

Book Reviews

Family Homeopathy: A Practical Guide for Home Treatment by Paul Callinan. Keats Publishing Inc., Connecticut. 343 pages. Hardcover, 1995, US \$24.95.

Family Homeopathy is a book that will be useful for both physicians and their patients. Dr. Paul Callinan has drawn on his experience as a clinician and researcher to write this comprehensive guide to acute care with homeopathy. Although other books on this subject can be found, *Family Homeopathy* is unique because it includes an excellent chapter that explores current theories for the mechanism of action of homeopathic medicines.

The book begins with a brief history of homeopathy and goes on to summarize the guiding principles of this often misunderstood form of medicine. These are: the Law of Similars (like cures like), and potentization (the process of dilution and succussion by which a substance is rendered medicinally active). What follows is a detailed account of the scientific literature which relates to the use of infinitesimal doses of drugs. Dr. Callinan discusses principles in the field of pharmacology, largely ignored in recent years, that actually substantiate the theory of how homeopathic medicines work. The Dose-Response curve illustrates that an increased dose of drug gives increased effect, a lowered dose of drug gives a reduced effect, and a very low dose gives no effect. However, it is the threshold level at the start of the curve that is of relevance to homeopathic medicine. Pharmacologists tend to ignore the effects of drugs at threshold level due to the often unexplainable results obtained there. In doing so, they have neglected to investigate the effects of very low doses of drugs—an investigation that could lead to a greater acceptance of homeopathy in the scientific community. One of the earliest known laws of pharmacology is the Arndt-Schulz Law. It essentially explains the action of homeopathic medicines when it states that: small doses stimulate, moderate doses inhibit

(the realm of most conventional drugs), and large doses kill. Mention of this law has virtually disappeared from current pharmacology texts, but its principles have been rediscovered in the phenomenon known as hormesis. In the field of toxicology, it was well known that poisons at high concentrations inhibit metabolism and ultimately cause death. However, the effects of poisons at low doses have provided unexpected results that can not be explained by current medical science. At low doses, poisons actually have a stimulatory effect on living organisms. Research continues in this area and may soon lead to a better understanding of homeopathy.

Next, Dr. Callinan describes the way that molecules such as water, store energy and how this may provide a scientific explanation for the way homeopathic medicines act in the body. It is thought that during the process of succussion (the rhythmic shaking of the homeopathic solution done at each stage of dilution) vibratory energy is exchanged between the medicinal substance and the water. The water is then left with a vibratory imprint of that substance. Not only is energy stored, but information as well, which differs from one substance to another. This information is carried into the body on the water molecules of the homeopathic medicine. Research has furthermore shown that these water molecules undergo certain structural changes.

At the end of Part One, clinical trials using homeopathy in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and hayfever are highlighted. Since the publication of this book, two double blind studies have appeared in conventional medical journals showing a positive outcome for the homeopathic treatment group. These were an asthma study published in the *Lancet* (September 1995) and a childhood diarrhea study published in *Pediatrics Journal* (May 1994). With the renewed interest in homeopathy gaining momentum,

and the need for further proof of homeopathy's efficacy, increasing numbers of scientifically rigorous trials are being undertaken.

Part Two of the book begins with basic instructions on how to select a homeopathic medicine in an acute case and how to evaluate its effects. For experienced practitioners, this will serve as a helpful review of homeopathic posology (the principles governing the potency and frequency of repetition of the medicine). However, for a person with little or no training in homeopathy, these guidelines would be insufficient for successful prescribing and it would be necessary to refer to other textbooks. There has always been debate amongst homeopaths as to the selection of a medicine's potency in homeopathic prescribing. It should not concern readers if they find conflicting information on this subject in other literature. Dr. Callinan carefully points out that high potency prescribing (above 30c) is the realm of professional homeopaths and should not be attempted by lay people.

The chapter on First Aid will be particularly useful for those who are new to homeopathy. This is an area where beginner and experienced homeopath alike can achieve dramatic results. For physicians wishing to introduce homeopathy into their conventional practice, First Aid cases provide the ideal opportunity. They are simple to prescribe for and homeopathic medicines can be used safely in conjunction with conventional therapies. Medicines such as *Arnica montana* significantly reduce the bruising, bleeding and swelling of traumatic injuries. Many people encounter homeopathy for the first time when they try *Arnica* for the treatment of some sort of injury. The often amazing results obtained have won over many a skeptic of homeopathy.

Chapters four through nine provide a quick reference guide to most common health problems listed alphabetically under the headings: Common, Infants, Children, Mothers, Women and Men. Each chapter

provides a brief description of a variety of illnesses and the homeopathic medicines used to treat them. As each is accompanied by common sense precautions and suggestions as to when to seek professional advice, physicians can feel confident recommending this book to their patients for home care of acute illness. Dr. Callinan makes note that, in certain cases, it is difficult to provide more than temporary relief of symptoms and for more lasting results a constitutional prescription may be required. Constitutional prescribing is based on an in-depth interview with the patient and a thorough review of their complete medical history. A single medicine is then usually prescribed which has an effect at the mental, emotional and physical levels. This type of homeopathic practice is obviously beyond the scope of this book.

The topic of vaccination is addressed in the Children's section, providing balanced information on the risks and benefits of this often controversial procedure, as well as tips for parents on how to minimize the potential side effects of vaccines. Homeopathy has a long history of successfully treating many of the diseases children are immunized against. If parents choose not to vaccinate, they can rely on homeopathic treatment in uncomplicated cases. The prophylactic use of homeopathic medicines (in the absence of an actual epidemic) is a controversial topic, even amongst experienced homeopaths. This brings into question Dr Callinan's recommendations for the routine administration of certain nosodes as a preventive measure. This is an area that requires further study. Until more data is available, constitutional treatment of a child is the preventive method of choice for most homeopaths.

Part Three of the book is devoted to *Materia Medica* (a list of medicines and the detailed indications for their use). Family Homeopathy surpasses other books on acute care by the number of medicines in-

cluded in this section. Dr. Callinan has drawn on a vast amount of homeopathic literature and skillfully presents each medicine in a concisely written format. He highlights the appearance of the patient, the main symptom picture including the modalities (influences which make the symptoms better or worse), and has extracted key words which simplifies the process of differentiating between medicines. Some confusion might arise from having a separate Materia Medica for the medicines that comprise the Twelve Tissue Salts. Although acknowledged as a complete system, the twelve tissue salts are usu-

ally included in any standard Homeopathic Materia Medica.

The final chapter consists of a list of commonly used homeopathic medicines and the symptoms they treat which could be included in a home medicine kit. This is followed by a resource guide which would benefit from the inclusion of two important nonprofit organizations in the US that promote and provide training in homeopathy; the National Center for Homeopathy, and the International Foundation for Homeopathy.

-Review by Elizabeth Chapman, N.D.