDIES

Belladonna

Throbbing headache, worse on stooping, lying, jar and noise. Flushed dry face with dilated pupils and often fever, sometimes accompanied by delirium. Also after exposure to the sun.

Headache

Bryonia

Pain often right-sided but particularly worse on movement of head or eyes and better from pressure, occurring frequently in association with a respiratory infection and cough which aggravates the pain; also of value in migraine. Wants to be left alone.

China Sulphurica

Aching pain in the occiput extending over the head. Sweaty damp head. Better from cold applications, worse on turning the head or eyes and worse in the open air. Patient looks nauseated but wants to eat. Flatulence but cannot break wind (a China symptom).

Gelsemium

This is the remedy for influenza! headache, dull, aching, occurring in damp mild weather and accompanied by the usual aching in the limbs, hot and cold sensations, and chills up and down the back. Lack of thirst, even when febrile, and drowsiness add to this picture. The headache is relieved by passage of large quantities of pale urine.

Glonoine

Bursting headache, sometimes brought on by exposure to heat of the sun, with pounding in the head, such as that found in men working with nitroglycerine. Worse bending down.

Iris Versicolor

Frontal headache or feeling of constriction of head, with bilious vomiting and nausea. May come on after mental strain, on relaxing. Headache worse at *rest*, better from motion. Useful in acute migraine.

Magnesia Phosphorica

Neuralgic type of pain, especially shooting on the right side, and a deeper occipital headache spreading over the head on the left.

Pain occurs after exposure to *cold* or nervous strain and excitement. Worse from cold air, touch, 9-11 a.m. or 4-8 p.m. Better from warmth, firm pressure.

Sanguinaria

Recurring *periodic* headache, commencing in the morning and abating in the evening. A very useful migraine remedy for right temporal or frontal pain, with dizziness and sickness, better lying down and sleep. The menstrual periods are profuse and the patient feels worse before and after

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them. It is also a remedy for paroxysmal cough relieved by loud eructations of wind. Rheumatic pains in the right shoulder are also helped (Rhus Tox., Ferrum Met. also).

Sanguinaria can be given to migraine patients to use in the acute phase, and it frequently cuts short the attacks or reduces their severity.

Spigelia

Shooting pain on the left side of the head extending to the face and arm, worse on motion, stooping.

Causticum

CAUSTICUM (Potash preparation. See Hahnemann's instructions in Tyler.)

Sallow, sickly-looking, dark hair, dark eyes, dark mood. Paralysis, contractures, rheumatoid, warts. After suppression of eruptions. Broken-down constitution.

Generals

Worse in cold dry winds, frost, causing paralysis, rheumatism.

Mentals

Hopeless, weepy, foreboding, apprehension, despair of recovery, fear something is going to happen, fear of dark, twilight.

Irritable, peevish and distrustful, but very sympathetic to suffering of others.

Ailments from grief, loss of sleep, anger. May sit silently, inattentive.

Memory fails and mental effort leads to symptoms.

Can be angry, dictatorial, contradicting everything.

Vertigo

Worse on lying down in bed, worse on stooping, worse at menses; tendency to fall forwards or sideways. Sensation of space between brain and skull, better from warmth.

Headache

Pulsating or stitching, neuralgia of face.

Paralysis

Of single parts *-facial*, swallowing, voice - throat, eyelids, limbs with trembling (all like Gelsemium). Especially after exposure to very cold wind.

Eyes

Dry, stinging, itching; wants to dab eyelids.

Respiratory

Hoarseness worse in the morning (Phosphorus evening). Burning rawness. Loss of voice. Inability to raise sputum, partly raised and then slips back. Urine spurts on coughing. Cough relieved by cold water.

Causticum

Stomach

Sits down hungry, but smell of food upsets (Arsenicum, Sepia, Cocculus).

Rectum

Paralysis - inactive, fills up, no desire - better standing up.

Genito-urinary

A most valuable remedy in cystitis - acute sensitiveness to cold. Great urgency with inability to pass urine, then later involuntary passage of urine without warning. Shooting pain in rectum when cannot pass urine.

Incontinence on coughing, sneezing or exertion.

Valuable following operation, when patient cannot pass urine.

Menstrual colic with tearing back pains better at night. Epilepsy with incontinence during irregular menses. I

Warts

Hands, face, nose, eyes, large, bleed easily (Thuja, Dulcamara).

Rheumatic

Advanced with contractures of tendons, drawing pains, cannot get ease, restless at night. Worse in dry cold. Better from warmth and wet.

Slow progressive loss of muscle power.

Painful stiffness of neck and back on rising from a chair.

Drawing, tearing pains in thighs, legs, knees, feet worse in the open air and better in bed.

Rhus Toxicodendron

RHUS TOXICODENDRON (The great rheumatic remedy, also of value in skin eruptions)

Rheumatic HEADACHE, feels sore in muscles, caused by draught or DAMP, especially occiput, worse bending head backwards. Rheumatic IRITIS from exposure to WET - pains shoot through the eyes to the back of the head, worse at night. Orbital cellulitis. Paralysis of eye muscles from exposure to cold and WET. Pain in maxillary joints, cracking. Stiffness and pain in neck and back, aching in SMALL of back. Strain of left shoulder joint - pains in joint and arm, aching and numbness. Articular inflammation. Pains in wrists and hands. Dull aching right sciatic nerve. Stiffness in knees and feet. Aching in legs, unable to rest for a moment. Paroxysmal pains from getting wet. The pains of Rhus Tox. are worse on first moving but relieved by continued movement. (Rhododendron pain is relieved immediately on moving.)

Stiffness of part on FIRST MOVING.

Aggravation from draught, first movement, cold, wet, at rest.

Amelioration from heat and when warmed by exercise.

RESTLESSNESS. Must move the part. Pains worse AT NIGHT. Numbness and twitching of extremities; traumatic paralysis. Alternation with Bryonia as symptoms change. FEVERS - with restlessness, delirium, suspicion of being poisoned.

(Influenza, paratyphoid.) Dryness of the mouth with great thirst; red triangular tip of the tongue.

Desire for milk. Effects of OVER-EXERTION of a group of muscles, or over-use of the voice, which is initially hoarse and then improves with movement.

Mentals

Incapable of spontaneous warmth and expression, unable to relax, stiff on the mental level also. Fear of being hurt.

Skin

Eruptions which are *vesicular* or pustular, or even erysipelalous.

Eczema of palms and fingers, blistering eruptions of the vulva, and *shingles*. Herpes of the lips.