

# A child's nighttime cough keeps mom wide awake

by Pardeep Panesar, HMA, DHom(UK)

**A**T MIDNIGHT ONE NIGHT about four years ago, my neighbor Pam phoned me out of desperation. Her young daughter had kept her up the previous night with a bad cough. Pam's husband was out of town and she was dreading another sleepless night alone with a sick child. As a friend and an enthusiastic budding homeopath, I agreed to help her.

Pam reported that two-year-old Kim had been a little under-the-weather for the past few days. Normally a placid, good-natured, affectionate child, she had become quieter than usual but also easily agitated and quarrelsome with her siblings. She had been a little flushed but not feverish; the heat was more in her head, while her hands were cold. She was worse by evening.

## Resisting her bedtime routine

She was eating and drinking less than usual and resisting her usual bedtime routine. By 10 p.m., she reluctantly went to bed but didn't want to be left alone. Within minutes of her head touching the pillow and while asleep, she would start to cough loudly. Pam would go in to check on her daughter, who would remain asleep yet would continue coughing. Pam described the cough as deep, loud, and dry-sounding (as opposed to loose or rattling); she said it was like nothing she had ever heard before. This same thing had happened the previous night; as soon as Pam put Kim down to sleep, the coughing would start!

## A unique symptom

In homeopathic prescribing, we know that the strange, rare, and peculiar symptoms are often the ones that lead us to the correct remedy. In analyzing this case, the most unusual symptom I noticed was the cough starting at night and, more precisely, as soon as Kim went to bed. Although nighttime coughs are not unusual, this one came on so suddenly within minutes of going to bed that it seemed peculiar to me—so I began my search for a remedy with this symptom.

I looked in the repertory under the rubric, "Cough, lying, aggravates." There were so many remedies listed that I realized this rubric was not going to help narrow my search. But as I continued reading down the page, I was amazed to see the sub-rubric, "Cough, lying, night, as soon as head touches pillow." This described Kim's symptom exactly, and there were just a few remedies listed. *Drosera* was in bold type so I started reading about it in various materia medicas.

## *Drosera*

*Drosera rotundifolia* (sundew) is a remedy that has been found to be useful in tuberculosis, whooping cough,

croup, asthma, spasmodic cough, and bronchitis—when the symptoms match. The cough is described as beginning with a sensation of tickling or irritation in the larynx. The cough is spasmodic, dry, or barking and can be quite severe, forcing the patient to hold his chest or sides. The coughing paroxysms follow each other rapidly. The patient needing *Drosera* is worse from open air, the warmth of the bed, warm drinks, talking, and in the evening, particularly after midnight. Some mind symptoms include: easily angered, fears being alone, dread of the night, restlessness, and anxiety when alone.

According to Boericke's *Materia Medica*, *Drosera* is indicated for: "Harassing and titillating cough in children—not at all through the day, but commences as soon as the head touches the pillow at night."

## *Rumex*

This description certainly seemed to fit Kim's symptoms well. However, the nature of Kim's symptoms also made me consider the remedy, *Rumex crispus* (Yellow Dock), which can sometimes be confused with *Drosera*. *Rumex* also appears in the repertory rubric, "Cough, lying, aggravates."

Boericke's *Materia Medica* describes the following *Rumex* symptoms: "Tickling in the throat pit causes cough. ... Dry, teasing cough preventing sleep. Aggravated by pressure, talking, and especially by inspiring cool air and at night" (11 p.m.). Temperature changes are known to aggravate the *Rumex* cough, as when one moves from a warmer to a cooler room. Mind symptoms include: low-spirited, serious expression of the face, and restlessness in the evening.

Kim's cough could have been aggravated by the slight difference in room temperature when she moved from the family room to the bedroom to go to sleep, thus indicating *Rumex*. Also, her bedtime at 10 p.m. was closer to *Rumex*'s 11 p.m. aggravation than to *Drosera*'s after-midnight aggravation. Her resisting of her bedtime routine could be considered restlessness in the evening, and she was definitely low-spirited.

## A decision is made

Both remedies seemed to fit Kim's symptoms fairly well, but I chose *Drosera* based on the compelling symptom, "Cough, lying, as soon as head touches pillow." Her daytime irritability and nighttime anxiety about being alone ("dread of the night"?) support the choice of *Drosera*. Another big deciding factor was that I had *Drosera* in my remedy kit, but not *Rumex*!

I took a dose of *Drosera* 30C over to my neighbor's.



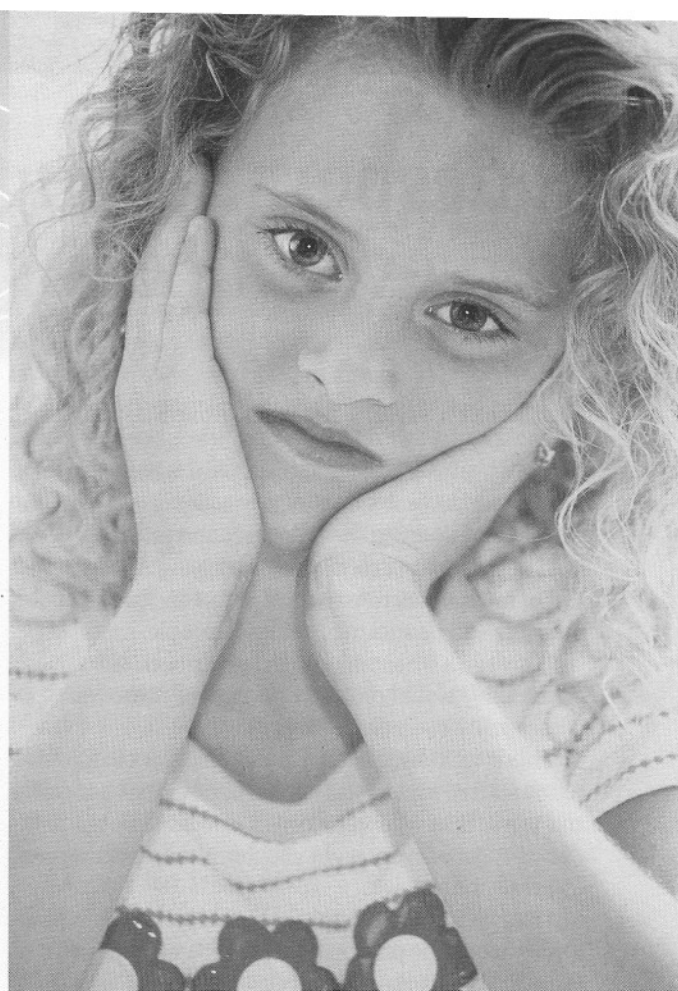
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We gave Kim the remedy, and surprisingly enough, she chewed it in her sleep (fortunately, the sweet taste of homeopathic remedies requires little coaxing of children)! Within about 10 minutes or so, Kim's cough subsided. We heard it once or twice again during the next half-hour, but the time between the coughing spasms was definitely lengthening. Pam was able to get some sleep that night, as her daughter's condition improved.

The next day, Kim slept till mid-morning (she had been waking early and going to bed late during her illness). When she awoke, she was back to her normal friendly and cheerful self.

#### A good choice

Kim had no recurring coughs for the rest of the year, so *Drosera* was indeed a good remedy for her! 🌿



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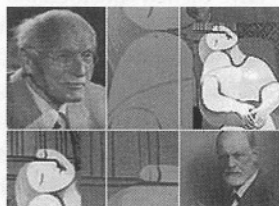
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