

Advancing Practice: Joint American Homeopathic Conference 2014

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

Homeopaths from all over the USA and the rest of the world gathered at the Hyatt Regency, Long Beach, California from April 4th – 6th, 2014 to celebrate the ninth annual Joint American Homeopathic Conference (JAHC). With over three full days of intense activity, it was quite a challenge choosing which events to attend. In going to one fascinating lecture, one was unfortunately missing another informative and interesting presentation in another room. Despite this frustration, the participants took everything as it came and had a fabulous time.

In one room, on April 4th, the first presenters, Eric Udell and Pearlyn Goodman-Herrick, shared their experience of treating acute and dissimilar disease in patients under treatment for a chronic condition. This is a very common situation that every homeopath is bound to face from time to time and this session was well attended. In another room, simultaneously, Divya Chabra took us on a mind-blowing trip through her “leap to simillimum” concept. With a set of well-articulated arguments Divya urged the participants to explore the subconscious terrain of clients by asking them about food desires and aversions, as well as fears, dreams and acutes that they may have experienced in early childhood and pre-pubescence before they learned to compensate. She expressed the need for a new materia medica that would describe the remedies chosen by following her method. Later that evening, the JAHC opening reception was held in the exhibitor hall while the exhibitors displayed their wares and the participants mingled.

The following morning, after being rejuvenated by the early morning yoga and walk offered by Loretta Butchorn, the participants were treated to an energetic presentation by Farokh Master about his approach to the homeopathic treatment of advanced cases of cancer. There were many questions at the end of the presentation and if the organizers had not practically dragged Farokh Master from the stage, he would have continued for the whole day... and surely no one would have tired.

From this hot-button issue, a frontier topic of homeopathy, we were taken back to basics by Joe Kellerstein talking about “Four Quadrant Questioning: Toward Precision in Case Taking.” Joe told us how precise questioning could help us to acquire descriptor-rich symptomatology that goes to the core of the case. He reminded us that Hahnemann considered general, unqualified symptoms to be of little value in identifying the remedy.

Later, we heard from Kate Birch and Cilla Whatcott about homeoprophylaxis and how this can develop children’s immune systems. Kate and Cilla consider this method to be a useful approach for a public health model. Their list of evidence and studies from multiple sources around the world validate the effectiveness of homeoprophylaxis. This approach started in the 1800s when Hahnemann first introduced the concept, and it is easy to see that a new public health model would be a possibility.

It was a treat to hear Nancy Herrick and Roger Morrison’s idea of leprosy being the miasm of outcasts. This presentation was quite thought-provoking because leprosy is almost wiped out in the Western hemisphere with only 6500 cases reported annually. It is seen mainly in third world countries like India and Bangladesh. Though the cases these speakers presented had never been in contact with a person infected with leprosy, they exhibited characteristics of this miasm by way of a very easily recognizable set of symptoms, such as a deep sense of isolation, self-hatred and disgust.

The topic of case taking for children was presented by Lisa Decandia, based on her year-long research project into the experience and opinion of experts regarding how they work with children. She highlighted the common ground and differences, and helped us to identify the best way to approach children’s cases.

The afternoon sessions included “The Banerji Protocols: Disease-Specific Treatments for Common or Serious Health Problems.” This topic, addressed by Barbara Sarter and the father and son duo, Prasanta and Pratip Banerji, kicked up some heavy-duty dust as some participants considered the Ba-

nerji approach to be non-homeopathic and non-Hahnemannian. How could you give a specific remedy for a specific disease? Is it not mimicking the allopathic approach of treating a disease, they asked. The holy grail of homeopathy is treating an individual based on his characteristic symptoms and then **finding a remedy that matches these symptoms. Since the disease- and diagnosis-specific approach of the Banerjis flew against this paradigm, it was hard for some folks to swallow. However, the Banerjis stuck to their claim that based on five generations of homeopathic experience in the family, their protocols are efficacious and cost-effective for the treatment of hundreds of conditions for which conventional medicine has limited options. They offer a system for rapid prescribing in a busy practice, as they see 800-1000 patients daily in the teaming megalopolis of Kolkata, India. Since this level of patient load is never going to be a problem for an average American homeopath, we are free to learn about the protocol but not necessarily to feel the pressure to practice it.**

Another afternoon event included a presentation on "Lanthanides: Remedies of Empowerment for Homeopathic Pioneers" by Jason-Aeric Huenecke. Later in the evening, we heard Karen Allen speak on "Endometriosis and Pain Reduction: A Case Retrospective Review." As endometriosis is a common problem affecting over 5 million women, Karen's straightforward research methodology and outcome were very well received. She successfully showed how homeopathy could be of service in those cases where Western medicine had failed and she urged the younger generation to engage in further research.

Saturday evening was a treat for the participants as they could join the organizers on a cruise and go sightseeing along the waterways while enjoying an evening of celebratory drinks and a light dinner.

Sunday began with a NASH meeting for its members. This was followed by a presentation from Kim Kalina about CEASE Therapy for Autistic Spectrum and Other Modern Complaints, as proposed by Tinus Smits. Kim made the case that CEASE Therapy is not just for autism anymore. It is an effective way to address many stubborn chronic complaints that fail to resolve with constitutional homeopathy, for example, ADD, ADHD, depression, arthritis and many other ailments. These ailments can be addressed by using the three-pronged and individualized approach of detoxifying causative factors with isopathic remedies, supporting the body's cellular systems with specific orthomolecular supplements and strengthening the whole person with constitutional homeopathic remedies. Kim's comment that, "It is possible to heal on all levels. Wellness can now be achieved in cases where obstacles to cure proved impossible previously. Come learn more!" drew a great round of applause.

With so many ongoing wars, Renita Hermann's talk on post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and military sexual trauma of returning war-veterans turned out to be a very timely topic.

A large section of the population experiences various gut-related symptoms, including allergies and food intolerance, so a talk by Bara Waters on "Bowel Nosodes: When It's Time to Go Deep" helped us understand these remedies and how to use them with confidence in our practice.

The importance of cell salts and their role in life-maintenance was explored by Tanya Renner as she educated us by explaining the idea of using cell salts for removal of troublesome symptoms and re-establishing mineral balance.

Karl Robinson brought us up to date on Aluminum, its neurotoxic effects and medicinal potential.

The last day ended with a plenary session on "The Heart of Homeopathy: Inspiring Stories from Practice."

Overall, the annual labor of love that the NCH engages in by way of organizing the JAHC is a special treat for homeopaths of all stripes and allegiances. The take-home message of the JAHC 2014 was that as homeopaths, we are free to experiment, innovate and take strides into the future while staying true to the roots and fundamentals of homeopathy. Every new method that comes around could be one more tool to help us find the simillimum.

The tenth JAHC is to be held in Philadelphia and this year's participants looked forward to re-connecting in May 2015, if not sooner.

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