

Homeopathic prescribing in rheumatology



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Homeopathy:

What is it?

- **Treatment of like with like**
 - 'Similia similibus curentur'
- **Minimum dose**
 - including 'ultramolecular' dilutions
- **Holism**
 - Constitution, 'terrain'
- **Idiosyncrasy**
 - 'rare, strange & peculiar' symptoms



Homeopathy: *some facts & figures*

- In UK among the most popular forms of CAM
 - 10% of population buy OTC/year
 - 470,000 users nationwide (1998)
 - Particularly in chronically-ill
 - Growth about 12%/year
 - Faculty of Homeopathy recognised by Act of Parliament (registered health professionals only)
 - About 1000 UK Drs, many GPs
 - Primary health care certificate (LFHom), also specialist exam
 - NHS Specialist units London, Glasgow, Bristol, Liverpool



Homeopathy: *some facts and figures*

- **Europe**

- France >50% of population
- Germany, Belgium, Netherlands 30-40%
- Italy public health in Toscana
- Poland >30%

- **USA**

- Annual use 3.4% (1997), 500% growth from 1990!



Homeopathy: *some facts and figures*

- **India**
 - 178 homeopathic medical colleges
 - >200,000 registered homeopaths, 12,000 graduates/year.
 - >300 homeopathic hospitals, >8000 dispensaries
- **Latin America**
 - Particularly Argentina, Brazil, Mexico
 - Public health use in Brazil and Cuba
- **Elsewhere**
 - Rapid growth in Japan, South Africa



Belladonna

Atropa belladonna
Deadly nightshade

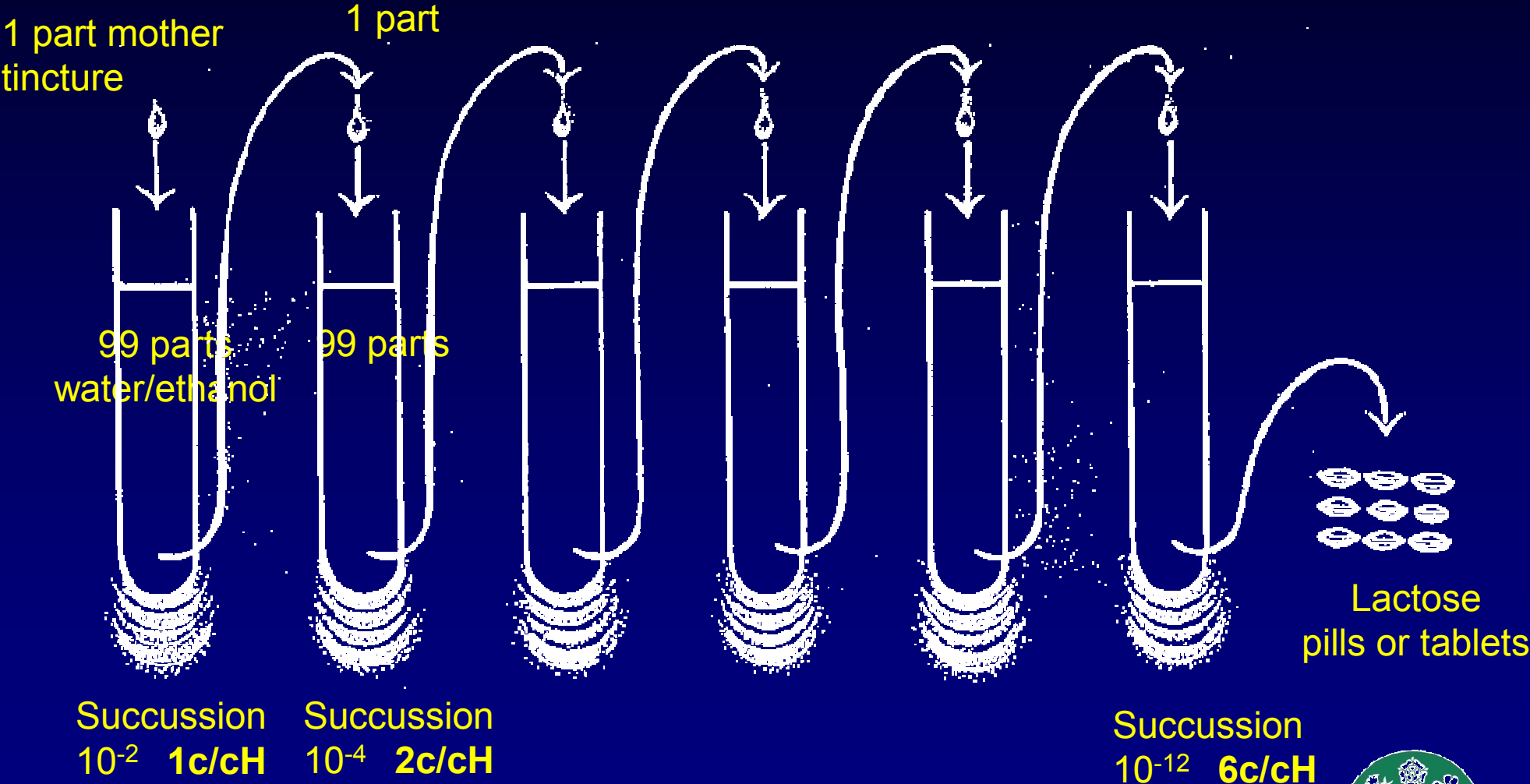


Belladonna

- Atropinic, anticholinergic, parasympatholytic
 - Tachycardia
 - hot, dry skin, flushed face
 - decreased secretions
 - dilated pupils
 - confusion, delirium
- Clinically:
 - bright red sore throat
 - Acute otitis media
 - <noise, jarring



Preparation of homeopathic dilutions



Avogadro's Law (Loschmidt's constant)

- The number of particles in one gram mole of a pure substance is 6.023×10^{23}
- It is extremely unlikely that dilutions beyond $12c/cH$ or $23x/dH$ contain any molecule of the starting substance



Prescribing strategies in rheumatology

- Best as part of an integrated care package
- 2 main types of homeopathy

Keynote	Individualised
Based on small number of typical symptoms	Treats 'person, not disease', needs detailed medical history
Limited number of homeopathic medicines	Uses many medicines
Low dilution (5-6c) 2-3/day	High dilution (30c or higher) 1-2/week
Relatively simple	Requires considerable training



Keynote prescribing for FMS: *Rhus tox*

• Picture

- morning stiffness ++, rapid stiffening, restlessness,
- >limbering up
 - 'can't sit through East Enders'
- Disturbed sleep
 - 'wake every hour, go downstairs to make a cup of tea'

• Modalities

- >limbering up
- >heat <cold,
- weather sensitive
 - but can't predict: *Causticum, Dulcamara, Rhododendron*

Keynote prescribing for FMS: *Rhus tox*

- **Correlates**

- Itchy blistering eruptions,
 - including contact dermatitis, drug rashes
 - >local heat
- Dreams of exertion
 - 'feel like I've been running all night'

Keynote prescribing in rheumatology: *Bryonia alba*

- **Picture**

- Stiff ++, painful
- Stiff neck, low back pain
- Costochondritis
- Tendonitis

- **Modalities**

- << slightest movement jarring
- >> support, pressure (collar, splint, bandaging)

- **Correlates**

- Irritable (compare *Nux v*, *Colo*, *Cham*)
- Headache, radiates from neck
- Dry mouth, thirst ++ for cold



'Constitutional' prescribing: *the patient, not the disease*

- **Calcareo carbonica**
 - Traditionally made from middle layer of oyster shell, amorphous calcium carbonate
- Probably the commonest constitutional medicine for children
 - Wide range of problems: chronic tonsillitis, recurrent colds, behavioural, teething etc



Calcareo carbonica

*A 'constitutional' medicine:
Treating the patient not the illness.'*

- **Whole person characteristics**
 - Big (especially head), but pale, flabby
 - Development delay, especially physical
 - Stubborn, anxious
 - Many fears, nightmares
 - Sweaty, especially head, sweat smells sour
 - Recurrent lymphadenopathy
 - Averse and/or allergic cow's milk
 - Craves eggs, pica



Calcareo carbonica: *some specific symptoms*

- Mental
 - Many fears – death of parents, disease
 - Nightmares – wakes screaming
 - Determined, headstrong, tantrums
- Food
 - Likes milk & dairy products, soft boiled eggs
 - Strange cravings – pica
- Others
 - Skin problems esp urticaria, dermographism



The patient not the disease: *practical implications*

- Typical, expected symptoms of relatively little interest
 - Although important to establish/confirm diagnosis
- Unusual, incongruous symptoms more valuable
- Correlative symptoms of interest
 - Not typically associated with eczema
 - Eg migraine, not hayfever



The patient not the disease: *whole person features*

- Psychological
 - Trait: introvert/extrovert, tidy/disorganised, assertive/ yielding
 - State: anxiety/depression – how does it manifest?
- Physical
 - Habitus
 - Hot/chilly, owl/lark etc



Building the Picture: *history*

Presenting complaint

- Not the name of the disease, but what the patient complains of.
- **Diagnosis**
- **History of present complaint**
 - Temporal
 - Duration, pace and pattern of evolution
- **Precipitating factors**
 - Mental shock, acute
 - Mental stress, chronic
 - Other illnesses ('never well since')
 - Surgery



Local modalities

- Time
- Weather, cold/wet, hot/dry, prediction
- Local temperature
- Local pressure
- Exertion
- Other



Systems enquiry

- Head, Upper respiratory tract
- Chest
- Neck and back
- Stomach, food allergies & reactions, desires and aversions.
- Bowel, urinary
- Menstrual
- Skin



Mentals:

the most sensitive parameter

- Reaction to illness
- Affect
- Sympathy/consolation
- Anxiety, nature, free-floating/specific, irrational fears
- **Specific mentals**
 - Tidy/untidy, assertive/gives in, irascible/weepy, libido etc



Generals and Examination

- **Generals**
 - Time (in general)
 - Temperature (in general)
 - Sweat
- **Examination**
 - Contractures (joints) - *Caust, Formica*
 - Hot swollen joint – *Apis*
 - Tendonitis – *Bry*
 - Multiple supports, bandages - *Bry*
 - Hyperkeratosis – *Ant-c*
 - Itchy eruptions – *Sul*
 - Vesicular eruptions – *Rhus-t*
 - Ridged nails – longitudinal *Sil*, lateral *Ant-c*



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

> LOCAL COLD

Apis mellifica

- Acute inflammatory polyarthropathy
- Aetiology
 - Acute mental shock (sometimes)
- Modalities
 - Sudden onset, joints swollen and painful ++,
 - >local cold (ice) <<pressure



Ledum palustre



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

> LOCAL COLD

Ledum palustre

- Picture
 - Chronic inflammatory arthritis
- Evolution
 - Starting in feet (sometimes)
 - Joints stiff, thickened synovium and fibrosis +,
- Modalities
 - >local cold, but generally chilly patient



Pulsatilla



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

> LOCAL COLD *Pulsatilla vulgaris*

- A constitutional medicine, covers a range of different illnesses in patients of particular type
- Type
 - Women(?), disease erratic and shifting, weepy/whingey, mild tempered/yielding, >sympathy/affection
- Evolution
 - Shifting polyarthrits (including RA and SLE)
- Aetiology
 - Events of female reproductive cycle
- Modalities
 - >local cold and fresh air but chilly patient <premenstrually, burning feet
- *Correlates*
 - Catarrh, averse fat, thirstless



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

> LOCAL COLD

Sulphur

- Another polychrest
- Type
 - Hot (physically and in temper), opinionated, argumentative, untidy, dirty, bad skin
- Evolution
 - Almost any kind of arthritis
- Modalities
 - >local cold but >warm dry weather, burning feet
- Correlates
 - Loves fat and spicy food, thirsty, skin disease



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

> LOCAL COLD

Bryonia alba/dioica

- Picture
 - Stiff ++, painful
 - Cervical spondylosis, low backs
 - Irritable (compare *Nux v*, *Colo*, *Cham*)
- Modalities
 - << slightest movement jarring
 - >> support, pressure (collar, splint, bandaging)
 - (compare *Sep*, *Nat m*, *Colo*)
 - > cold (?)
- Correlates
 - Headache, radiates from neck
 - Pleuritic pain, costochondritis, tendonitis
 - Best ++ for cold



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

>LOCAL HEAT
Causticum

- Picture
 - Chronic arthritis, often with contractures, hips, TMJs, larynx
 - Sympathetic ++ to others.
 - Can't stand to see starving babies on TV – has to turn off or leave room
- Aetiology
 - Chronic psychological stress
- Modalities
 - >local warmth >rest >frosty weather,
 - sensitive ++ to weather, can predict
- Correlates
 - Stress/urge incontinence, painless hoarseness



Causticum: *a personal picture*

- Has to turn TV off, or leave room when images of starving children are shown
 - ◆ or more concerned about animal welfare than human
- Background of stress
 - ◆ typically nursing/caring for relative for long period, illness starts when stress is off
- Depression
 - ◆ may be suppressed/denied
 - ◆ suppressed anger/resentment ++ daughter's depression also responded well!



Causticum: *a personal picture*

- **Can predict weather**
 - ◆ Rhus-t and others worse when weather cold, wet, but cannot predict
 - ◆ Dulc, Rhod also v sensitive, Phos not in joints
- **Collaterals**
 - ◆ recurrent hoarseness or irritating cough from larynx or region of carina
 - ◆ urge/stress incontinence (but common in women, limited value)
 - ◆ warts: esp fingers



Causticum: *a personal picture*

- Myths?
 - ◆ localised paralyses/palsies
 - ◆ anarchistic or revolutionary personalities
 - ?extrapolation from repertory extraction



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

>LOCAL HEAT

Sepia

- Another polychrest
- Type
- Women(?), flat affect, depression, loss of libido
 - be careful, can appear vivacious
 - <consolation, unsympathetic,
 - 'don't like fuss & bother'
 - chilly >vigorous exertion
 - Male picture?
- Aetiology
 - Chronic psychological stress, menopause
- Modalities
 - >local warmth, generally chilly ++, sacroiliac pain >vigorous exertion >music, dancing
- Correlates
 - Depression, post-nasal drip, menstrual problems;
 - Grave sour, acid tastes (compare *Ant crud*)



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

>LOCAL HEAT

Phosphorus

- Type
 - Slim, sympathetic, sensitive, intuitive, phobic, grew-up early. If burnt-out may resemble Sepia
- Evolution
 - Any type of inflammatory arthritis often associated with osteoporosis
- Modalities
 - >morning >sleep, short sleep <change in weather <before thunderstorm
 - >warmth >massage
- Correlates
 - Easy bruising, small haemoptyses, epistaxis, fear of dark, storms, craves cold refreshing food/drinks.



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

>LOCAL HEAT

Silicea

- Type
 - Thin, pale (be careful!)
 - determined, fussy, finicky, tired but determined and stubborn, obsessional
 - Lacks self confidence, over conscientious, very chilly
- *Evolution*
 - Inflammatory arthritis sometimes following acute illness or vaccination
- *Modalities*
 - >warmth<change in weather
- *Correlates*
 - Recurrent/slow resolving infections,
 - cold, damp hands,
 - longitudinal ridging of fingernails, weak, fine hair,
 - needle-phobia.



Rhus toxicodendron

(Toxicodendron pubescens, Poison ivy)



Inflammatory Polyarthropathy

>LOCAL HEAT

Rhus toxicodendron

- Arthritis/rheumatism (almost any kind!)
 - morning stiffness ++, rapid stiffening, restlessness, >limbering up
 - ‘can’t sit through East Enders’
 - Disturbed sleep
 - ‘wake every hour, go downstairis to make a cup of tea’
- Modalities
 - >limbering up <cold,
 - weather sensitive
 - but can’t predict: *Causticum, Dulcamara, Rhododendron*
- Correlates
 - Itchy vesicular eruptions, inc contact dermatitis, drug rashes >local heat
 - Dreams of exertion
 - ‘feel like I’ve been running all night’
- Too easy to prescribe



Cimicifuga racemosa



Underused Medicines for Inflammatory Arthritis

Cimicifuga (Actea) racemosa

- Picture
 - Myalgia (including Polymyalgia rheumatica)
 - Bellies of large muscles, limb girdles
- Mentals
 - Loquacious ++ (compare *Lach*)
 - Desperate, depressed
 - 'You've got to help me doctor'
- Correlates
 - Headache occiput eyes
 - Sensation of something loose or flapping at apex
 - Menopause, menstrual problems



Underused Medicines for Arthritis

Kalmia latifolia

- Severe, disproportionate pain
 - Centrifugal pain (opp *Ledum*) often from (R) shoulder
 - Swollen active joints
 - No strong temp, movement modality
- Correlates
 - Iritis, pericarditis (*Bry*), palpitations



Underused Medicines for Arthritis

Antimonium crudum

Inflammatory arthritis, particularly fingers and feet

- Feet sore & tender
- Correlates
 - Sentimental weeping (compare *Graph*)
 - 'sappy movies on the telly'
 - Skin: hyperkeratosis plantaris, cracking skin angles of mouth etc (compare *Graph*), urticaria
 - Craves acid (compare *Sep*)



Calcarea fluorica (Fluorite, fluorspar)



Underused Medicines for Arthritis

Calcarea fluorica

- Chronic arthritis, often with large Heberden's nodes
- 2 pictures
- Hyperextensibility arthralgia in youth
 - Gymnasts, dancers
- OA etc when older
 - Scoliosis, asymmetry
- Modalities
 - Stiff on initial movement
 - Stiffening less rapid than *Rhus tox*
 - <cold, wet weather >warmth
- Correlates
 - Uneven teeth, poor enamel
 - Generally lax connective tissues: varices, tendency to hernias, aortic valve prolapse



Underused Medicines for Arthritis

Calcarea phosphorica

- Picture
 - Tall, slim, sensitive (similar to *Phosphorus*)
 - Osteoporosis, 'Growing pains' in adolescent
 - post-fracture (compare *Symphytum*)
- Modalities
 - <cold, wet weather
 - <mental overexertion
- Correlates
 - Fatiguability, headache from mental work
 - Heavy periods
 - Craves ham, salami etc



Topical Treatment

Periarticular Injections

- ***Formica***
- Stiff joints including frozen shoulder, supraspinatus tendonitis, contracted knees, trigger fingers
- ***Apis***
- Isolated hot swollen joints

Topical application

- *SRL gel/cream (Symphytum, Rhus tox, Ledum)*, now replaced by *Rhus tox* and *Calendula* or *Ruta* cream
- Local application for osteoarthritic joints



'Indicated Remedy Fails'

WRONG REMEDY

- Take history again, check modalities
 - Patients may be very unobservant of their own disease, the 1st consultation may have stimulated them to observe more closely
 - Advanced disease is often relatively featureless: look for correlative/alternating features



'Indicated Remedy Fails 2'

- **Are you trying to be too clever?**
 - latching onto a single 'rare, strange or peculiar' symptom at the expense of the broader picture
- **Talk to relative/spouse**
 - Features which the patient may play down or be unaware
 - Probe for hidden psychic aetiology:
 - concealed depression in a 'coper' - *Nat m*
 - masked depression - *Sep*
 - concealed indignation (or guilt/resentment) - *Stap*



'Not what they say, but how they say it'

- *Arg nit* - quick, twitchy, nervous, excitable
- *Lyc* - 'donnish' intellectual, reserved
- *Nux v* - precise, assertive, may be aggressive and demanding
- *Puls* - soft-spoken, maybe vague
- *Sul* - theories ++ about disease
- *Lach, Cimi* - loquacious ++
- *Phos* - attractive, maybe flirtatious
- *Plat* - 'macha', supercilious
- *Stap* - seething anger



Practicalities

- **Wait for the right case**
 - ◆ Don't expect a good result if the 'picture' doesn't fit
- **Counsel patient/parents**
 - ◆ Not to stop steroids or immunosuppressants, topical or systemic, abruptly
 - ◆ Possibility of aggravation



Practicalities 2

- **Aggravation**
 - ◆ 15-20% of skin cases have an initial aggravation
 - ◆ Risk reduced by starting with low dilution
 - ◆ Soon after starting treatment
 - ◆ Counsel parents to stop if aggravation occurs
 - ◆ Distinguish from effects of reducing topical steroids and infection
 - ◆ Treat infection early with appropriate antibiotic



Practicalities 3

- **Be patient**
 - ◆ Homeopathy is slow-acting, rate of response proportionate to severity and duration of problem.
 - ◆ In chronic cases wait at least 4 weeks before drawing any conclusion
 - ◆ But remission may be complete and indefinite.
- **Prescription**
 - ◆ For general use 6C, 2 tablets bd
 - ◆ Suck tablets, on clean palate



Homeopathic treatment of Fibromyalgia (FMS) JR 33 year old woman

- February 2002
 - referred with Sarcoidosis
 - cough, shortness of breath, chest pain
 - haemoptysis in past
 - generalised musculoskeletal pain
 - prednisolone 10mg/day for 3½ years



Homeopathic treatment of FMS

JR 33 year old woman

- February 2002 continued
 - tall, slim
 - attractive, easy rapport
 - 'terribly tired'
 - > morning, >siesta
 - 'witchy, don't like it'
 - bruises easily (?due to prednisolone)
- Prescription
 - Phosphorus 30c 2, twice weekly



Homeopathic treatment of FMS

JR 33 year old woman

- February 2001 – March 2002
 - remained on Phosphorus 30c
 - stopped prednisolone December 2001
 - discharged, asymptomatic, no medication March 2002



Homeopathic treatment of FMS

JR 33 year old woman

- January 2007
 - presented again with widespread musculoskeletal pain
 - emotionally 'flat',
 - physically chilly
- Examination
 - full movement range throughout
 - straight leg raising = 80°
 - soft tissue tender points = 12/18
 - investigations normal: X rays knees, cervical spine, ESR, antinuclear antibodies, rheumatoid factor, angiotensin converting enzyme



Homeopathic treatment of FMS

JR 33 year old woman

- January 2007
 - prescription Phosphorus 200c twice weekly, Rhus tox 6c twice daily
- January 2007- September 2009
 - steady improvement
 - almost asymptomatic September 2009
 - discharged Phos 200c as required
- Reflection
 - A 'constitutional' Phosphorus



Homeopathic treatment of FMS: ES 54 year old woman

- Presentation March 2008
 - musculoskeletal pain, mostly in legs, also low back, wrists and hands, neck and shoulders for about 6 years
 - Several episodes of R sided sciatica
 - menopausal hot flushes++
 - fatigue
 - onset after # left ankle September 2001, but 1 year later
 - further deterioration associated with menopause 2004
 - has urticaria
 - past history of renal stones



Homeopathic treatment of FMS

ES 54 year old woman

- March 2008 continued
- Examination
 - overweight (BMI = 34)
 - Heberden's nodes
 - full movement ranges
 - bilateral trochanteric bursitis, right ischial bursitis
 - STTPs = 11/18
- Investigations
 - Rheumatoid latex, antinuclear antibodies negative
 - deficiencies in Ω -3 and Ω -6 essential fatty acids
 - widespread moderate degenerative changes in lumbar spine
- Prescription
 - Rhus tox 6c 2, twice daily



Homeopathic treatment of FMS

ES 54 year old woman

- March 2008 continued
 - Sleep poor
 - Very stiff & achey in the morning
 - Had multiple treatments
 - Amitryptiline, gabapentin, acupuncture, graded exercise
 - None very helpful.
 - Gabapentin 'made me terribly dizzy'



Homeopathic treatment of FMS

ES 54 year old woman

- Follow up May 2008
- No better
 - Sleep very poor
 - 'vivid frightening dreams, take several minutes to come round'
 - 'in a cold sweat, pillow damp'
 - Chief Clerk in firm of solicitors for many years
 - left after row with senior partner's secretary, problems started soon after
- Prescription
 - Calc carb 30c, 2 twice weekly



Homeopathic treatment of FMS

ES 54 year old woman

- March 2009
 - 'much better'
 - still some low back pain, but manageable
 - occasional paracetamol
 - sleeping well
 - working part time as legal executive
 - 'don't take it so seriously'
- Discharged Calc carb 30c as required

