

# Taking the Case

The homoeopath, like a good detective asks, who, what, why, where and when each time they consider a case. It is important to discover all the symptoms related to the suffering, before we can prescribe. Where it hurts, when it hurts, what makes it worse, what makes it better, when it began and why it exists.

In home prescribing you are usually focusing on the symptoms the person is experiencing right now. The more detail about the individual's idiosyncratic symptoms the easier it will be to find the best remedy. It is not enough to simply note a symptom such as fever; dozens of remedies come into consideration. It's how the fever presents and affects the person that leads you to the remedy.

I highly recommend that you take some notes. They will be very helpful when reviewing the remedy choice later. You can use a system of underlines and double underlines to denote important or strong symptoms.

Start off by eliciting some details about the presenting complaint. When did it start? Did anything seem to be the cause, what else was going on around this time? Is it the same now as when it started or somehow different? Details about the complaint. Tell me everything about the complaint. Does anything make it better or worse? Describe the sensations or pain and its exact location.

Then move on to some general symptoms: What do you notice generally? Are you hotter or colder? Do you like hot or cold applications? Do you want fresh air or does it make symptoms worse? Do you have a more comfortable position, or are you better moving or staying still? Have your food or drinks preferences changed at all? Do you like sympathy and consolation? Do you feel afraid, if so by what? Are your symptoms one sided or moving around? Is there a change in sweating, more or less etc? Any discharges?

Ask if there are any other physical symptoms that may be concomitant to the main complaint. And for any changes in the mental or emotional state.

According to Dana Ullman these are the 10 questions that you need to ask.

1. *What are you most concerned about?* Open-ended questions give the most useful information whereas direct questions that can be answered with a yes or no very quickly close down the information flow.
2. *Tell me more about the problem.* This is how you can flush out symptoms without leading. It can be repeated several times during case taking to bring out more information.
3. *What makes your symptoms worse?* What aggravates or ameliorates the condition. These are called modalities and help you to differentiate between remedies. It is an easy mistake to assume that you know what the person means, you must ask directly rather than theorizing. The resulting answers can be very surprising and lead to the remedy.
4. In constitutional prescribing once you've explored all the symptoms of the primary complaint it's time to move on to secondary complaints. This is not usually as necessary in acute illnesses.

5. *What in general makes you feel better or worse?* These are the symptoms that affect the whole person such as foods that ameliorate or aggravate in general.
6. *What foods or drinks, if any have you been craving or been averse to?* This is not about what is or isn't good for us but rather what the body is desiring or repelled by.
7. Go over the body from the top down to see if there are any symptoms the person has forgotten to mention. Ask about headaches, digestion, in general .....
8. *What emotions do you feel most commonly and most strongly?* People respond to their situation differently, there may be anger, sadness, resentment or fear. The person's emotional state is intimately connected to his or her physical illness. The totality of physical and physiological characteristics defines the person's overall state and remedy.
9. *Describe your mental state?* The mental state, sense of self, ego, will and cognitive function, are equally as important as the emotional state if not more so.
10. *Is there anything else that you can say to describe any physical or psychological symptom or characteristic?* Give the person a few moments to consider any other important symptoms, or characteristics that come to mind.

Some good clear symptoms in each of these areas should be enough to choose an appropriate remedy. Make sure that you know exactly what the person means before you start studying the repertory and Materia Medica. It is an easy mistake to make to imagine you know what the person is talking about and therefore miss important and individual detail.

Next month we will explore how to repertorise the case; how to use this information that you have gathered.

## Definition

**Concomitant Symptoms:** This is a symptom that occurs at the same time as another symptom. There seldom appears to be any relationship to the two other than time however they can be very valuable in differentiating remedies and leading you to the correct one.