



Mahar Asher Sperling and a baby iguana see eye-to-eye in Costa Rica.

Soothe Summer Sicknesses

From stings to traveler's tummy: how to safeguard your family

by VATSALA SPERLING, MS, PhD, PDHom, CCH, RSHom(NA)

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For our first wedding anniversary in 1997, my husband, Ehud Sperling, presented me with a book—*The Organon of the Medical Art* by Samuel Hahnemann, the visionary 19th century medical doctor who founded homeopathy. I looked it over and asked Ehud why he had given me a book instead of a romantic present, say, a piece of fancy jewelry. “Books change lives,” he replied. Having founded a successful book publishing company when he was merely 24 years old (Inner Traditions International) and having worked with scores of women staff members, he seemed to have an idea about what would be a perfect gift for his wife. I chose not to argue, and I put the book away to read later. Little did I realize that in the not-too-distant future, this book would help me walk the path of homeopathy. Once on this path, my need to look back and sideways would go away.

Vital spark

That first reading of the *Organon* stirred something in me. Back in India, I was raised with homeopathy but had not studied the subject. I had chosen to be a clinical microbiologist instead. With a master's and a doctoral degree, I worked as chief of clinical microbiology services in a children's hospital. Clinical microbiology is only a few light-years away from homeopathy. It is based on the idea that germs, our enemies, are outside of us. All we have to do is use stronger and stronger weapons to destroy them. Antibiotics, antifungals, and antivirals can do away with any germs known to humankind. And in a germ-free state, we would be quite healthy. As a clinical microbiologist, I did not think about the *vital force*—

the energy that animates living beings—something that Hahnemann had written about in the *Organon*. Curiosity drew me in. I read the *Organon* again, again, and then again. Each time I read it, I felt that natural laws, which are the foundation of homeopathy, made sense after all.

Seeing me digging into the *Organon* was encouragement enough for my husband, and when our son was born in 1998, he brought home another book, William Boericke's *Materia Medica with Repertory, 9th edition*. On reading this pocketbook, I felt that homeopathy could conquer just about any ailment known to humankind. From our local health food store, I began purchasing a few remedies that were likely to be useful for my family.

Calm before a storm

On a particularly lazy summer evening as I was sipping tea and watching the pale rays of the setting sun create a soft glow on my son's pretty face, I was blissfully unaware that I would become a student again, take four-and-a-half years of classical homeopathy education from Misha Norland's School of Homeopathy, and eventually start my own practice in Vermont. All that would come later. For now, tea was delicious. My son was playing peacefully. The scent of freshly cut grass was wafting in through the screened porch door. Life felt great.

This spell of tranquility was broken abruptly by blood-curdling screams coming from my backyard. I jumped to my feet and looked out. My 14-year-old nephew, who was visiting us for the summer, was running frantically in the yard, screaming in agony, swatting himself as if some bugs were chasing him. A few minutes earlier in his shorts and

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He had pushed the mower over a nest of ground wasps, and they were after him in full force.

sleeveless t-shirt, he had been humming a tune, pushing a lawnmower, and sipping lemonade. Now, he was beside himself, running here and there, wailing at the top of his lungs.

It looked like he was being chased by a swarm of bugs, although I could not see any from my distance of 100 yards away. It could be honeybees, ground wasps, or ants, I guessed. But how could I help him?

Stung by a swarm!

My repeated reading of the *Organon* came in handy. “Like cures like” rang like a bell in my mind. In a great hurry, I ran inside and shuffled through the handful of homeopathic remedies in my collection. *Apis* and *Ledum* stood out as likely options. I grabbed both and ran to my nephew. He was screaming in pain. There were over 30 stings on his legs all the way to his groin and on his hands, neck, face, and head. Inadvertently, he had pushed the mower over a nest of ground wasps, and they were after him in full force. He was getting covered in large, raised, red spots that were warm to touch. He cried out for help, as the sting-wounds were painful, itchy, and burning. I decided on *Apis* 30c, a remedy made from the honeybee, as it fit the picture of hot, red, swollen, itchy, painful skin eruptions—much like hives or bee stings. I gave him five pellets. I repeated the dose a couple more times, but he began calming down after the first dose. Though the stings were still a bit painful, he could sleep through the night, and by the next morning he was 90% better.

I did not give him any more *Apis*, as I recalled from the *Organon* that we need a minimum amount of the remedy to bring about a cure. I saw with my own eyes that the two teachings of Hahnemann, like cures like and the law of minimum dose, do work.

Traveler’s tummy

A few years later in summer 2003, we were traveling in Costa Rica with our three-year-old son, taking in the sights and sounds of a new country. We had hired a pilot with a single-engine propeller-plane that flew just above the treetops, and we crisscrossed the country from coast to coast, visiting remote places, landing and taking off from runways that were nothing more than a strip of grass. While it was all *so much fun*, our son came down with a stomach bug. He began having up to ten bowel movements a day. He had no fever and did not complain of abdominal pain, discomfort, gas, vomiting, or nausea. The stools did not have any blood, offensive smell, froth, or unusual color. Just loose stools that came on with such an urgency that he could not wait to be taken to the nearest toilet. Other than this, his disposition was good, he was enjoying himself, and he slept okay.

I looked through the repertory section of Boericke’s *Materia Medica*. Having not yet started my formal education in homeopathy, I did not know how to use a repertory. On reading the foreword, I learned that the remedies mentioned in italics indicated more frequently verified clinical remedies. On this basis, I wrote down the symptoms:

- Diarrhea, from hot weather
- Diarrhea, from fruits (he was eating lots of pineapple, a new fruit for him)
- Type of stool, frequent
- Type of stool, gushing, gurgling
- Type of stool, profuse, sudden, cannot wait, watery, thin
- Aggravated from eating, drinking, motion.

Then I picked all the remedies mentioned in italics and read about them in the materia medica section. The remedies included *Arsenicum album*, *Apis*, *Chamo-*



A young moose visits Vatsala Sperling’s Vermont backyard, site of her nephew’s encounter with a wasp nest.

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Author Vatsala Sperling with her husband Ehud, son Mahar, and the pilot who flew them around Costa Rica.

With basic remedies that can be purchased over the counter, I was able to help my family in moments of crisis.



A toucan nibbles on a tree-ripened papaya in Costa Rica.

milla, Podophyllum, Phosphoric acid, Phosphorus, Veratrum album, and Sulphur.

I did not have *Arsenicum, Podophyllum, Phosphoric acid, or Phosphorus* in my travel kit, as I was just an inexperienced beginner, but I did have *Apis, Chamomilla, Veratrum album, and Sulphur*, as well as *Nux vomica*.

I ruled out *Apis* and *Chamomilla* based on my son's disposition. Unlike the mental profile of people needing *Apis* (listless, tearful, jealous) or *Chamomilla* (whining, restless, angry), he was playful, content, and quite okay despite his loose stools. I ruled out *Nux vomica* because his problem did not start with too much rich food. The kid was barely eating his porridge. But I noticed that he still wanted to eat some pineapple ... and people needing *Veratrum album* tend to crave fruit.

He was also feeling a bit chillier than usual and asking for a jacket, and his hands and feet felt cold to touch. People needing *Veratrum album* tend to be chilly with cold skin, whereas those needing *Sulphur* usually feel hot, are worse from washing, and are worse from the warmth of the bed at night.

Vacation saver

At this point, I recalled reading that Hahnemann had used *Veratrum album* successfully for combating a cholera epidemic. As a clinical microbiologist who had studied and worked at children's hospitals in India, I'd had an up-close and personal encounter with cholera. I knew what the rice-water stools of cholera look like. Though my son's stools did not indicate cholera, I decided to give him *Veratrum album* 30c, based on

this history, his chilliness, his desire for fruits, and the fact that it was the best choice of the remedies I had with me.

After three doses of *Veratrum album* over the next day and a half, he began passing normal stools. We continued touring the country as per our itinerary without having to look for a restroom 10 times a day—and lived to share this story with you...

Life changers

There you have it—two anecdotes where someone gets sick, they take a homeopathic remedy, and magically they get better. So, you might ask, what is new?

For me, stories like these tell us something deeper and of lasting value that can turn someone's life around, including your own! How so?

Let us begin with studying Hahnemann's *Organon*. If you have a photographic memory, reading it once might be enough, but most regular mortals read it many times over. Each time you read it, a small nugget of truth sticks to your brain ... the nuggets that came to my rescue are, "Like cures like" and the "Law of minimum dose." We live in an age of "more is less." Hahnemann told us that less is more. It is counterintuitive, but from stories like this, you can see that the law of minimum dose works well. All that the body needs is a hint of the healing potential of a remedy when the remedy is chosen based on the law of similars.

Next, get a basic materia medica. Boericke's *Materia Medica* is a good place to begin. Try to get a basic idea of the acute illnesses your family is prone to catching. Some families get a lot of colds, others get skin problems, and yet others are prone to stomach upsets. Based on your study of these simple books, begin creating a collection of remedies in the 30c potency. Several pre-designed remedy kits are also available from reputable homeopathic manufacturers.

You might have plans to study homeopathy to become a professional. Or you might simply want to use homeopathy for yourself and your family for everyday acute conditions and then work with a certified professional homeopath for constitutional care. Irrespective of your choice, you will see that homeopathy lends itself beautifully to caring for the immediate wellness needs of your family till you manage to find professional help.

In the first example I shared with you, we prevented an emergency room visit for my nephew after his wasp-nest encounter. This was especially beneficial because he was visiting from Oman and did not have US-based health insurance. In the second example, my son avoided an emergency room visit in Costa Rica. This was a blessing because at that time, we did not utter a word of Spanish or know how to navigate that country's socialized health care system.

With basic remedies that can be purchased over the counter and by keeping the flame of the *Organon* and basic materia medica alive in my heart, I was able to help my family in moments of crisis. Homeopathy's elegant simplicity and ease of use are hard to ignore. By simply learning the layout of homeopathy, you, too, can extend a loving and helping hand to your family.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vatsala Sperling, MS, PhD, PDHom, CCH, RSHom(NA), was Chief of Clinical Microbiology at a children's hospital in Chennai, India, where she conducted research with the World Health Organization and published extensively. On moving to the USA, she studied at Misha

Norland's School of Homeopathy. She is author of nine books (www.InnerTraditions.com) and many articles on homeopathy, health, and spirituality. She practices classical homeopathy in Vermont, volunteers on the case review committee of the Council for Homeopathic Certification, and has served on the board of directors of NASH. www.rochesterhomeopathy.com.

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