



# Happy on the Trails Again

## Homeopathy gives horse her health back—and a new lease on life

by VATSALA SPERLING, MS, PhD, PDHom, RSHom, CCH

WHEN MY FRIEND MARIA ASKED IF I COULD HELP HER dear Patricia with homeopathy, I gave an enthusiastic “Yes!”—even though I knew this would be a big challenge. You see, Pat is a nineteen-year-old mare, I am not a knowledgeable horse person, and my office is not set up for receiving animals.

Maria, however, has been a horse breeder for all of the 18 years I have known her and is quite an authority on everything about caring for horses. She has known Pat for over twelve years, and since she handles Pat on a daily basis, I knew I could depend on her observations as the basis of my case taking.

I had a special fondness for Pat because eight years ago, I had made a little foray into horsemanship and had asked Maria for lessons. Of all the horses in her stable, she chose Pat as my steed because of her steadiness, sociability, and patience with beginners. I didn’t take lessons for long, but I remembered the kindness that Pat had shown me and I wanted to help now if I could.

### A horse in trouble

Maria had seen some changes in Pat that concerned her, and she described Pat’s symptoms to me on April 29, 2014: “I can tell Pat doesn’t feel well. She might even have a headache. The soft spots above her eyes have been bulging out for the past two months. They’re swollen pretty big and puffy, and they don’t rebound from gentle pushing. That can be a sign of serious illness in a horse, but the vet has ruled out a lot of dire diagnoses including Cushing’s disease, laminitis, and insulin resistance.”

I asked Maria to tell me more. “Pat used to be a dutiful horse, she just did her job, but now she doesn’t like to be bothered. She has become cranky and seemingly depressed over the past year, worse in the past six months. She stays in her shelter most of the day—by choice—and does not go in the sun. Sunny warm days in Vermont are normally a treat for horses, but since

all this started, Pat would rather be indoors. From her shelter, she goes to the hay pile, goes to get a drink, then gets back to shelter and lies down. She is not energetic or enthusiastic anymore, though her appetite is OK.

“When her feet are being trimmed she acts impatient, as though she’s had enough with holding a foot up. By the time we are done trimming, she is gesturing to bite. She never behaved like this before.

“She also has something that seems like vertigo. I usually make noise as I approach her, so she knows I’m coming. If I don’t, then her vertigo episodes happen. She rears, scrambles, and then collapses. She falls to her left side—always the left. Her legs are not bothering her; they work just fine. When she falls, her legs don’t give out, her knees don’t buckle—she just falls to the left. A few minutes later she gets up and her behavior is totally normal as if nothing had happened. This has been going on for the past three years.” The falling, of course, made it too dangerous to ride her, and soon after the vertigo episodes started, Maria had noticed that Pat didn’t willingly accept saddling any more. This formerly calm and patient horse who had loved to help beginners learn to ride had not been saddled or ridden in over two years.

“Her lack of energy and enthusiasm—it looks a lot like depression—has been very pronounced for the past six months,” Maria told me. “The swelling above her eyes started two months ago. Even with her falling episodes, depressive behavior and crankiness, and swelling above the eye, Pat is quite a stoic horse. She is not jumpy with pain.”



Pat running around in her shelter, two days after starting the homeopathic remedy.

**Animals respond beautifully to homeopathy, and since their symptoms show an objective improvement, it is not a “placebo effect.”**



Pat (right) grazes with her friend—20 days after starting remedy.

### Back to the beginning

By now, it was apparent to me that there had been a huge change in this formerly healthy, hardworking, and dutiful mare. I needed to learn what was happening with Pat when her troubles started, so I asked Maria if anything unusual had gone on three years ago.

“Well, yes,” she recalled. “About three years ago, I was brushing Pat’s neck with a soft brush. She reared as if she’d felt an electric shock. She lost her balance. Since then, she has unclear perception of the ground—she’ll raise and lower her foot as if she’s not sure where the ground is. This has gotten worse in the past three years.

“Then some time after that ‘electric shock’ incident, Pat had greenish-yellow, horrible-smelling pus discharging from her right nostril. The vet thought it was a tooth abscess on the upper right side, even though the x-ray didn’t show any particular problems. A 14-day course of heavy-duty antibiotic stopped the discharge. She had no more dental problems, but her vertigo issues started and she began falling to the left side.”

Maria also reported that Pat’s blood tests had come out negative for Lyme disease, but with slightly elevated levels of insulin and iron. Everything else was OK. There seemed to be no identifiable reason for these worsening symptoms Pat was suffering.

I created a timeline, starting with three years ago:

1. “Electric shock” incident while brushing
2. Foul pus discharging from right nostril, treated with antibiotic
3. Symptoms of vertigo and falling to left
4. Biting when feet are trimmed
5. Depressive behavior in past year—pronounced in past six months, with lethargy, isolation, staying inside
6. Swelling above the eye in the past two months.

### Finding the characteristic symptoms

Aphorism 153 of Hahnemann’s *Organon of the Medical Art* clearly tells us that strange, rare, and peculiar symptoms are the most important in the search for a homeopathic remedy. I considered what in this case was unusual for horses in general and for Pat in particular.

## After three days of taking the remedy, she started running around the pasture.

Pat—who used to love to graze in the fields and pastures, soaking up the sunshine during the brief Vermont summers—was now avoiding the sun by choice. She was gesturing to bite when her feet were being trimmed. Biting is one way that horses commonly show their displeasure, but Pat had never done this before. Moreover, when she was approached unexpectedly, she reared, scrambled, and fell to the left. And finally, she had swelling above her eyes. These symptoms stood out for me as strange and unusual, and I considered them for repertorization:

- Generalities; Sun; heat; aggravates
- Head; Swollen, distended
- Vertigo; Fall, tendency to fall to left
- Mind; Biting

As shown in the accompanying repertorization chart, *Belladonna* ranked first. It also very nicely fit the history of infection at the beginning of all these troubles. It covered the peculiar symptom of avoiding both the light and the heat of the sun, as well as the tendency to bite, which is common for some horses but not for Pat. *Belladonna* covers inflammation and swelling such as Pat was having above her eyes, as well as that strong and peculiar symptom of always falling to the left side. *Belladonna* is well known as addressing conditions that are worse from heat. Of course, Pat could not state in words that she felt worse in the heat of the sun, but her behavior was clear. We can often tell what makes an animal feel worse because they go out of their way to avoid it, as Pat did the sun.

Total	Bell.	Lach.	Glon.	Stram.	Calc.	Camph.	Nat-c.	Sulph.	Nat-m.	Ant-c.	Cedr.	Iris-foe.	Nux-u.
Rubrics	10	8	7	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	2	2
Kingdoms	4	4	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	1	1	2	2
AGG; Sun; heat, in the (35)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
SWOLLEN, distended, ... (60)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
FALL, tendency to; to left (27)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Mind; BITING (29)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

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Another remedy that ranked highly in the repertorization was *Lachesis*, which is also known for addressing conditions that are worse from heat and that are left-sided. Individuals who need *Lachesis*, however, tend to experience these symptoms in the context of circulatory problems, which was not true for Pat. That, along with the fact that an infection had appeared at the beginning of Pat’s decline, made me lean toward choosing *Belladonna*, a remedy famous for addressing infections and inflammations.

I decided to start Pat on *Belladonna* 30c. I asked Maria to give the remedy—a few pellets dissolved in two tablespoons of water—twice daily by opening Pat’s lips and delivering half a

## My friend was amazed and delighted to be able to take Pat out for a ride once again.

dropperful between her gums and lips. I also instructed her to stop giving the remedy at the end of one week, or sooner if Pat started to improve.

### What a difference!

On May 12, a week after starting the remedy, Maria told me, “I am happy to report that Pat’s heath and general outlook have vastly improved since giving her your remedy! After three days of taking it, she started running around the pasture. As you told me to, I stopped giving the remedy as soon as we saw improvement. The swelling above her eyes has gone down. She seems quite happy and well balanced. I am thrilled to see her feeling so much better and in such a short period of time, too! She didn’t mind me putting the remedy in the corner of her mouth with an eyedropper. It was quite easy to give it to her that way.” A week later, Maria was able to saddle up Pat since she was no longer falling, and my friend was amazed and delighted to be able to take Pat out for a ride once again.



Pat’s head looks good—the swelling above her eyes has gone down.

### Nonverbal voices

As with the homeopathic treatment of newborn babies and very young children who do not speak yet, animal case-taking depends on the astute observations of the daily caregiver as well as the healer. In these cases, we cannot elicit verbal expressions and gestures as needed in the modern Sensation

Method of case-taking and analysis, and therefore we have to rely on our time-tested homeopathy tools like repertories, materia medica, provings, and the *Organon*. (Homeopaths Bhavisha and Sachindra Joshi of Mumbai, India, stressed this very notion to me when I interviewed them for HPATHY online magazine, November 18, 2013.) Moreover, we have to rely mainly on objective symptoms and the animal’s behavior to discern modalities. Pat could not tell me in words that she felt worse in the sun, for example, but she told me by staying away from it.

## I smile every time I think of the two of them together out on the trails.



Pat and Maria—happy again in each other’s company.

Though this appears to be a simple case, the purpose of reporting it is to highlight that animals respond beautifully to homeopathy, and since their symptoms show a clear, objective improvement, it is not a “placebo effect” as homeopathy is described in certain circles. All beings express life force, each in its own unique way. Although I do not practice veterinary homeopathy, with the help of Maria, who has a great knowledge of and affinity for horses, I was able to understand Pat and the deranged expressions of her life force that Hahnemann called disease in aphorism 11 of the *Organon*: “In disease, the life force is first dynamically mistuned and then manifests its mistunement through symptoms.” The life force expresses itself so clearly that I could hear its language even through this horse and use homeopathy’s simple time-tested tools to help her.

### Life-changing improvement

For another follow-up, I decided to pay Pat a visit in her stable on May 20. I could not help feeling happy as I watched her grazing peacefully in a sunny meadow. As Pat looked up to me with her soulful eyes, showing curiosity about my camera and sniffing me in the heart region, I noticed that the swellings above her eyes could hardly be seen. Maria and I exchanged a vigorous high five and I said quietly to myself, “Thank you Patricia, for getting well, and thank you *Belladonna* for helping Patricia.”

Now, four months later, Pat continues to be in good health. Maria reports: “Pat suffered with vertigo / falling episodes for *three years*. But since homeopathic treatment, she has had *no episodes*—she is doing *great!*”

Homeopathy changed both Pat’s life and Maria’s. I smile every time I think of the two of them together out on the trails.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vatsala Sperlina MS, PhD, PDHom, RSHom, CCH, was Chief of Clinical Microbiology services in a children’s hospital in Chennai, India. Growing up in India, she fondly remembers the sweet taste of homeopathic remedies from her local homeopathic doctors. Enrolling in Misha Norland’s School of Homeopathy in 2004, she has ever since been immersed in homeopathy. A published author of eight books (InnerTraditions.com) and several essays, she practices classical homeopathy in Vermont, where she lives with her family. [www.Rochesterhomeopathy.com](http://www.Rochesterhomeopathy.com)