

Aetiology

According to Ian Watson in his book 'A Guide to Methodologies of Homoeopathy', Aetiology is defined as 'the assignment of a cause'. In these cases a prescription is based primarily on some past trauma, illness or event rather than on the presenting symptoms. The stronger the cause and effect relationship between the trauma and the presenting state, the more an 'aetiological' prescription is indicated.

Ian describes two kinds of aetiology – direct and indirect.

With direct aetiology there is a clear and direct relationship between the presenting problem and the trauma which preceded it, no matter how long ago this was. For example – 'headaches that began 3 years ago after a head injury'. Our homoeopathic books are full of examples of remedies that we know have an established reputation in treating ailments following a particular trauma be it grief, fright, bad news, vaccination, injury, poisoning, medication etc.

Ian describes an example of this as generalised flu symptoms for which there are many possible remedies however on further enquiry it seems the symptoms appeared several hours after the person was involved in a minor accident. She was very shaken but not hurt. Based on this Aconite was given on the direct aetiology of 'ailments from fright'.

Indirect aetiology covers two types; the first is where a person has been in a certain environment, family dynamic or any other life or work situation, which has over a period of time, lowered their level of health and contributed to their becoming sick. In these cases the presenting symptoms are usually the best guide to the remedy.

The second type is where a person had an illness or possibly an operation at some time that lowered their general state of health, although they may appear to be fully recovered. As a result of this they become susceptible to new problems that start to manifest over a period of weeks or months.

With indirect aetiologies, the presenting symptoms should take precedence over the original stress for purposes of prescribing, but the stressful situation, if known, will often help to confirm the remedy picture.

Chronic cases often contain multiple aetiologies in the history, each of which has added something to the picture that finally presents itself for treatment. These cases are complex to

treat and should be managed by a homoeopathic practitioner.

For the purposes of home prescribing, you can see that considering the events surrounding the onset of a set of symptoms will go a very long way in helping you to select a remedy that has a deep and lasting effect. If there are remedies that are known to suit the person well in maintaining general health e.g., Calc carb, Nat mur, Sulphur for example, it can help to consolidate the healing if the initial remedy selected on the basis of aetiology is then followed at a later time by this general remedy.

Next month we will explore **layers** – distinct levels that may require different remedies.