

East Bay Homeopaths Meet to Discuss Avian Flu

By Diana Kehlmann

In December of 2005, a group of about 40 Bay Area homeopaths gathered at the Pacific Academy of Homeopathy in San Francisco to discuss their concerns over the possibility of an Avian Flu pandemic. The agenda was to share information about the origin and spread of the Bird Flu (H5N1 virus) and how, as a health community outside of the allopathic mainstream, we could respond to a major epidemic.

The discussion was opened by Richard Pitt, PAH director, who reported the results of the International Conference on Homeopathy and the Avian Flu in Paris this past November. He also gave a summary of the material covered in Sandra Perko's "The Homeopathic Treatment of Influenza" (see "Bird Flu Threat, Homeopathy Today, December 2005).

Far Reaching Discussions

A far reaching exchange among the participants followed, ranging from the practical issues of prevention, protocols and remedies to the influence of social and cultural factors in epidemics such as the unhygienic methods of raising animals in the unnaturally crowded conditions of large scale production facilities, the culling of infected flocks without protective clothing, and the sale of slaughtered birds at reduced prices in third world markets.

'Susceptibility' was quickly raised by several participants. It was agreed that while allopathic medicine focuses on the important issues of virology, homeopaths must also consider the field of energetic imbalance from which disease emerges. From a homeopathic point of view, periodic outbreaks of influenza can be seen as acute manifestations of chronic disease. Many shared the opinion that susceptibility to influenza is a psychic, vital energy phenomenon whose current emergence may be related to the outbreaks of violence, both man-made and natural, erupting concurrently all over the world.

Global Fear

The label, "global war on terror" implies no boundaries or safety zones on the planet. Can we infer, participants asked, that fear is infecting the collective psyche and preparing fertile terrain for the virus? It was pointed out that the 1918 epidemic happened when the world was traumatized by World War I, a barbaric war that created a virtual pandemic of fear. The Spanish flu virus and Avian flu virus are very similar in structure. It was suggested that the unexplained phenomenon of so many young soldiers in top physical condition contracting and dying from the Spanish flu was due not only to the closeness of their daily contact, or to increased vascular harm caused by aspirin, but also fear-induced susceptibility. Today, in addition to worldwide social and political unrest we're on the verge of irreparably unbalancing planetary ecology. We are, in effect, "at war" with the life forms and forces that nurture and sustain us. Does this indicate a worldwide shift on the dynamic plane?

Genus Epidemicus

A discussion of remedies followed. Several veteran practitioners offered useful protocols that worked during ordinary flu epidemics. Among those most relied on were Aconite and Gelsemium which, it was noted, have strong fear components. Brigitte Essl, a European M.D. now practicing in the Bay Area, remarked that in her residency in Austria, Aconite was the first remedy for influenza and it most always worked. Here, however, she finds Gelsemium to be more often effective. Pitt opined

that climate accounted for the difference: Bay Area weather is more consistently mild and suited to Gelsemium. This comment suggested the need to share information about what is working most effectively and to determine a genus epidemicus. (See the NCH Flu Tracker tool on the NCH website, www.homeopathic.org).

Dr. Cyrus Wood-Thomas, D.C., outlined Hahnemann's writings about epidemics, reminding the group of the emphasis Hahnemann put on finding the genus epidemicus. Though people may show different ailments they are manifesting dissimilar parts of the same disease so that a small number of remedies will ultimately apply to everyone. Possible climactic differences notwithstanding, Wood-Thomas believes that if there is an Avian flu outbreak in India, the genus epidemicus will be identified very quickly because of the numerous homeopaths and homeopathic colleges attempting to save the greatest number of people in the shortest period of time. Wood-Thomas and his wife Janara Iman-Thomas, a herbalist and nutritionist, stressed the importance of prevention and prophylaxis with good hygiene and immune enhancers, such as vitamins and anti-viral, anti-bacterial herbs.

Which Nosode?

Oscillococinum was used by many of the practitioners, both to prevent and treat flu outbreaks. Influenzinum, made from last years flu vaccine, was also recommended by some to be taken prophylactically, usually once a week during flu season. However, it was clear to everyone that neither may be effective in an outbreak of Avian flu. Perhaps only a nosode based on the H1N5 virus which would match the exact energy of the disease could be more effective than conventional remedies or even those matching the genus epidemicus. Since the H1N5 and 1918 viruses are similar, a nosode made from existent Spanish flu infected material might prove useful. The question of whether a homeopathic Avian Flu nosode could induce an antibody response similar to vaccination, as Variolinum did with smallpox, was also raised.

Useful Review

The discussion inspired participants to review symptoms of the Spanish flu and search out remedies that addressed the hemorrhaging, pneumonia and the sometimes quite debilitating sequelae of the 1918 outbreak, including encephalitis lethargica (sleeping sickness) and Guillain-Barre type syndromes. Some thought they'd put together "homeopathic tool kits" with remedies and protocols for their patients to have on hand at home which could be supplemented if, for example, a nosode became available or a genus epidemicus was identified. It was generally hoped that we will never have to face a deadly flu pandemic, but it was agreed that, in any case, the meeting served a useful purposes of sharing and building increased awareness as well as local community bonding and building.

Diana Kehlmann along with Melissa Rissman, both graduates of the Pacific Academy of Homeopathy and practicing in the East Bay, organized the meeting. Diana also practices Jin Shin Jyutsu, a form of oriental bodywork and is certified by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. She can be contacted at dkehlmann@sbcglobal.net