

A case of bronchitis

by Pardeep Panesar, HMA, DHom(UK)

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WE WERE PREPARING FOR a house-hunting trip to Arizona from New Jersey last November when my 11-year-old, Sunny, became ill. While playing outside on a windy Saturday afternoon with his best friend, my son suddenly felt sick and weak. He came inside wanting to go to bed right away. He had nausea, no appetite, and a slight cough, but no fever.

The remedy *Nux vomica* has the following symptoms (and therefore the ability to cure them): worse motion, worse open air, worse exposure to cold winds, and nausea. These symptoms seemed to match Sunny's condition. My son also fits the "thin, quick, active, and irritable" description of patients who often need *Nux vomica* constitutionally, and he had responded well to this remedy in constitutional treatment in the past. So I gave him *Nux vomica* 30C, and he went right to sleep, which is generally a good sign after taking a homeopathic remedy.

The next day his nausea was gone, but he would not get out of bed or eat. Generally a healthy boy, I was not worried and repeated the *Nux vomica* once or twice. By Monday morning, there was no improvement. He refused to go to school saying he still did not feel well, and he was coughing a little more now. I decided to switch to a different remedy. I gave *Aconite* because his symptoms had come on suddenly that Saturday, after being outside in the cold wind. (Sudden onset, and illness after exposure to cold winds are classic *Aconite* symptoms).

Getting help

By Tuesday afternoon he hadn't improved and I was getting worried, so I phoned some of my homeopathic friends for advice. One suggested the remedy *Lycopodium* because Sunny was attending a new school and probably experiencing some lack of confidence with anticipatory anxiety. She believed that the new situation could have triggered his illness, because such factors can sometimes lead to acute ailments. Like *Nux vomica*, the person who needs *Lycopodium* can be strong-willed, assertive, and determined to get his own way. During illness, these traits can become more dominant! After administering one dose of *Lycopodium* 30C, Sunny sat up in bed and started ordering drinks and television programs! This change was startling to me. Perhaps it was an aggravation of his traits of bossiness, etc., and an aggravation could be construed as a good sign that healing was about to occur. However, there appeared to be no other immediate change or relief of his illness.

Should I have stayed with this same remedy based on an aggravation? Possibly, but because there was no

other change in his condition after a wait of several hours, I did not repeat *Lycopodium*.

By Friday morning, six days after the initial onset, I was desperate—no, frantic—and scheduled a doctor's appointment. The diagnosis was bronchitis, and I was disappointed that a simple acute ailment had deteriorated into a worsening condition that I had been unable to avert with homeopathic home care. I conceded to the doctor's advice of a prescription for antibiotics and felt that there was no time for experiments in the name of homeopathy! Before driving to the pharmacy to fill the prescription, I dropped my son off at home because he wanted to lie down. By now, it had been six days of complete prostration, coughing (a short attempt at expulsion with inability to expectorate), and not eating. Momentarily it was a relief not to have to open my homeopathic books to find a remedy. My homeopath-friend reassured me, quite correctly, that we grew up taking occasional antibiotics and that once in a while it was necessary. But on my return home, there were more challenges to face!

Sunny refuses

My sister had phoned while I was out, and when I returned her call she laughingly told me that Sunny had complained to her that his mom was going to "try and give him conventional medicine!" Indeed, my son categorically refused to take the antibiotic and insisted that I search my homeopathic books to find the right remedy! Nothing could persuade him and by 11:00 a.m. on that same day, I finally gave in conditionally. We made a deal—I would try one last time to find a homeopathic remedy, but if it didn't help he had to take the antibiotic. Five days before our scheduled flight to Arizona, it was back to the drawing board! It was obviously going to be a long and eventful day.

A solid doctor's diagnosis can be an excellent starting point for selecting a remedy, even though the actual symptoms of the illness are more useful. Actually, a diagnosis *plus the individualizing symptoms* of a person's illness are of the utmost importance in the selection of the correct remedy. I turned to the Chest chapter in Kent's *Repertory* under "Inflammation, bronchial tubes" (bronchitis) and saw many remedies listed, including *Lycopodium* (at this point, I was not interested in backtracking, however). The first two bold-type remedies listed were *Antimonium tartaricum* and *Arsenicum album*, and they both struck a chord.

I looked at *Arsenicum album* in Phatak's *Materia Medica* and it seemed like a good match: "Low vitality, sudden effects, anxious, loss of appetite and loose rattling cough." For *Antimonium tartaricum*, Phatak said: "Affects the mucous membranes especially the bronchi

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and lungs causing great accumulation of mucus ... causing depression of vital power and weakness and chest seems full yet less and less is raised. ... Prostration of mind and body and fear of being alone yet wants to be left alone." *Arsenicum* also has a fear of being alone yet wants to be alone.

These two remedies seemed to cover the totality of symptoms but it was now down to the subtle nuances and the degree of intensity of the symptoms. So I listed Sunny's main symptoms and compared them to the related symptoms of *Antimonium tartaricum* and *Arsenicum album*.

Sunny's symptoms:

Bronchitis
Weakness and prostration (wants to remain in bed)
Thirst for only small sips of cold water
Cough with inability to bring up phlegm
Lies and sleeps on right side (facing the door)
Anxious and despondent (frequently calling)
Lack of appetite

Antimonium tartaricum

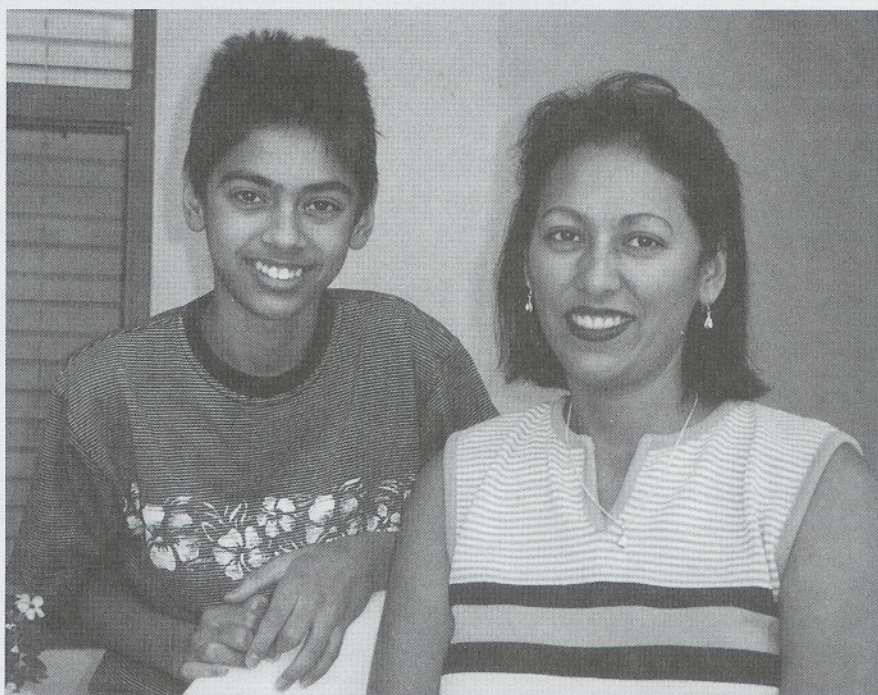
Bronchitis
Weakness and lassitude
Prostration mind and body
Nausea, sinking of stomach
Low vitality
Coarse loose rattling cough
Worse warm drinks
Drinks little and often
Chest seems full yet less and less raised
Worse lying on right side
Fear of being alone

Arsenicum album

Bronchitis
Mentally nervous, anxious, restless
Weakness and emaciation rapid
Cannot bear sight or smell of food
Prostration out of proportion to illness
Restless sleep (hands over head)
Fears being alone
Cough, worse midnight
Cold, but wants heat
Desires cold drinks but worse for them
Unable to lie down, must sit up

Deciding between two remedies

Sunny's prostration was certainly out of proportion to his illness. He lay in bed all the time with eyes wide open, frequently called for attention, not wanting to be left alone. He was anxious and wanted to know everything that was going on. These symptoms correlate with



Sunny and Pardeep Panesar,
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the remedy *Arsenicum*. Both *Antimonium tart* and *Arsenicum* are fearful and despair recovery, but *Arsenicum* is much more intense in degree. Sunny was not as chilly as I would expect *Arsenicum* to be, however, nor did he prefer sitting up to lying down. There was also an absence of *Arsenicum's* characteristic restlessness, associated with fear. While both remedies have thirst, *Arsenicum* is worse for cold drinks, yet Sunny preferred cold drinks. His cough was loose and rattling and I felt that the crux of his condition could be described by the *Antimonium tartaricum* symptoms, "Chest seems full yet less and less is raised" which was causing his low vitality and "Prostration of mind and body."

This was good enough for now. It was Friday and I was armed with antibiotics, an agreement to try only once more with homeopathy, and we were flying out on Wednesday. I gave him one dose of *Antimonium tartaricum* 30C and he fell asleep for 2 hours. When he woke, he started coughing up the mucus. An hour later, Sunny asked for something to eat for the first time in a week. These were good signs but I was still cautious. By 4:00 p.m. he asked if he could have Chinese food for dinner and ate a plateful of chicken, broccoli, and rice—and he was out of bed!

The next morning, Sunny was up and about tidying his room (perhaps *Arsenicum album* would have done fine too; it is known for fastidiousness). He was still coughing up mucus but he was eating and his vitality had improved. I continued to give him *Antimonium tartaricum* 30C, three times a day for two days. On Monday, I asked my friend and neighbor who is a

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