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**Into the Realm of Sea Remedies. Sensation in Sea Animals.
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from the Inside; An Ovarian Cancer Case.**

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Determining What Works Best: Removal of Maintaining Cause or the Remedy?

By Vatsala Sperling, MS, PhD, PDHom, CCH, RSHom(NA)

Sue is an attractive woman in her fifties. She has taken much care to present herself well. I meet her at the reception and feel as though she is a picture of calmness. Her movements are graceful as she walks in, finds a comfortable seat, and sits back. She has a thick mop of hair with a few gray highlights and not one strand is out of place.

She speaks gently in a soft voice, “Do you mind opening the window just a bit? It is so nice and fresh outside, let us enjoy a bit of that indoors.”

Though she has asked very politely, I feel an edge in her question.

Sue’s initial list of complaints that presented themselves at the beginning of the case are as follows:

- After rich food, hemorrhoids pop out and bleed for days.
- Indigestion with slightest indiscretion in eating.
- Strong, rich foods and alcohol disagree.
- After rich food, abdominal bloating, heaviness, pain, and stuck-ness lasting for days.
- Stomach feels heavy, food sits like a rock.
- Lower back pain with abdominal distress.
- Insufficient stools with many visits to the loo.
- Burping too often.
- Smelly flatulence without relief, much gurgling, rumbling.
- Results for endoscopy, colonoscopy, stool, and blood tests are normal.

My initial thoughts, if I were in a hurry, would be to lean toward *Pulsatilla*—she is soft-spoken, gentle, agreeable, likes fresh air and has abdominal discomfort from rich food. Case closed.

But the “ask” about opening the window a bit, though framed as a polite question, did come off more as an order. It had caught my attention. I am going to dig more. *Pulsatilla* can wait.

VS: Your complaints are centered around digestion. Homeopathy has many remedies that might support your vital force in overcoming this issue. For choosing a remedy, I must learn a bit about you as an individual. What can you tell me?

Sue: I go for silent retreats in a meditation camp. No one talks for a month. We eat boiled rice gruel and sleep on the floor. In this camp, I do very well, no symptoms whatsoever. In my home, I eat all organic, vegan, vegetarian food—as bland as possible—that I cook from the scratch. I walk eight miles every day and do yoga mornings and evenings.

[Observation] Very impressive indeed, but where are the rubrics?

Sue: Occasionally, I go out with friends for a drink and dinner. Oh, pork ribs, filet mignon, steak, venison, crab cakes, salmon... so yummy, particularly if you pair them with the right kind of alcohol. But the night of these fancy meals is pure hell. Right after the meal, I begin to feel unwell. Somehow, I get back home. Next morning, I am good for nothing. My back is gone, my abdomen is bloated, I become a burping, farting lunatic running to the loo ten times a day with hardly any result to show for all the effort except a bunch of bleeding and itching hemorrhoids hanging from my rear. I can barely walk to the mailbox at the end of my driveway. All this drama lasts for 36-48 hours...and then gradually, the belly begins to become normal.

[Observation] Now, her eyes are misty. With this description of her symptoms, she provokes empathy in me. I am almost ready to console and comfort her, but I hold myself back and note that her symptoms are worse from intake of animal-based rich food and alcohol.

VS: How does this problem affect you?

Sue: What do you mean, affect me?

[Observation] There is that edge again. I hear a very slight tinge of anger in her voice. It is ever so slight, but clearly present. In the very beginning, the order to open the window disguised as a polite question, and now, this tinge of anger... these do not sit well with *Pulsatilla*. I have to dig more.

VS: I mean, what do you feel differently when you are experiencing them?

Sue: Well, I want to slash those bloody hemorrhoids with a blade and be done. I want to do an enema and flush all the

gunk out, I would, but for those silly hemorrhoids. I have no energy whatsoever to get out of bed and walk. I crawl to the loo. I curse and swear at the people who asked me out. I do so well on rice gruel. Why do I need to eat out and suffer like a fool? I try to be polite for the sake of the host but the evening weighs on me like a rock. The toxic food sits in my stomach like a rock. All the sweet chatter, mindless gossip, and two-cents opinions of those flesh-eating morons, they should just drown in their own whisky bottle and die, so, I do not have to suffer from eating out with them...

[Observation] Her choice of words does not fit any more with the image of calmness I saw in the reception area. Anger is an issue, not just rich food, and alcohol.

VS: What is your experience around rice gruel in a silent retreat?

[Observation] I am hoping this question will help me understand why she is drawn to rice gruel and silent retreat.

Sue: I have not been into rice gruel all my life. (My ears perk up. This rice gruel situation is exactly opposite of her outing with friends when she eats rich animal-based food, consumes alcohol, and gets sick.) I hated all bland foods. I have always enjoyed extravagantly spiced foods cooked with real butter. For years I ate these, drank heavily, and partied till 2 AM. No problem. As a software engineer, I was troubleshooting for corporations, selling them the latest programs that would cost them a fortune and solve a bit of their problems. I was asked out to wine and dine almost every night. Most of these years I did just fine.

VS: Most of these years you did just fine? When did your problem begin?

[Observation] A timeline is emerging, and I am going to explore it.

Sue: A few years ago, most of my assistants moved on to other jobs. I hired a bunch of guys from your country (India). They began staging a coup. Their idea was to unseat me from the throne and take over the company. I fought them off tooth and nail. I turned into a raging, rabid bitch, ready to rip apart their brown skin and spill their guts out. My anger started becoming unmanageable. If words could cut like blades, mine were the sharpest and right on. I would erupt horribly for the slightest cause or for no cause at all. One day I turned around and realized that I was the only white female in my office. Everyone else was brown, black, yellow, from other countries, smarty pants with big dreams of owning a piece of America. They hung out in their pathetic little ethnic groups. I was an angry outsider, a minority in my own country, the land of my ancestors. The immigrants were taking over. Around this time, I was reacting poorly to my eating habits, getting sicker

and sicker, angrier, and angrier, and one day, I was given a golden handshake—a ton of money and an exit route! I took both.

This part of her life narrative shows when and how her current problems established themselves in her being. In order to compensate, her vital force has directed her to an exactly opposite route, rice gruel and silent retreats. Though she has compensated well, and worked willfully at removing the diet-related-maintaining-cause of her suffering, why are her problems not going away?

Instinctual gut feeling, quick observations, and a hurried prescription can lead us to selecting an inappropriate remedy.

VS: How were you as a child?

Sue: Fighting, kicking, and screaming murder if I did not get my way. If I got my way, I would be sweet as a honeydew. I was quick to say nasty words just to win. My high school friends enrolled in art school. I majored in computer engineering and earned two postgraduate degrees in computer securities. It is not necessarily a man's world. There are many, very smart female computer engineers but it is definitely a dog-eats-dog world with ruthless competition. All politeness is just a veneer. People are aiming for the jugular while engaging in a friendly handshake. As a child, I had to win, even if it was just a bike race around the block. As an adult, I absolutely had to win, or else, my words would kill.

Her childhood reflections give a glimpse of an uncompensated state. The personality traits like saying and doing nasty things just to win, have been present since childhood. Computer science education and a high profile career helped firm up these traits into a competitive habit. In her adult life, the workplace brought out the worst in her behavior—out of control expressions of anger.

It is quite apparent at this point that her digestive system complaints are not just because of rich foods. This may be a maintaining cause. When it is removed willfully, and she enrolls into silent retreat and lives on rice gruel, her symptoms do go away, but only to return with the intake of unsuitable food. We must also note that removal of Sue's apparent maintaining cause is not curing her either. A remedy that would mirror her mental and general state of being is her hope. This mental and general state of being is ambitiousness, competitiveness, with easily provoked anger which is expressed in sharp and cutting words. If a remedy is her hope, what would that remedy be? Let us see.

[People] will say things to appear in a more positive light. We should try to explore the darker and more negative aspects and explore the polar opposite aspects of the case to find a successful prescription.

2. People like to speak about not just their symptoms, but will say things to appear in a more positive light. We should try to explore the darker and more negative aspects of the client's situation and symptoms and look and explore the polar opposite aspects of the case to find a successful prescription.

Unless it is an acute situation with one hundred and three degrees fever and projectile vomiting, in general, clients just do not talk about their symptoms. They also share with us little snippets of their life as they tell their stories.

Sue mentions month-long retreats where she is silent, eats rice gruel, and sleeps on the floor. I was indeed impressed with this austerity. But the question to explore is—what is at the opposing pole of this description? If we can find that out, perhaps we will be able to solve the case. Why is Sue drawn to these retreats where everyone is nice-nice, eating bland food, avoiding luxuries, and avoiding even conversation! How would Sue be, what would she experience and feel if she were in a situation that was the polar opposite of this idealistic retreat? We need to know this for a successful prescription.

Just a little bit more of questioning her unravels the high and low points of her career, her childhood, her food habits, her competitiveness, her anger, and violent expressions of her anger. If I had gone further and explored a little more about the silent retreat, I wonder what my prescription would have been. But I was curious to find out why she opted for the retreats, and it turns out that it enabled her to be in a situation which did not provoke her anger. Thus, we come away with a fuller, more complete picture of her personality and we can pick rubrics that match her personality as well. Using both mental and general symptoms, we are better able to find a truer remedy for Sue.

3. Maintaining cause and its removal can lead to amelioration or removal of symptoms.

What Hahnemann taught us is pure common sense in Aphorism #771. If a person is getting sick because of living in the damp basement, then the dampness is the

maintaining cause. If someone's stomach is upset and disturbed from eating rich food, then of course, rich food is the maintaining cause. There are as many proclamations as possible about what is good and bad for you. As a result, we have gluten, dairy, sugar, caffeine, nut-free diets, vegan, keto and one-meal-a-day diet, weight loss, and weight-gain diets and so on. Each diet has its benefits and pitfalls. However, when we see a client with distinctly diet-related expressions of symptoms, we should still ask ourselves, 'Is diet the only maintaining cause?'

From Sue's description of her time in the silent retreat, it appears that rich, meat-based foods and alcohol are the culprits and once she bans them from her life, she is well, and she gets over her digestive complaints. This is correct, but only partially. As soon as she is out of the retreat, and eats out, she gets sick again. So, her food intake is not the only cause of her problem. And again, we must also note that refraining from rich food is not solving her problem permanently either, so it is an aspect that 'does not fit'—in the sense that if faulty food were her problem, then her symptoms should more-or-less permanently go away once the faulty food is removed. This is not happening in Sue's case.

As it turns out, while enjoying her outing with friends, she is also experiencing intense bouts of anger in which she wishes her meat-eating moron hosts would drown in their own bottle of whiskey. And essentially, her troubles started when she began facing competition at her work from immigrants, and while still living a high life—she turned very defensive of her position and began expressing intense anger and rage.

To summarize my thoughts on this case, the silent retreat with rice gruel serves two purposes. It removes the maintaining cause temporarily and it helps her find a compensation for her otherwise aggressive, angry personality. Compensation is nature's way for us to be able to live with our shortcomings. In stepping past the maintaining cause and compensation, and in exploring what does not fit, we find a treasure trove of rubrics that cover Sue's personality as well as her symptoms.

Remedy choice:

Though *Lycopodium*, *China* and *Chamomilla* are close competitors of *Nux vomica*, it is clear that Sue is calling out for *Nux vomica* and not any other remedy.

Her digestive discomforts are not from starchy foods, she is a highly confident and competitive person, and she expresses her anger with violent words—these traits point me away from *Lycopodium*. *Lycopodium* shows off in the house and is quite timid outside. Ailments from loss of fluids and reproaching others are seen in *China*. It covers digestive issues like abdominal distention, belching, flatulence, desire

for highly seasoned food, but there is a degree of irritability, touchiness and sensitivity in *China* that is not seen in Sue. *Chamomilla* has a fiery temperament, over sensitivity from pain, and bad temper. This might serve Sue during her acute crisis, but overall, the display of anger with violent words and imagery, desire to compete and win, and a leaning toward high life (rich food, wining, dining at the peak of her career), and her inability to adjust to intense competition at work, point me strongly toward *Nux vomica*².

Prescription:

Sue was given *Nux vomica* 1M, one dry dose, and a liquid preparation to take on two more consecutive nights. Then she was to observe her response. She was given a few pills of this potency, to take in the future if she experienced bouts of anger.

Sue was also given a vial of *Nux vomica* 30C, to be taken five pills twice a day when she experienced digestive upsets from eating out.

If her hemorrhoids bothered her excessively, she could apply suppositories for local comfort. She refused the suppositories.

Follow up in three months:

1. She has been well.
2. Ate out with friends only once. Took very small portions. Avoided alcohol.
3. Did not feel very angry at the eating habits of her hosts.
4. No silent retreats in winter months; people do not want to freeze while sleeping on the floor.
5. Did not need to repeat 1M *Nux*
6. Did not take many doses of 30C *Nux*.

Sue: Can't really say if your remedies worked. I have not exactly been in situations that have in the past elicited a digestive disturbance.

Her comment was less than warm and encouraging, however, she has been well, so, there is no need to change anything.

Follow up in six months:

1. Eating out more than I did in winter months.
2. Thought of repeating 1M, but I have not.
3. Taken a few doses of 30C. Hemorrhoids have been ok. Bowel movement is better. Back pain is better. After eating out, stomach is not as bloated, heavy, gassy, and stuck as before. The next day after dining out, I am taking it easy, staying home, drinking warm water with lemon juice in it, skipping breakfast and lunch so that my digestive system is not taxed any further.

Sue: Essentially, I am functioning fine, and not suffering as before. Have not gone to this summer's silent retreat...it gets a bit boring after a while, I am only fifty-three, I need to live a good life and take care of my health, find something meaningful to do instead of staying silent a whole month.

Sue has taken up a volunteer task of teaching computer usage to residents in a senior's home.

Sue: The oldies are cute. They think I am a spring chicken. They mess up their computers, but I do not get mad at them...I just teach them again...and I enjoy when their faces glow on receiving an email from their grandkids.

Sue has gotten past her food-related digestive discomfort, her anger issues, her need for being in a silent retreat and eating rice gruel, and she is positively contributing, without anger, to the wellbeing of her fellow humans at an old age home!

Is it all, or partially, because of *Nux vomica*? Will she ever need any other remedy? Is she permanently cured of her problem? Only time will tell, but even a brief sunshine that one can enjoy because of a remedy is something that calls for a celebration.

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Dr. Vatsala Sperling MS, PhD, PDHom, CCH, RSHom(NA), is a Clinical Microbiologist, artist, author, mother and a homeopath (www.Rochesterhomeopathy.com). She came to The United States of America in 1996 from India, where she held the position of Chief of Clinical Microbiology Services at the country's largest private pediatric hospital. She has lectured and written extensively in her field and is the recipient of several awards and recognitions, including a Gold Medal for Extraordinary Scholarship from the President of India. Presently, Vatsala lives in Vermont with her husband, Ebud Sperling and their son, Mahar. Among other credits, Vatsala and her husband have co-authored a book, "For seven lifetimes: An East West journey to a spiritually fulfilling and sustainable marriage." Besides this, Vatsala has written and published several books including her latest, Ayurvedic Reset Diet. From 2005, Vatsala began studying homeopathy and now, as a certified member of National Center of Homeopathy, and North American Society of Homeopaths, Vatsala practices classical homeopathy in Vermont, and volunteers for NCH as well as NASH.