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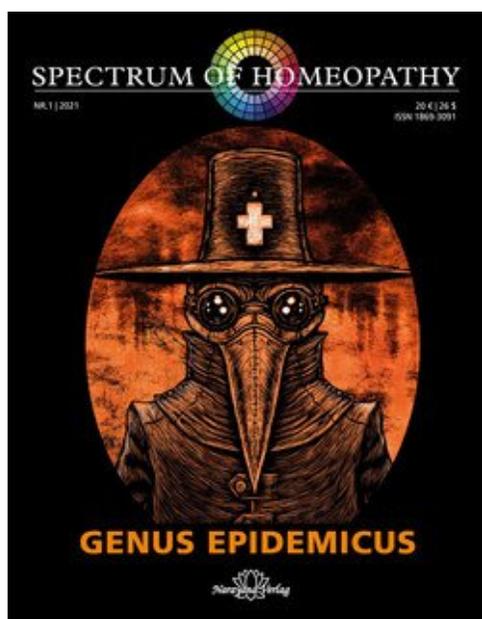
Spectrum of Homeopathy 2021-1, Genus Epidemicus

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I CAN'T BREATHE

Covid-19 and homeopathy in South Africa

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SUMMARY: After exponential growth was avoided by an earlier lockdown, South Africa has since been hit by a severe wave of the pandemic. A series of short cases illustrate homeopathic practice in the treatment of Covid-19 in this country. The unpredictable course of the disease necessitates flexible prescribing, with a positive patient reaction expected within a few hours and significant improvement within one to two days. In one case the path to healing led via several intermediate steps to the South African plant *Artemisia afra*.

KEYWORDS: Abrotanum, Aconitum, Ammonium carbonicum, Arnica, *Artemisia afra*, Bryonia, Camphora, *Carbo vegetabilis*, constitutional remedy, coronavirus, *Corvus corax*, Covid-19, *Cryptococcus neoformans*, genus epidemicus, hypoxia, *Iberis amara*, *Ozonum*, Phosphorus, *Pyrogenium*, pulmonary embolism, South Africa, Sulphur, *Tuberculinum bovinum*



South Africa's population of 58.8 million has not been spared by this epidemic of Covid-19. The government announced a national state of disaster on 15th March 2020. At that point, we had 16 cases with one case of community-acquired Covid. The early timing of the lockdown achieved its aim in delaying the exponential rise in cases, allowing (in theory at least) the health care services to prepare for the testing and inevitable hospitalisations. However, when the peak number of cases came in mid-June there was a high number of deaths.



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UPDATE SOUTH AFRICA, JANUARY 2021

The South African Medical Research Council has calculated excess deaths as 112,280 between 6th May 2020 and 16th January 2021. And every day in January we are now witnessing record numbers of deaths. The second wave is largely driven by a new mutated variant, 501.V2, which spreads faster, can still be detected on nasopharynx swab for PCR tests up to 20 days after infection, and is affecting younger, healthier people with very severe illness. The second wave has seen an increase so far of more than 50% compared to the first peak and has not stopped rising. Alumina, Pulsatilla and Carbon monoxide have become useful remedies, in addition to the previous remedies.

A strict lockdown is once again in force, affecting the poorest most of all. Children in the black townships no longer get their usual free lunch because now the schools are shut. Donations are welcome at luckybeans.eu; for more information see www.juergen-

The official number of Covid-19 deaths (i.e. with a positive SARS-CoV2 test and/or diagnosis) at the time of writing (26th November 2020) is 21,289¹. However, a more accurate assessment by counting “excess deaths” finds at least 50,856² deaths between 1st May – 4th November 2020. That is 865 deaths per million people in the population, which is on a par with the United Kingdom’s excess mortality of 890 deaths per million over the same period. The South African Medical Research Council has concluded that these are likely to be directly related to Covid-19 infections since deaths resulting from reduced access to services and lack of medication and would have occurred much later. Note that these figures are from the period before South Africa became a hotspot with the especially contagious variant “VUI2020/12/01”. For more recent figures, see box “Update South Africa, January 2021”.

Start and progress of the pandemic: The South African epidemic was shaped by, on the protective side, the early enactment of public health measures such as strict lockdown and a universal face mask policy. We were able to learn from international experience in medicine and homeopathy since our epidemic peak has been weeks to months later than Europe and Asia. Some have postulated that a younger population has been protective, though there is no clear evidence for this. Those on HIV treatment have not shown extra risk.

On the other hand, widespread malnutrition, obesity, diabetes and hypertension, lack of financial support for self-isolation and the impossibility of physical distancing in overcrowded houses have all been factors implicated in rapid spread and high morbidity and mortality. There was no sustained implementation of a policy of test, track, trace and isolate.

Homeopathy and Covid-19 in South Africa: Homeopathic practice is regulated by law and degrees are offered at two of South Africa’s universities. Whilst recognized as a health care profession, homeopathy has not been integrated into any healthcare implementation plan. All of the homeopathic practitioners currently work in the private sector, with no homeopathy posts in the public sector, which services 86.8% of the population. At the start of level 5 lockdown, homeopaths were granted permits to practice as an essential service.

Around this time, a small group of us (32) homeopaths formed a South African Posidemic group to support one another, share remedies and to learn from, and provide input to Jeremy Sherr’s international Posidemic group. In addition we made attempts to obtain permission for homeopaths to work within the public health sector. Whilst initially support was found in the provincial Department of Health, it turned out that this was not to be our time for government work.

However our group has treated people with acute Covid-19, long Covid-19 and with complications of Covid-19. We have treated carers for grief and ill-effects of night-watching, children and young adults for anxiety from isolation, the elderly, vulnerable and those with fears of getting ill, losing their loved ones, those with “what-if-it’s-covid-itis”, as well as those who are facing job losses and loss of financial security. Homeopathy has had something effective to offer for all these people.

HOMEOPATHIC TREATMENT OF ACUTE COVID-19

Constitutional or genus epidemics? Whilst each homeopath took their own path in treating Covid, our group benefited from Sherr’s approach to epidemics and experiences, based on aphorism 101 and 102 of the Organon.

The collective vital force was disturbed in Covid-19, demanding an epidemic remedy. Constitutional remedies were indicated for carers and those affected by lockdown. Aconite came in very handy for the acute fear of “what-if-it’s-covid-itis” as well as for the early stages of Covid-19.

Covid-19 is a complex multi-systemic disease and we found that it presented in many different ways. Almost all bodily systems were affected, which is also seen in much influenza. The predominant and pervasive symptom was extreme fatigue or feeling easily fatigued and low oxygen saturation on pulse oximeter.

The disease process was often tricky, in that patients would feel better for a day or more, and then relapse, to an even worse condition. The disease moved rapidly, demanding that we moved with it, often having to change remedies that had previously worked, to match the new picture emerging.

General approach to diagnosis and consulting: When there was a negative PCR test for Covid-19 (when people were out of the window for a positive swab, or when the test was unaffordable, a careful history, experience and group work gave us confidence to make a clinical diagnosis of Covid-19.

We consulted on Zoom, WhatsApp, or face-to-face, at least daily, more often 2-3 times a day. Special attention was paid around days 7-12 since the onset of symptoms, for this seemed to be the critical period. In the very sick patients I asked the carer to give me reports every two to three hours, sometimes throughout the night. Uber delivery was in much use. For patients who lived far away there was often difficulty in anticipating which set of remedies may be required. In two cases patients in hospital took the remedies. In general, we expected that patients ought to show a positive response to a remedy within two hours, otherwise the remedy needed changing. We sought a significant improvement within 12 to 48 hours. The availability of colleagues to assist one another day or night

provided but if oxygen saturation persisted below 90%, patients were advised to go to hospital. However in all our cases after the remedy no patients needed hospital admission.

Patients were also advised not to exert themselves during illness and convalescence to avoid myocardial infarction. They often felt better than they were and were keen to resume activity. We treated around 75 (59 plus 16) cases of Covid. There were no deaths amongst our patients treated with homeopathy.

SHORT CASES OF ACUTE COVID-19

CASE 1: Phosphorus – 70-year-old woman, haemochromatosis, latent diabetes, confirmed pulmonary embolism

Complaints: Sore bones, > expectoration, difficult expectoration, hysterical cough just by breathing, pain have to hold head on coughing, no balance, will fall if not holding onto wall. Too weak to talk, responded to Bryonia initially. Then relapsed, admitted to hospital with oxygen saturation 84-89 on room air, blood sugar levels very high. Pulmonary embolism on ventilation quotient scan.

Prescriptions: Phos. every 2 hours.

Follow-up: Off oxygen after one day. Discharged home after three days. Continued to complete recovery on Phosphorus.

CASE 2: Cryptococcus – 58-year-old-woman, farmer, HIV-positive

On day 6 she was suffering severe Covid-19, feeling very weak with oxygen saturation below 90%. Many remedies were tried, all with slight response but they never held for more than a day. These included Phos, Bry, Carbo veg, Camphor and Pyrogen. Her X-ray showed interstitial pneumonia. The course of her illness was very unpredictable from day to day. She was very weak and breathless and yet insisted on getting out of bed to feed her animals even though her family could have done it for her. We would talk twice a day and eventually after the Pyrogen she said that her energy and appetite had improved slightly but her oxygen saturation went down to 85%.

Further symptoms: an intense coldness with white fingers and toes. She could not get warm.

Great difficulty breathing, feeling like each breath could be her last. She felt too weak to expectorate properly.

"I feel like I am turning inwards. There is only enough energy

CASE 3: Ozonum – 59-year-old man, high blood pressure, asthma

He has a very adversarial relationship with abusive employers. His main symptoms centred on severe throbbing headache, > closing his eyes and > lying down. He had a sensation of wearing a very heavy jacket that was weighing down on his shoulders and back and another feeling of a ring of ice and thorns around his chest.

Prescription: Whereas Bry, Carbo veg and Camphor did not help, Ozone did immediately. He progressed very well and recovered fully. (Dr F. Anderson)

CASE 4: Ozonum, Camphora – 75-year-old man, high blood pressure

His only symptoms initially were that all his food tasted salty and he had a severe lumbar backache < stooping and > lying on his back. He said he could breathe fine although his oxygen saturation was only 90%. Ozone 200C and then 1M and 10M helped for 4 days

He then developed a chill with chattering teeth and a great anxiety that he could not describe. He also felt very weak and his saturation dropped to 87%.

Prescription: Camphor 10M every 4 hours worked beautifully. (Dr F. Anderson)

CASE 5: Iberis amara – 21-year-old man, very fit

Five days after being with a Covid positive person he developed a fever and a slight cough. "I am well. I can't have the virus so I went to do a very heavy workout at the gym. Since then my heart hurts. I am sure I have just pulled a muscle. It is linked with my breathing at the beginning and end of every breath. I get a sharp pain in my heart. It hurts to cough. Otherwise I feel fine." On asking it turned out he was breathing rapidly and shallowly, had a cough and was feeling maybe a little weak.

Prescription: Arnica 200C and Kali carb 200C alternated every 2 hours for the next 5 days

Follow-up: The cough and his energy improved but not the heart pain. "When I laugh that's when it hurts the most. It's like someone is poking a knife in me."

Prescription: Iberis amara 30C every 4 hours

Follow-up: He recovered quickly and completely. (Dr F. Anderson)

From Phatak's 'Concise Materia Medica': This remedy has

CASE 6: Corvus corax – 65-year-old woman

She tested negative on the PCR test despite having absolutely typical Covid symptoms. She was unable to breathe because of mucus and she could feel the mucus shifting like goo when she turned over in bed. Many remedies were tried with varying degrees of success. Repertory work always came down to Phos but giving this brought up an Aconite state of fear and never helped physically. Eventually she said her main complaint was that because she had tested negative no one believed she was sick.

“My reality is completely denied. I don’t even know if I am sick or not. Is this real? I feel so trapped in the flat and no one believes me, they think I am faking it.”

In Jonathan Shore’s proving of Raven the core idea was having one’s reality and truth denied and feeling outraged about that.

Prescription: Corvus helped significantly but her symptoms continued to return every few days.

Follow-up: The interval got longer with higher potencies of Corvus. She progressed to Calc carb, her normal constitutional, and is now doing reasonably on Taxus baccata.

CASE 7: Arnica – 9-year-old boy, Covid toes

Painful feet, especially toes. Red, itchy swollen. Cannot even have a sheet on them, cannot wear socks and shoes and cannot touch them. “I want to play football.”

Prescription: Arnica 1M every 12 hours, three doses in total

Follow-up: He was pain-free after 12 hours. The swelling and itching was reduced the next day and the lesions slowly improved, disappearing after one week. His mother reports a miracle response from the remedy.

CASE 8: 28-year-old woman, primary school teacher

20th July 2020: She has painful fingers, redness and pain on bending. Eruptions are raised and rosy red. Also starting on toes. Lachesis has no effect.

Next day: Stomach cramps, < touch, stomach noisy swishing, bloating and flatulent, nausea for egg, > eating. Fingers starting to burn. Phos has no effect.

Same evening: “I can’t breathe, it’s tight and burns in chest. Throat, nose and eyes burn. Nose started running this morning, thin and clear. Someone is sitting on the middle of my chest. Head hot, rest of body cold, craving cold water. Since this morning exhausted, could not lift head off pillow. Heavy and drowsy, no energy. Smells are knocking me out, like my perfume.” Oxygen saturation 87 – 91%. Phos no help, Mur-ac. 200C and Carbo veg. help a bit.

Next day: Amm-c. helps with breathing and coughing, chest

expectoration, tried to dislodge it.” She jokes: “I told you I am special and need a special remedy. I can’t do this any more, not interested.”

Symptoms > morning, < 2 pm. “After nap I feel floaty, no control over body, numb, I was floating, everything blocked out and gone, just the couch and me in another world. My limbs not attached to my body, all detached and floating. After the oxygen supplementation my pulse was 130.”

16:00 on same day: “Shortness of breath (SOB) after a shower, oxygen saturation 75%, took Carbo. veg and Amm-c. Now saturation is 93%. Cannot walk to lounge, something stuck on my chest, someone strangling my throat and upper chest. Started having bursts of energy this afternoon, SOB just talking, painful cough, anything sets it off.”

Next day 07:45: “I had the worst night, restless, abdominal cramps with urging for stool, < touching. Chest a bit better, still like someone pressing on sternum, still mucous on throat and very dry mouth. I crave food but no energy to chew the food. Eyes still burning and watering. Oxygen saturation is 95-99% in morning. I had a water dream – the shower was open and everyone was showering. It was my turn to shower. All I did was to stand under the shower, it was embarrassing. A teacher colleague said I should shower with my underwear.” > Massage around navel or hard pressure.

Prescription: Succinum at around noon. Patient had immediate relief.

Same day 19:00: “I had two naps, each time woke better, breathing much easier.”

Next morning: “Woke feeling better, my breathing has improved, no coughing.”

Next day: “My body is really sore. It’s as if someone drove over me, over and over. It’s my lower back and legs. I took Arnica but it was no good. Everything is aching. I still have a dry mouth but not better. It’s like those expanders you had, my



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works in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her route to homeopathy was via obstetrics and gynaecology. As a doctor, activist and researcher she has combatted HIV and stands up for the rights of women. As a homeopathic doctor she is a member of a WISH working group. To more effectively

promote homeopathy in the public health sector, she is currently seeking to do a PhD.

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ARTEMISIA AFRA

This plant is *Artemisia afra*, commonly known as African wormwood, umhlonyane (in Zulu), legane (in Sotho) and wilde (in Afrikaans). It is one of the best known of all the African indigenous medicines, still widely used. It is common and grows wild along the eastern parts of the African continent from Ethiopia to South Africa. It looks similar to *Artemisia absinthum*, and is in the clade Anthemideae. Its herbal category is as a bitter tonic, analgesic and anthelmintic. Its medicinal uses are well known for chest conditions, cough, cold, influenza, asthma, heartburn, flatulence, croup, whooping cough, worms and gout. It is also used as a moth repellent and insecticide. The volatile oil has antimicrobial antioxidative properties. The volatile oil is variable, and contains a large number of monoterpenes (including thujones and camphor), sesquiterpenes, coumarins and polyactelylenes.

Fresh or dried leaves and stems are used to prepare infusions, decoctions or tinctures. Some people roll fresh leaves and insert them into the nose to clear a headache and stuffy nose.

The homeopathic remedy has not yet been proved. It was identified, and hand potentised to 30C by Dr Russell Hopkins (a homeopath with an interest in indigenous plants) and Peter Fraser (a homeopathic pharmacist) in Cape Town, South Africa. I decided to try it due to its widespread anecdotal herbal use. A proving is scheduled for early 2021.

oxygen all day. My fingers are looking much better. Energised and feel like myself again." She went on to recover completely. Comment: Every time I repertorised I came to Phos but it did not help even when she repeated it. The carbon remedies were coming up a lot and I had high hopes for Carb-f. But it did not help at all. I also really looked at the birds and snakes since there was an animal energy as well.

LONG COVID-19

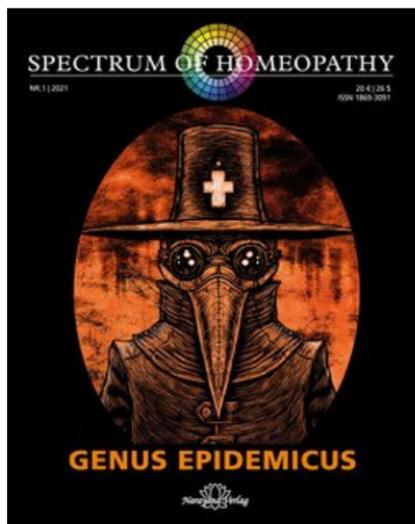
CASE 9: Tuberculinum bovinum – 59-year-old woman

Her husband tested positive for Covid-19. She suffered weakness, no energy, chills, pressure on her chest and pulsing pains

in calves and heels. Oxygen saturation 88 – 93%, responded partially to Phos-ac, Ars. alb, not to Camphor. Desired salt. Six weeks later she still had occasional chest pains, and breathlessness on exertion. Return of night sweats that she had during menopause.

Prescription: Tub bovinum resolved the case.

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