

Sea remedies

Evolution of the Senses

Jo Evans

Emryss Publishers



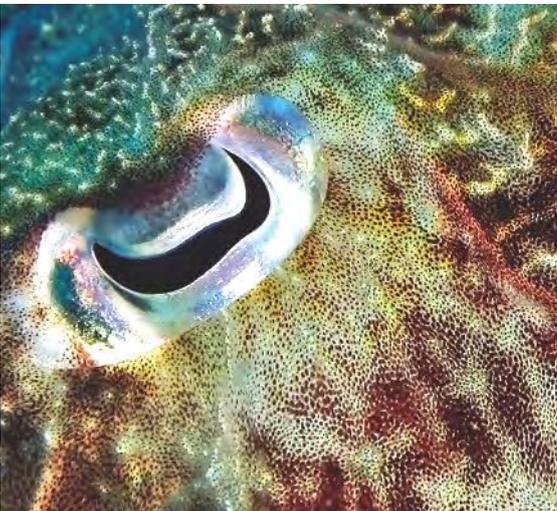
"This book offers an invitation: a subtle and simply irresistible one. From myth to neuroscience, from provings to cases, it offers the reader every possible approach. Diving for our antecedents in evolution, we rediscover senses that we have long forgotten. Emerging from the depths of this work, sea remedies cease to be just remedies. Future homeopathic books will be measured against this one."

Franz Swoboda, MD, Austria. Editor of *Documenta Homoeopathica*, Homeopathic Physician



"A beautifully illustrated and meticulously researched book on the sea remedies that stands to become a classic. *Sea Remedies, Evolution of the Senses* expands one's understanding of these valuable remedies by providing a vast amount of empirical data on provings and medical application, as well as stimulating the imagination through an intimate understanding of the substance and its role in mythology."

Jane Cicchetti, RSHom(NA), CCH, Homeopath, international teacher and author of *Dreams, Symbols and Homeopathy*, publ. North Atlantic books, USA



"This book is the most extensive collection of remedies from the realm of the oceans, and takes homeopathic materia medica to a deeper level of understanding. The author's sensitivity of perception and ability to extract the vital information from natural science, qualitative science, literature and the homeopathic knowledge-base, comes together in a coherent presentation of sensations and functions, valuable polarities, and common themes of groups and sub-groups. The beautiful design and pictures bring you, like a dive, face to face with the colourful sea realm and its remedies."

Andreas N. Bjørndal, MNHL, Homeopath and Principal of the Norwegian Academy of Natural Medicine, Oslo.

*Detail of red coral,
a sea anemone and a
cuttlefish's eye*

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- Fully illustrated in colour throughout, this is a sensory materia medica of 24 sea remedies, with emphasis on *the senses*. The author invites us to explore this strange and mysterious undersea world, enabling us to experience the vital sensation of mollusc, starfish or lobster. We are taken on a journey through evolution, from the sensory hub of the jellyfish, to understanding coral as an animal with the capacity to change the weather, to the intricate logarithmic spiral of the nautilus.
- It is from the ancient sea creatures that the human senses have evolved; in fact we use less senses than some sea creatures, which also have a keen awareness of electro magnetism and lateral line symmetry. The book traces the evolution of our senses through the natural, biological and evolutionary history of the marine invertebrates, with appendices on the sensory symptoms of the corresponding remedies. There are individual chapters and appendices of symptoms for the Senses of Hearing, Smell and Taste, Touch and Vision.
- Each materia medica chapter begins with a summary of the remedy and its key elements, and then opens out to a wider examination of the sensations, functions and polarities of the remedy in every aspect. The layout of the materia medica is guided by the senses. Each materia medica chapter is followed by the natural history of the remedy; the uses of the source material in other medicines; homeopathic cases (where available) and the folklore, mythology, symbol and signature surrounding the source substance.
- Much of the materia medica is new. Authors and proving co-ordinators have willingly shared their cases and provings, and much of the material is previously unpublished and unavailable elsewhere.
- The photographs are spectacular, making the book a joy to read and use. As one reviewer put it: the beautiful design and pictures bring you, like a dive, face to face with the colourful sea realm and its remedies.

From the book's editor Jenni Tree

This work is the academic anchor giving weight and stability to homeopaths working in many styles, whether analysing through sensation, theme, physical affinities, repertory or materia medica. The joy of the book is in its eloquent and erudite narrative. It darts into poetry and film, medical research and oceanic biodiversity, and is as beautifully written as it is illustrated.

In this book we hear the voices of the invertebrate sea creatures, the porifera (sponge); cnidarians (three jellyfish, coral and two sea anemones); echinoderms (two starfish and a flower urchin); arthropods (horseshoe crab and lobster); molluscs, divided into bivalves (four bivalve shell remedies) and gastropods (two 'snail' shell remedies); cephalopods (the cuttlefish, squid, nautilus and octopus), and the pearls – two oceanic gems – as well as mother of pearl.

Sea Remedies: sensory evolution provides a stunning, full-colour illustrated guide to the marine invertebrate remedies used in homeopathy. Alongside the materia medica, additional chapters explore the evolution of the senses and the relationship of our human sensory experience to that of this group of early animals.

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Sample Chapter

Echinoderms

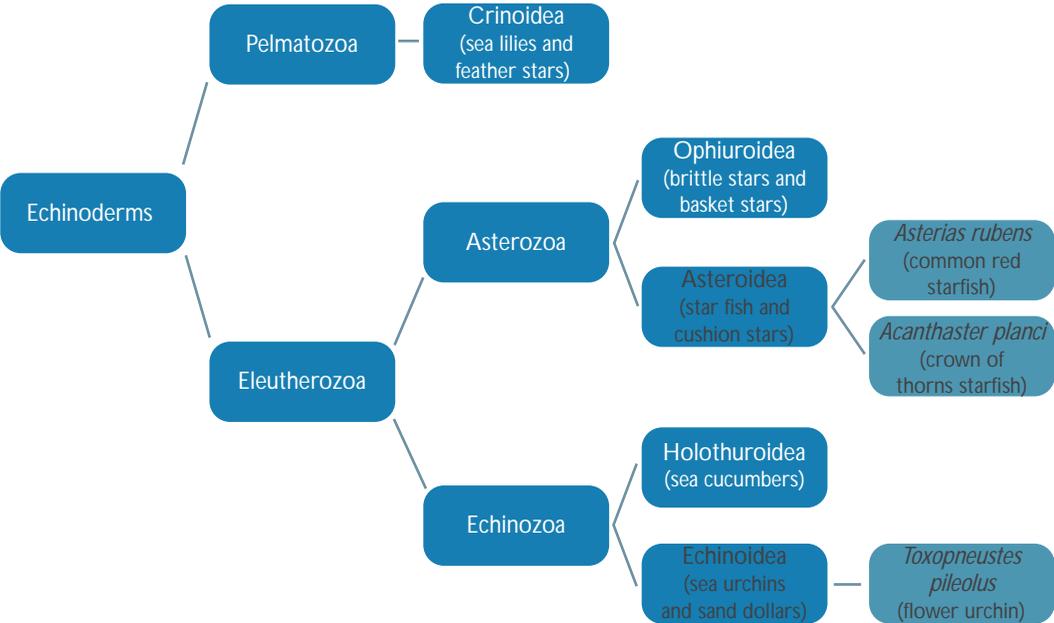
Asterias rubens (red starfish)

Acanthaster planci (crown of thorns starfish)

Toxopneustes pileolus (flower urchin)



ECHINODERMS TREE OF LIFE



Echinoderm Remedies

The core sensation of these intense and passionate remedies is that of being under pressure, held back, full of suppressed emotions and sensations, and at risk of bursting with these feelings, OR feelings completely and frustratingly lacking, empty and hollow: feeling the lack of emotion, sex, food and any kind of stimulation. Intensely sycotic (see also delusions of limbs growing longer) as well as belonging to the cancer miasm, with its sense of overwhelming struggle.

Mental/Emotional: Intense and passionate, but suppressed or restricted. A feeling of being under pressure. Touchy, reacts strongly to contradiction. Ailments from mortification. Argumentative and impatient. May either over-react OR completely suppress emotional responses. Indifference and depression alternates with anger and excitement. Delusions as to the nature of the brain. Delusions about length and growth of limbs. Theme of death, the dead and necrosis. Sensitive to odours (real and imaginary). Infestation: insects, parasites and bloodsuckers. Dreams of sinking, being trapped, stuck in the mud (see also the empty, sinking stomach sensation in *Toxop-p*). Children and family issues: aversion to children, anxiety about children, the demands of nurturing. Pressure to give, care or nurture, at the expense of emotional freedom. Highly sexual. Dreams of fire, sex, death, wild animals.

Desires: Stimulation, strongly flavoured food, sex, music with a strong rhythm (Tchaikovsky and Wagner). *Strong sexual element:* erotic dreams, strong sexual desire, problems of a sexual nature and of the reproductive system and glands, especially the breasts.

Aversion to children (DD *Medusa, Sepia*).

Sensation

- ~ Expansion, Bursting, Splitting OR Contract ion. Hollow OR Full.
- ~ Compression: as if in a vice, crushed by a great weight, cramping (of jaw, head, eyes, stomach, rectum, throat).
- ~ Burning. Itching. Pins and needles. Numbness/coldness.
- ~ Stabbing. Cutting. Stitching. Electric shocks.
- ~ Convulsions. Jerking. Pulsation. Twitching.
- ~ As if pulled inwards. Drawing. Boring. Digging. Screwing.

Clinical: Auto-immune disease, lymphatic system and glands (breasts, axillary glands). Neurological. Cardiovascular. Sex. Hormones.

Associated conditions: Epilepsy. Hypertension. Stroke. Glandular problems. Breast cancer. Nymphomania. Migraine. Sinusitis. Flu. Oedema. Eczema. Herpes. Acne. Ulceration.

Problems of extremities: Feet, toes, hands, fingers. Delusions about legs (being longer, shorter).

ECHINODERMS NATURAL HISTORY

What's included?

Crinoids (feather stars and sea lilies); Asteroidea (starfish or sea stars); Ophiuroidea (brittle stars and basket stars); Holothuroidea (sea cucumbers); Echinoidea (sea urchins and sand dollars).

Echinoderms in homeopathy

- *Asterias rubens* (common red starfish) Asteroidea.
- *Acanthaster planci* (crown of thorns starfish) Asteroidea.
- *Toxopneustes pileolus* (flower urchin) Echinoidea.

Evolutionary history

Echinoderms first appear in the fossil record during the mid-Cambrian period. However, possible echinoderm species have been traced back to the Proterozoic period and it is thought by some researchers that echinoderms existed in the Precambrian era. This is the largest phylum without any freshwater or terrestrial forms, although some can live in brackish water.

Features common to Echinoderms

- Radial symmetry.
- Echinoderm means spiny skin. Calcareous plates, called *ossicles*, are connected by collagen-based ligaments, under nervous control.
- Mutable collagenous tissue. The collagen-based ligaments can be locked or unlocked, tight or loose, allowing a range of movement. The skeleton of echinoids (urchins) and asteroids (starfish) can also form *pedicellariae* (pincer-like structures) as seen in *Toxopneustes pileolus*.

- A water-vascular system: water pressure creates hydraulic power for movement, respiration and feeding. In starfish, canals radiating out from a central ring, circling the gut, pump sea water through the body and operate the sucker-like feet (podia).

Body types: Are extremely varied. Shapes are tubular, stars, spherical, discoid, feathery, bush and basket-like.

Body system: Echinoderms possess an open, fluid-filled body cavity lined with tissue, the coelom or gut. They have a 'mouth' underneath, on the lower surface, and an 'anus' on top. There are no specialised excretory organs. There is a non-centralised nervous system: a nerve net, but no brain. Echinoderms possess gonads and the sexes are usually separate. Only holothurians have specialised respiratory systems, and many echinoderms have only rudimentary circulatory systems; the water-vascular system takes over some of the functions of these systems, as there is no heart to act as a pump. Echinoderms are capable of body regeneration, regrowing arms in the case of starfish, but the powers of regeneration in this group go well beyond regeneration of arms. This is explored in more detail in the chapter on the Sense of Touch, under the heading Of Life and Limb.

Senses: Communication takes place by means of chemicals and pheromones. There are light-sensing organs in the skin. The non-centralised nervous system allows echinoderms to sense the environment from all sides and provides them with their sense of touch: nerves are more concentrated in the tips of the 'arms' in starfish.



ACANTHASTER PLANCI

Crown of thorns starfish

Summary

MAIN POLARITIES: Despair OR Peacefulness. Expansion OR Contraction.

MIND: Dazed, intoxicated, fear of disease (cancer, necrosis). Delusions brain is dissolving or necrosing. Delusions of insects, slugs or snails infesting the skin. Delusions naked. Erotic dreams. Irritability and anger.

SENSATION: Burning, heat, flushing. Stabbing, stitching, pricking. Pulling, drawing. Numbness. Pulsating. Pressure. Congestion. Falling, flying. Expansion. Itching. As if broken apart. As of a stone.

DREAMS: Disease, necrosis, infestation. Erotic. Wild animals. Insects. Competitions and contests. Inadequately dressed. Danger, fire, explosion. Lost, searching. Late. Flying. Falling. Dancing. Talking with the dead. Water, sea, swimming. Subways, buildings. Money, disputes over money.

SYSTEM AFFINITIES: Immune. Nervous. Skin.

CLINICAL AFFINITIES: Eczema. Herpes. Ulceration. Oedema. Sinusitis. Migraine. Influenza. Haemorrhage. Complaints of the liver. Travel sickness. Palpitations. Thrombocytopenia.* Leucopenia.** Peripheral numbness.

GENERALS: Weakness. Sensation of impending influenza. Burning, flushing. Numbness. Stabbing or pricking pains. Pulsating. Trembling. Nervous restlessness.

* **Thrombocytopenia:** low blood platelet count; increased haemorrhagic tendency.

** **Leucopenia:** low white blood cell count; increased risk of infection.

Classification

Kingdom: Animalia **Phylum:** Echinoderm **Class:** Asteroidea **Order:** Valvatida

Family: Acanthasteridae **Genus:** Acanthaster **Species:** Planci.

Homeopathic name: *Acanthaster planci* **Abbreviation:** Acan-p.

Common names: Crown of thorns starfish; coral-eating starfish.

Etymology: Latin: *acantha* (s); *acanthae* (pl.): spine, spiny.

Remedy Source

Dr med Jörg Hildebrandt¹ collected a crown of thorns starfish on a diving expedition to the island Bohol in the Philippines in March 1998. Part of its stomach and a tip of an arm were taken and immediately triturated to the first C potency. Later it was potentised to 30C and 200C by Mag. Robert Müntz, Salvator Pharmacy, Eisenstadt, where the remedy can be obtained [robert.muentz@remedia.at].

Proving

Double-blind proving of *Acanthaster planci* by Dr. med. Jörg Hildebrandt. Fourteen healthy provers (13 verum 30C or 200C, one placebo) between 21 and 50 years of age; one patient also provided symptoms. The double blind proving took place from October 1998 to December 1999, with the provers starting on different dates.

Compare

Echinoderms: *Asterias rubens*, *Toxopneustes pileoleus*. Cnidarians.

Generalities

SENSATION: Swelling, oedema. Burning, heat. Numbness. Stitching. Pressing. Tearing. Itching. Of impending influenza.

FUNCTION: Weakness. Trembling. Eczema. Oedema. Sinusitis. Migraine. Influenza. Haemorrhage. Chill. Weak and heavy extremities. Restlessness. Complaints of the liver. Thrombocytopenia. Leucopenia.

Mind

POLARITIES: Despair. Peaceful.

SENSATION: Dazed with sleepiness. Dazed, with intoxicated feeling after sleep.

Delusions: Brain is dissolving. A necrotic abscess of the brain. Insects, spiders and snails in the skin. Hypochondria: cancer, disease. Of being naked while in public; being inadequately dressed. He has fallen off a wall.

FUNCTION: Ailments from mortification (eczema). Mental exhaustion. Mistakes in speech and writing. Difficulty concentrating. Talks to himself when alone. Nervous irritability from slight causes (music aggravates). Angry.

LANGUAGE: “Meanwhile I stretched out many legs to gain a broad (financial) basis to live on, costing a lot of energy.” “For me, the train for children has left” = I’m too old for children now. (DD Aversion to children *Asterias rubens*, *Medusa*, *Sepia*.)

DESIRES: Powerful, strong music (e.g. Tchaikovsky). Business activity.

AVERSION: Company.

AGGRAVATION: Soft music (soft music e.g. Schubert aggravates, while strongly rhythmic music like Tchaikovsky or Latin/Jazz ameliorates).

¹ Dr. med. Jörg Hildebrandt, Feldmühlweg 103, A-3100 St. Pölten, Austria. [j.hildebrandt@telering.at] [www.dr-hildebrandt.at] Last accessed October 2008. I would like to thank Jörg Hildebrandt for his invaluable help in the preparation of the materia medica section of this remedy.

Dreams

Activities: Dancing. Of falling from high places. Of flying. Of wandering. Of looking for something lost. Of being lost. Arriving home too late. Disputes over money. Contests, competitions.

Circumstances: Disease: necrosis, necrosis of the liver, legs; abscess of brain (brain is a black and crumbling mass which can be pressed out like a boil); the cerebellum is missing. Dreams of blisters on the skin with ants, slugs, snails and spiders inside. Ill relative. Pregnancy. Marriage. Erotic. Naked. Underdressed for the occasion.

People: Relatives, friends, neighbours. A deceased acquaintance is standing and talking to him.

Animals: Wild animals. Ants, flies, insects, spiders, slugs and snails. Pigs.

Objects: Of trains and subways. Of buildings. Of computer.

Phenomena and elements: Explosion. Fire. Water, ocean. Swimming in the sea.

Feelings: Danger. Erotic. Competition. Disgusted after dreams.

Sensory: Colours.

Quality of dreams: Pleasant, anxious, terrifying, angry, irritable, continue after waking, heavy and oppressive.

Sleep

SENSATION: Sleepiness.

FUNCTION: Waking with headache. Comatose. Snoring. Disturbed through physical restlessness. Disturbed by salivation. Sleepless though sleepy.

Face

SENSATION: Itching, numb, swollen, hot. Stitching. Expansion, tension. Pressing pain in cheekbones.

FUNCTION: Herpes. Perspiration. Scaly skin eruptions at the margins of the hair (cured symptom), eyelids, ear and face in general. Painful sinusitis in head, eyes and teeth, bending forwards aggravates.

Head and Headache

SENSATION: As if there is an abscess on the brain. Pulsating, throbbing. Stitching, stabbing. Drawing. Congestion of blood. Waves of heat. Pressing, above eyes. Pressing inwards. Crushing, as if broken into pieces.

FUNCTION: Migraine. Perspiration of head and brow. Headache appears suddenly. Headache from the slightest touch to the nape.

LOCATION: Forehead, above eyes, temples, back of head

HEADACHE AMELIORATION: Coffee. Warmth.

HEADACHE AGGRAVATION: On rising. After breakfast. Afternoon. Midnight. Stooping. Bending forwards. Laughing. Fast movement.

Hair and Scalp

FUNCTION: Skin eruptions at the margins of the hair (cured symptom). Sweating.

Eyes and Vision

SENSATION: Burning and heat (lids). Stitching (in eyeball), pricking, stabbing. Numbness. Drawing (as if pulled). Pressure, with sensation of expansion in the forehead. Of expansion with waves of heat in the head. Heat and itching of eyelids. Swelling. Sensation as if the left eye is smaller.

FUNCTION: Eyeballs rolling. Itching, red, scaly eruptions on lids. Focal length changed when reading.

AGGRAVATION: Rubbing. Bending forwards, bending over.

Ears and Hearing

SENSATION: Numbness. Pulsating. Blocked.

FUNCTION: Noises in ears (with headache). Eczema of the ears. Itching eruptions become painful. Hearing loss.

Taste

Metallic taste after eating.

Appetite

Strong, ravenous (with flushes of heat).

DESIRE: Eggs.

AVERSION: Salad. Sweets. Tea.

Tongue

SENSATION: Burning, heat.

FUNCTION: Blisters (edges, under tongue) < touch.

Mouth and Lips

SENSATION: Itching and Numbness of lips. Sensation as if covered. Dry.

FUNCTION: Swollen lips. Herpes around the mouth. White fever blisters. Watery saliva. Increased salivation < night. Inclination to swallow constantly.

Teeth and Gums

TEETH SENSATION: Burning and heat. As if loose. Stitching. Itching. Drawing, pulling. Pulsating. Sensation as if new teeth are growing. Pain < pressure, stooping, jarring, walking. > Fresh air. Pain in healthy teeth.

FUNCTION: Swollen gums. Affects molars.

CONCOMITANTS: Tooth pain with common cold.

Gastrointestinal

SENSATION: Stitching, pointed. Drawing, pulling. Contraction, cramps (crouching ameliorates). Heat. Pain like stones.

FUNCTION: Hiccoughs. Travel sickness.

CONCOMITANTS: Headache.

Rectum

SENSATION: Violent itching. Pain during stool.

FUNCTION: Diarrhoea. Bleeding fissure. Constipation (chronic).

Stool

Light brown. Yellow. Light. Odourless.

Half formed. Hard. Like sheep-dung, agglutinated balls. Soft.

Urinary

SENSATION: Pain in abdomen before urination.

Sense of Smell

ODOUR: Smells imaginary and real: rotten apples in the house, sweet smells.

Nose

SENSATION: Numbness. Cold. As if dripping water.

FUNCTION: Blocked.

DISCHARGE: Thin, clear, watery.

Respiratory System

THROAT SENSATION: Burning, heat. Pricking and stitching. Tickling. As if coated.

THROAT FUNCTION: Hawking constantly.

VOICE: Hoarse.

CHEST SENSATION: Oppression with trembling. Pulsating. Stabbing (sides).

Paroxysmal stabbing. Pulling, drawing (sides).

CHEST FUNCTION: Palpitations (< bending forwards). Trembling. Perspiration in the axillae.

COUGH SENSATION: Ice-cold air in passages. Scratching behind sternum. Tickly. Dry.

COUGH SOUND: Dry.

Heart and Blood

FUNCTION: Audible, irregular palpitations. Palpitations with trembling hands.

Haemorrhage. Thrombocytopenia [Reduced platelet (thrombocyte) count, resulting in reduced ability to clot blood, increased hemorrhagic tendency. Initial signs: bleeding gums, nosebleeds and increased bruising.] Hypertension. Leucopenia [low white blood cell count].

Sex, female

UTERUS SENSATION: Pain with menses, cramps, contractions: extending like a belt to the lumbar/sacral region.

BREASTS SENSATION: Stitching. Drawing, pulling.

BREASTS FUNCTION: Eruptions under the arms: axillae.

Touch, Movement and Temperature

PERCEPTION OF BODY: Brain is dissolving/rotting away. Expansion. Tension.

PERCEPTION OF TIME: Dreams of being late, arriving home too late.

PERCEPTION OF PRESSURE: Sensation of pressure, expansion and crushing; touch aggravates.

Pains

- ~ Burning, hot
- ~ Stabbing, darting, stitching
- ~ Pulling, drawing
- ~ Expanding/pulsating
- ~ Contraction/cramps
- ~ Crushing/as if broken apart

HEAT/COLD SENSATION: Cold hands and feet. General burning. Skin flushes. Fever. Chill in waves, > external warmth. Chill not > from warmth of bed.

HEAT/COLD FUNCTION: Cold hands during chill.

BALANCE: Vertigo as if the floor gave way.

AGGRAVATIONS: Afternoon, evening.

SKIN SENSATION: Burning. Numbness. Itching.

SKIN FUNCTION: Goosebumps. Eczema (eczema from mortification and emotional causes). Dry and rough. Cracked. Exfoliating. Ulcers. Blisters. Vesicles. Oedema.

BACK and SPINE SENSATION: Drawing. Pressing. Heat (as if sunburnt).

< Bending over, forwards, stretching. Heat in dorsal region.

BACK and SPINE FUNCTION: Perspiration. Twitching (shoulder blades).

MUSCULOSKELETAL SENSATION: Stitching, stabbing. Stabbing pain in elbow. Numbness. Drawing, pulling. Drawing in elbow, thigh. Heavy, tired. Burning of heel.

MUSCULOSKELETAL FUNCTION: Pains in thighs, calves, buttock muscles.

Fingers and Toes: Dry, rough, exfoliating, cracked: soles of feet and fingertips. Blistered/vesicles on feet < walking. Infected. Ulcerated. Numbness of fingertips, fingers. Pains in bones of fingers.

Clinical Data

Case from Dr. med. Jörg Hildebrandt, Austria

Mrs H, born in 1958, is a blonde, slim, active, sensitive 42 year-old woman, previously prescribed *Silica*. Her presenting problem is a **troublesome, itching, therapy-resistant eczema of the eyelids and ears, worse on the right side**. It started after a holiday in Malaysia in 2000. On the day that she got home, a thumbnail-size patch of eczema appeared first on the right upper eyelid and left lower eyelids, with reddening and

scaling, later with extreme itchiness and swelling. It got worse that week, first on both upper eyelids and lower eyelids, later on the cheeks and at the side of the lower jaw.

On the third day after taking *Acanthaster planci* 200C, she reported: “On the first day, I got red, scaly spots all over my face, but they did not itch”. On the second and third day: “The eruption on the upper eyelids and lower eyelids is still there a bit, not swelling, the intolerable itch has gone, no numbness.” She had previously stopped using topical cortisone. She feels hopeful. Two months later she relapses. Repeat of *Acanthaster planci* 200C. After that she says she is “unusually calm and composed, in spite of very many emotional and organisational problems.”

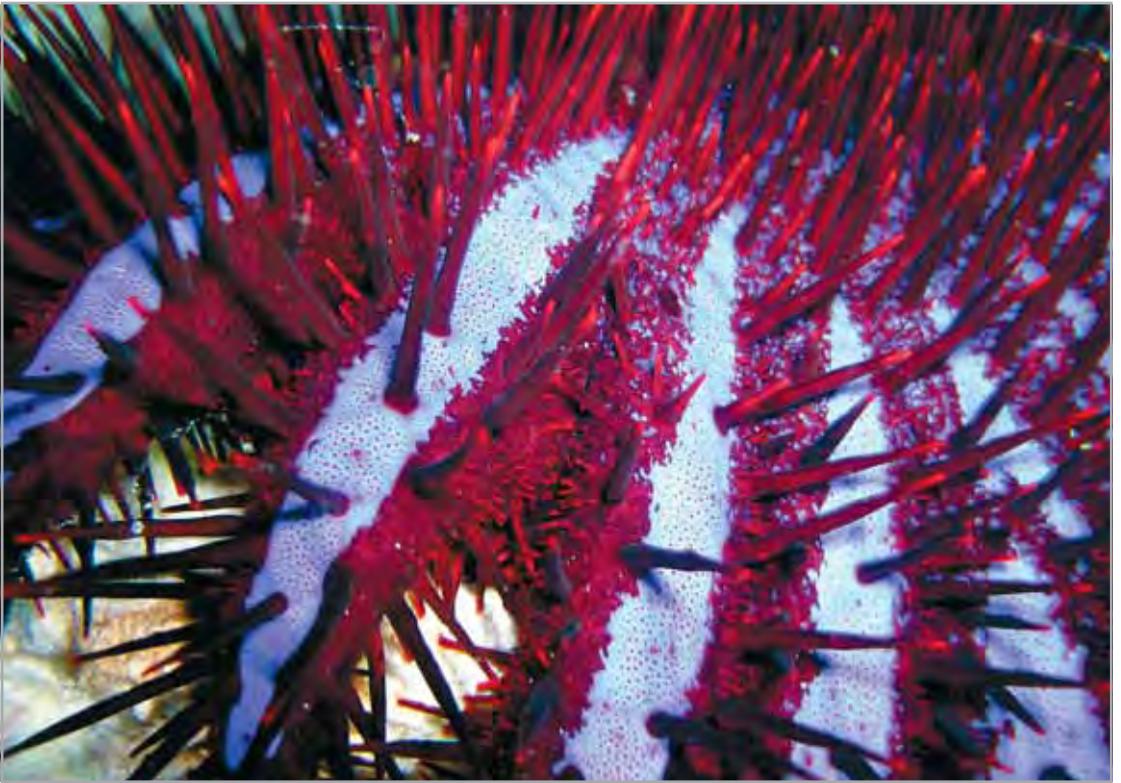
At the follow-up she realises that, before the eczema started, she had been through three experiences that had left her feeling mortified. The first was that a competitor got the job she had been hoping for. The second was that a rival was appointed to be the official deputy to the boss. Thirdly, her professional rival had children and this didn't seem to cause her any professional problems. The patient had put off her own desire to have children because of her career goals; she felt she had to give her career one hundred percent. Now she had neither career success nor children. In the meantime she felt she had “*stretched out too many legs*” to gain a broad (financial) basis to live on, costing a lot of energy, dispersing energy.” And that this was not conducive to family life.

She loves music with a strong rhythm: Latin American, jazz and Cuban: not crooners. Tchaikovsky and Wagner: not Mahler and Schubert.

Proving symptom (in a male prover): “Music irritated me. I was at the music society today and could not bear Schubert. I hated the sound of it; it was almost “homosexual” for me. Tchaikovsky was good. The power, the battle, the force, destruction. That was great.”

The patient said: “I love new experiences. I'm not complacent. I always want to be challenged and try new things, so I don't get bored.”

Six years later the patient remains well.



Close-ups showing the spines of the crown of thorns starfish

Other Medical Uses

The venom has been found to be antihypertensive.² The thorn poison has been studied and found to cause hypotension, thrombocytopenia and leucopenia.³ It has also been found to contain liver damaging substances.⁴ Enhanced vascular permeability.⁵

Hypotension: low blood pressure

Thrombocytopenia: low blood platelet count; increased haemorrhagic tendency.

Leucopenia: low white blood cell count; increased risk of infection.

Muscles, destruction⁶: “A rich source of useful venoms has been found in the crown-of-thorns starfish *Acanthaster planci*. One of its deadly venoms has been identified as a myotoxic (muscle destroying) phospholipase A (Mebs 1991), and several other candidates for such effects have been identified (Shiomi et al. 1985, 1988; Mebs 1989).”⁷

Muscles, contraction: One study found that venom of the crown of thorns starfish caused contractions of the uterus in rats and enhanced vascular permeability in rabbits. It acts to contract smooth muscle.⁸

Poisonings

Symptoms after contact with the poisonous venom of *Acanthaster planci*⁹

- Severe pain (lasting several hours or days), itching, swelling, heat and redness may occur with contact. The puncture site turns blue (erythema) and swells (oedema).
- More severe reactions include stiffening of the joints with aching, numbness, tingling, weakness, paralysis, nausea, vomiting, headaches and cough. Swollen tender lymph glands in groin or armpit.
- A spine tip in the finger can result in swelling and stiffness caused by the growth of granulation tissue typical of a foreign body reaction. In severe cases bone-destroying (osteolytic) processes may cause narrowing of a joint by destruction of cartilage, which requires surgery.

2 Chai Yoke Chin, Kim Kah Hwi, Johgalingam VT, *Anti-hypertensive effects of a novel polypeptide isolated from Crown of Thorns Starfish (Acanthaster Planci)*, 4th National Symposium on Health Sciences: Harmonisation of Research and Practice in Health Sciences, Kuala Lumpur, April 2002, pp. 76-81.

3 Shiroma N. et al., *Haemodynamic and haematologic effects of Acanthaster planci venom in dogs*. Department of Pharmacology, School of Medicine, University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa, Japan. *Toxicol*, October 1, 1994; 32(10): 1217-25.

4 Shiomi K., et al. *Liver damage by the crown-of-thorns starfish (Acanthaster planci) lethal factor*, Department of Food Science and Technology, Tokyo University of Fisheries, Japan. *Toxicol*, January 1, 1990; 28(5): 469-75.

5 Ibid.

6 Karasudani I., Omija, M., and Aniya, Y., *Smooth muscle contractile action of the venom from the crown-of-thorns starfish, Acanthaster planci*, Laboratory of Physiology and Pharmacology, University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa, Japan. *J Toxicol Sci*, February 1, 1996; 21(1): 11-7.

7 Petzelt, C., *Are Echinoderms of Interest to Biotechnology?* Progress in Molecular and Subcellular Biology, Subseries Marine Molecular Biotechnology. V. Matrangola (Ed.), Echinodermata, © Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2005.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

In Nature

The crown of thorns starfish was first described in 1705 by Georg Rumphius. Linnaeus named it in 1758. This is the only known venomous starfish. Although classed as an asteroidean, or sea star, for its many arms, it is also similar to the echinoids or urchins, because of its spines; sea urchins are also echinoderms. Adult crown of thorns starfish are usually about 30cm in diameter but can reach as much as half a metre. They will lose a limb when under stress, or in defence against a predator, but limbs can be regenerated within six months. *Acanthaster planci* vary in colour according to location; on the Great Barrier Reef they are normally brown or reddish-grey with red-tipped spines, while in Thailand luminous purple varieties can be seen.

Thorns: “The disc and arms are covered with a soft skin and stout, hinged spines two to three centimetres long, each with a three-sided blade at the tip. The spines are covered by a thin skin containing two types of glands, which produce venom and mucus. The tissues of an *A. planci* contain toxic saponins, which are not only poisonous to humans but also to insects and soil organisms by their suppression of plant growth. The starfish therefore cannot be used either for food or fertilizer.”¹⁰

Communication and perception: *Acanthaster planci* is able to sense predators as well as prey by means of chemoreception, a means of smelling and tasting underwater. The non-centralized nervous system allows echinoderms to sense their environment from all sides. Sensory cells on the skin sense light, contact, chemicals and water currents. Higher densities of sensory cells are found in the tube feet and along feeding canal margins. Red pigmented eye-spots are found at the end of each arm. These function as photoreceptors.

Feeding: Large numbers of crown of thorns starfish may gather to eat their way through a coral reef, but they are generally considered solitary, nocturnal feeders, maintaining distance from one another even when moving over a reef in numbers. Adult starfish normally feed on coral polyps. They extrude their stomachs and digest the coral polyps by releasing digestive enzymes to then absorb the liquefied tissue. When live hard corals are not available, alternative foods include soft corals, algae, clams, encrusting organisms, gastropods, gorgonians, hydrozoans and sea anemones. They can live for six to nine months without food.

Reproducing: The crown of thorns starfish reproduces sexually. Females shed eggs into the water and these are subsequently fertilised by sperm released from nearby males. They typically assume a bell-shape when spawning. Fertilisation is synchronised through chemical signalling. There is no parental care of offspring. Larvae settle on the sea floor and continue development there, ending the swimming phase. Initially the juvenile starfish has only five rudimentary arms but extra arms develop rapidly as the starfish begins to feed on encrusting algae. Within six months the

¹⁰ [www.sbg.ac.at/ipk/avstudio/pierofun/planci/planci.htm] Last accessed October 2008.

starfish is about one centimetre in size and begins to feed on corals. It becomes sexually mature at the end of its second year, by which time it has grown to about twenty centimetres in diameter.

It is not known how long this species lives, but they have been kept in aquaria for as long as eight years. Growth rate and reproduction rates decline after three to four years.

Movement: Crown of thorns starfish walk on large numbers of tiny tube feet situated in the grooves running along the underside of their arms. These act like hydraulic suckers, operating by means of water pressure in the central cavity and tubes. The arms are muscular and strong, allowing the starfish to walk across the sea floor, as well as navigate the reef; they can move in reverse, turn around and move individual arms independently (Perrins and Middleton, 1985).

Defending: Crown of thorns starfish are armoured with impressive spines, offering a strong deterrent to attackers. However, a number of animals are known to attack and prey on crown of thorns starfish, notably the giant triton, and also certain molluscs, fish, crustaceans and the fireworm.

Senses: Chemical messaging (smelling and tasting). Touch. Photoreceptors. Balance.¹¹

Signature and Symbol

The crown of thorns starfish is spiky, sinister-looking and venomous; its threatening image provokes an immediate sense of danger. They are known as the plague of the coral reefs, systematically eating their way through large areas of reef, destroying everything in their wake. This not only kills the living coral polyps but the infrastructure of vast numbers of reef species that depend on the coral for their habitat. Reefs can take up to two decades to regenerate. The imbalance is thought to have occurred largely as a result of over-harvesting the triton shell; the triton is the main predator of the crown of thorns starfish.

Signature

- Poisoning symptoms were borne out by the proving: itching, swelling, heat, oedema, reddening, numbness, stiffness of muscles and inflammation of lymph glands.
- The ‘thorns’: stabbing, stitching, pricking pains.
- Destructiveness of coral reefs, digesting the polyps alive: the delusions of necrosis, necrosis of the brain, of the brain dissolving. Fear of disease, cancer.

¹¹ [www.aims.gov.au/pages/reflib/cot-starfish/pages/] Last accessed October 2008, and Kosarek, N. 2000. “Acanthaster planci” (On-line), Animal Diversity Web. [http://animaldiversity.ummm.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Acanthaster_planci.html] Last accessed October 2008.



- Dark and sinister: Nocturnal feeder, dark spines: necrosis features in dreams and delusions.
- The proving brought out clusters of symptoms in the extremities, particularly around the toes and fingers, including eruptions, ulceration and numbness. As well as obviously having many arms/legs, this an area of great sensitivity for echinoderms, with a higher density of sensory cells here than any other part of the starfish body. (Cross reference *Asterias rubens* for this affinity with toes and fingers).
- There were delusions and dreams of insects, ants, and spiders; this starfish bears a resemblance to certain arthropods. The theme of infestation by insects and parasites also occurs in the clinical data of *Asterias rubens*.

Credits

Dr. med. Jörg Hildebrandt, Feldmühlweg 103, A-3100 St. Pölten, Austria.
 j.hildebrandt@telering.at; www.dr-hildebrandt.at

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