

Homeopathy and the flu

A proven track record against the flu

What homeopathy can do for you

by Randall Neustaedter, OMD

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FINDING THE RIGHT HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE for the flu is usually straightforward because the symptoms tend to be dramatic and easily characterized.

Homeopathy—a natural for epidemics

Most flu seasons and epidemics fit a common homeopathic remedy's symptom profile, so the majority of people with the flu will benefit from the epidemic medicine [or "genus epidemicus"]. Practicing homeopaths will easily discover this medicine in their community after seeing a few cases of the flu. For example, the epidemic medicine for the deadly 1918 Spanish flu was *Gelsemium*, which has also been the appropriate medicine for many other flu seasons (*Bryonia* and *Eupatorium* were secondary prescriptions in 1918). I have created a database for epidemic medicines in various parts of the United States reported by experienced homeopathic practitioners. These epidemic reports can be found at my website, www.cure-guide.com, in the flu section. Find your area of the country and you will see the most frequently prescribed homeopathic medicine for the flu where you live. [Also see the NCH's *Flu Tracker* at www.homeopathic.org and article on page 12.—Ed.]

Homeopaths are singularly confident about treating viral illness. Homeopathy has a long history of successfully managing serious acute infections, particularly the flu. Homeopathic medicine proved extremely effective in the 1918 flu pandemic, and it will prove itself in any future flu pandemic, just as it does every winter in the treatment of that year's flu cases.

The 1918 Spanish flu pandemic was a plague that exceeded the ravages of the Bubonic Plague of 1347, which killed a third of the European population. Worldwide, the Spanish flu killed an estimated 40 million people. In some primitive cultures the death rate was 100 percent. Fortunately, many patients in the United States had access to homeopathic medical care. A report to the American Institute of Homeopathy in 1921 documented the dramatic success of homeopathy in the worst flu pandemic in history. Of 24,000 flu cases treated with conventional medical care, the death rate was 28.2 percent; of 26,000 cases treated with homeopathy, the death rate was a nearly miraculous 1.05 percent. Similarly, many individual homeopathic physicians reported that they had treated thousands of patients with very few deaths.

Homeopathic flu prevention: *Influenzinum*

For at least the past 150 years, homeopathic practitioners have used the medicine *Influenzinum* as a flu preventive.

Influenzinum is a homeopathic medicine made from flu viruses. A proprietary preparation is produced by Dolisos pharmacy each year using the flu virus strains recommended by the World Health Organization for the year's vaccine production (*Dolivaxil*[™]—containing *Influenzinum* 9c). The typical dosage is once per week for four weeks beginning in October or later, followed by another dose three weeks later.

Between the years 1918 and 1957 the preparation of *Influenzinum* was derived from samples of blood or nasal secretions taken from patients who contracted the flu during the deadly 1918 flu pandemic. Subsequent to 1957, *Influenzinum* preparations come from a homeopathic preparation of the yearly flu viruses chosen for the flu vaccine. [Washington Homeopathic Products makes *Influenzinum* from that year's actual flu vaccine and suggests taking one dose monthly as a preventive during flu season.—Ed.]

It is hard to imagine the devastation caused by the flu epidemic of 1918–19. People who lived through it reported that someone who was up and well in the morning could be dead by evening.

—Julian Winston, *The Faces of Homeopathy*

In 1998, the French Society of Homeopathy conducted a survey of 23 homeopathic doctors concerning their use of *Influenzinum* as a flu preventive. The survey included use of *Influenzinum* over a 10-year period (1987–1998) in 453 patients. The protocol for the frequency of doses varied considerably among these doctors. Weekly doses were used by 26 percent of participants and monthly doses by 23 percent. Another 16 percent used a weekly then monthly dosage plan, and 35 percent applied some other dosage protocol. Eighty percent of respondents began treatment in the fall (September through November) and ended between February and April. Seventy percent of participants used a 9c strength of *Influenzinum*.

Results of the survey were remarkable. In approximately 90 percent of the cases, no instances of the flu occurred when *Influenzinum* was used preventively, no matter what the dosage protocol. Physicians deemed its effectiveness good to very good in 90 percent of the cases, and not effective in 5 percent of cases. Ninety-eight percent of the patients expressed a desire to take



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the same preventive treatment the following year. This confidence in homeopathic prevention among physicians with many years of experience and their patients speaks to the effectiveness of *Influenzinum* as a flu preventive. (It should be noted that a clinical study that approaches statistical significance evaluating the preventive effects of any homeopathic preparation would probably be prohibitively expensive.)

Treating the flu: *Oscillocochinum*[®]

One specific homeopathic medicine used to treat the flu has been subjected to clinical trials. It is a homeopathic preparation of the liver and heart of a Barbary duck—*Anas barbariae hepatis et cordis extractum* 200c which is known by its trade name *Oscillocochinum*[®], and is made by Boiron. This medicine was first formulated in 1925. Its name arose from a spurious notion that the blood of flu victims in the 1918 pandemic contained bacteria composed of balls (cocci) that vibrated, or oscillated. Joseph Roy, a French physician, identified this supposed pathogen and found it in many animal species. He chose as the source of his homeopathic preparation a duck, possibly an extremely fortuitous accident because of the association between human flu epidemics and bird viruses.

Oscillocochinum[®] was studied in France during the 1987 flu epidemic caused by an H1N1 virus. This multicenter study examined the effect of *Oscillocochinum*[®] on the early symptoms of flu. Results were published in the peer-reviewed *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*. A group of 149 non-homeopathic physicians enlisted 487 patients in the study, each of whom had developed flu-like symptoms during the previous 24 hours. Symptoms met strict criteria for the level of fever and the presence of associated flu symptoms. This took place in the midst of a documented flu epidemic. A treatment group and control group were established and the medicine was prescribed in five doses, once at the physician's office and then twice a day for two days following. More patients in the treatment group recovered completely in the first 48 hours than the control group (17 percent of patients with active treatment compared to 10 percent of controls). This was deemed a statistically significant difference. More patients in the treatment group also judged the treatment as favorable compared to the placebo—61 percent vs. 49 percent.

In 1990, German physicians replicated the French study of *Oscillocochinum*[®]. They used the same criteria as the previous study and enrolled 372 patients. After 48 hours of treatment with *Oscillocochinum*[®], the treat-

ment group had significantly milder symptoms than the control group, and the number of patients with no symptoms from day two onward was significantly greater in the treatment group (17.4 percent) compared to the control group (6.6 percent).

Both of these studies show a significant curative effect of a homeopathic medicine in the treatment of flu in carefully conducted, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trials. The two studies were done in different countries, each with many participating physicians, and during two different flu epidemics, presumably caused by different viruses. Conventional antiviral drugs reduce the duration of flu by about one day if taken within the first 48 hours of illness. Comparing the results of these studies with the meager effect of conventional treatment shows that homeopathy carries the potential to make a dramatic difference in any flu epidemic without the risk of drug side effects.

Homeopathic Flu Medicines

Gelsemium and *Bryonia*. The two most frequently indicated homeopathic flu medicines over the past 100 years have been *Gelsemium* and *Bryonia*. There are

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In their own words Homeopaths & the 1918 flu epidemic

The following appeared in "Homeopathy in Influenza—A Chorus of Fifty in Harmony" by W.A. Dewey, MD, in the *Journal of the American Institute of Homeopathy*, 1921. These quotes refer to the flu epidemic of 1918 when the mortality rate for conventional treatment was about 30%.

"In a plant of 8000 workers we had only one death ... *Gelsemium* was practically the only remedy used. We used no aspirin and no vaccines."
—Frank Wieland, MD, Chicago

"I have treated 1000 cases of influenza. I have the records to show my work. I have no losses. Please give all credit to homeopathy and none to the Scotch-Irish-American!"
—T.A. McCann, MD, Dayton, Ohio

"I did not lose a single case of influenza; my death rate in the pneumonias was 2.1%. The salicylates, including aspirin and quinine, were almost the sole standbys of the old school and it was a common thing to hear them speaking of losing 60% of their pneumonias."
—Dudley A. Williams, MD, Providence, Rhode Island.

"One physician in a Pittsburgh hospital asked a nurse if she knew anything better than what he was doing, because he was losing many cases. 'Yes, Doctor, stop aspirin and go down to a homeopathic pharmacy, and get homeopathic remedies.' The Doctor replied: 'But that is homeopathy.' 'I know it, but the homeopathic doctors for whom I have nursed have not lost a single case.'"
—W.F. Edmundson, MD, Pittsburgh

Source: *The Faces of Homeopathy: An Illustrated History of the First 200 Years*, by Julian Winston

If a remedy proves efficacious in treating a majority of sick individuals during the epidemic, then it can be tried preventatively on people who have not yet come down with the disease. This is called the *genus epidemicus* remedy.

significant differences in the symptom profiles of these two medicines that make it easy to decide which is the better fit. They are not the only medicines used to treat the flu, but between them they will probably fit the majority of cases.

Bryonia and *Gelsemium*-type flus both come on slowly over a 6–12 hour period. You begin to feel gradually worse over that time. By the second day you have aching muscles, feel pretty bad, and usually have a headache. In a *Bryonia* flu, you have more pain in the front of the head, which is definitely made worse by moving the head or moving the eyes, and feels better from pressing the hand on the head. In a *Gelsemium* flu, you have pain in the back of the head with stiffness and aching in the neck and across the shoulders. You do not want to move much either, and you may feel worse from moving around, but you avoid movement primarily because you are so tired.

The characteristic state of *Gelsemium* is lethargy and fatigue. By contrast, *Bryonia*'s state is one of tiredness but also restlessness. *Bryonia* discomfort is worse from motion, but at the same time you feel the urge to move about restlessly in the bed. No position seems comfortable. *Bryonia* is thirsty, *Gelsemium* is not.

Bryonia is generally warmer and drier. *Bryonia* wants air and cool temperatures to calm the heat. *Gelsemium* is chilly and sensitive to cold; cold shivers go down the spine. At the same time, *Gelsemium* is clammy with the fever, and feelings of heat and cold may alternate. *Bryonia* has more coughing and chest symptoms, a painful cough that aggravates the sore throat. The *Bryonia* cough will also cause chest pains, and the inevitable reaction to this situation is to press the palm to the chest to minimize the movement caused by coughing.

Gelsemium does not have the energy to be emotional. *Bryonia* is irritable, worried, and fretful. *Bryonia* wants to be left alone, *Gelsemium* is too exhausted to respond.

***Rhus toxicodendron*.** The *Rhus toxicodendron* flu immediately distinguishes itself by its extreme restlessness. With all of the aching pains, *Rhus tox* is better from moving. Constant motion, changing positions, and stretching provide the only relief. If you lie still with a *Rhus tox* flu you begin to ache, which forces you to move. Nighttime is the worst for those with a *Rhus tox* flu because of the difficulty remaining in one position. You will toss and turn looking for relief. Mentally and emotionally, those who need *Rhus tox* are anxious with a restless mind, and a sudden depression with crying is common. Like *Gelsemium*, *Rhus tox* is chilly and sweaty. *Rhus tox* is also sensitive to cold and better from warmth. The headache of both *Rhus tox* and *Gelsemium* has its focus in the back of the neck and head with aching across the shoulders. *Rhus tox* has a very dry mouth, but despite the dryness is not very thirsty.

***Baptisia*.** A *Baptisia* flu is a bad one that comes on quickly with a high fever. With a *Baptisia* flu, you are suddenly very sick and going downhill fast. Mentally, *Baptisia* is confused, stupidly dull, and even delirious, sleepy all the time, and unable to even answer questions. The main characteristic is an offensive odor from the sweat, the mouth, and the stool. *Baptisia* flus are typically accompanied by both diarrhea and vomiting. The tongue is coated yellow or brown, the throat intensely red, ulcers appear in the mouth, and the gums may ooze blood. 🍃

FOOTNOTE:

A number of other remedies may be indicated for influenza, such as: *Eupatorium* (when the bones feel broken), *Pyrogen* (when the bed feels too hard), *Arsenicum* (when there is great prostration, chilliness, restlessness), *Mercurius* (when there is offensive perspiration, excessive salivation). To learn more about these and other remedies, view the articles on the NCH Flu Tracker web pages at www.homeopathic.org—Ed.

FLU REMEDIES



Gelsemium

vs.

Chilly with chills down spine
Thirstless
Dull, sleepy, heavy
Worse from movement
Headache at back of head, stiff neck

Bryonia

Warm with desire for cool air
Thirsty
Dull, but irritable, worried
All symptoms worse from movement, but restless
Headache in forehead, better from pressure, worse motion



Gelsemium

vs.

Dull, sleepy, heavy
Worse from movement
Chilly with chills down spine
Thirstless

Rhus toxicodendron

Extremely restless, cannot get comfortable, anxious
Better from movement
Chilly and better from heat
Thirstless

