

## BELLADONA: CHRONIC SYNDROMES\*

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In his *Lectures on the Materia Medica*, J.T. Kent writes concerning *Belladona* that it „does not have depth in action, it does not have length in action and it does not effect a deep influence on the organism. *Belladona* is not a good remedy for recurrent affections, because it lacks periodicity as well as continuity. *Belladona* is recommended in affections which, once overcome, do not have a tendency to reappear”. Although the general characterization of the remedy is masterly done, these particular affirmations are denied by clinical practice and other works of materia medica.

There are five conditions that make *Belladona* a major chronic remedy, which appear recurrently, showing continuity in the affections and a deep affectation of the organism, where it cannot be substituted by any other remedy, and conventional therapeutic is merely palliative:

1. Migraine syndrome
2. Hypertensive syndrome
3. Chronic vertigo syndrome
4. Epilepsy
5. Psychosis with predominantly maniac manifestations

The presence of these syndromes, in which the therapeutic value of *Belladona* is undisputable, brings the problem of a „typology of *Belladona*” which does not seem as probable as the typologies of other plants, such as *Pulsatilla* or *Lycopodium*. However, even in chronic recurrent manifestations, *Belladona* is characterized by sudden and violent manifestations (as Kent sustained) in which its reactional model is significantly seen. Although the local symptoms may be remarkable, the most important thing is an intrinsic algorithm of general symptoms which allow to identify *Belladona* as an unmistakable remedy.

### 1. Migraine syndrome

*Belladona* is one of the most frequent remedies in periodic migraine, belonging together with *Bryonia*, *Spigelia*, *Sanguinaria* and *Iris* to the group of remedies for acute migraine, and *Natrium muriaticum*, *Sulphur* and *China* to the group of the chronic. Thus, it has to be taken into account in any differential diagnosis of recurrent migraine. (6)

The description of the migraine symptoms of *Belladona* overlaps its reactional model. Migraine appears early, at times even in childhood, but more especially in adolescence; it affects more (but not exclusively) women, and has a remarked tendency to periodicity which tends to shorten with the passing of time. If initially it appears related to menstruation, with the passage of time it becomes more and more frequent and unrelated to identifiable causes, until becoming an invalidating migraine of 2, 3 days which reappears at least once a week.

It may be triggered by:

- Proximity or presence of menstruation;

- Cold or a draft of air on the head;
- Cutting or washing the hair;
- Exposition to sun or intense heat. It may also appear after snow ophtalmia.
- Repressed or expressed anger;
- Powerful sensorial excitation, as e.g. sound and light in a disco.
- Psychological excitation following accidents or acute or violent conflicts.

Pain is frequently pulsating, as if pressing from inside outside, as if the head was to explode. It may begin in the occipital area, where arterial pulsations are felt; pain may extend to the full cranium and may become drawing, burning or crushing. It is always associated to phenomena of sensorial affection, photophobia and flickering scotomas in the first place, but also tinnitus, a more or less severe state of vertigo and an extraordinary sensitiveness of the scalp, at times the patient complains that even the hair is painful.

It is extremely aggravated by motion, even of the eyeballs; the patient feels the need to bury the head in the pillow (and usually lies on the abdomen, as to lie on the back aggravates the vertigo). Frequently, he/she makes the room dark, as light aggravates the pain. The light of a screen, like the one of a TV set, may still cause discomfort after the acute crisis is over, as well as noises and drafts of air. During the crisis, the face is congestive, even if the body temperature is normal, but it can become very pale, or alternate congestion and paleness.

If not checked at the beginning with strong analgesics, the pain will not be checked later with anything. It may appear in the night, but more frequently in the morning upon waking or a few hours after some triggering event.

It is a kind of migraine that poisons the existence of the patient for all his/her life, no matter countless treatments. In this case, homeopathy is one of the few therapeutic alternatives that may block the periodic reappearance of the symptoms. Interestingly, and especially in women, this kind of migraine appears in family lineages, presenting exactly the same modalities, which denotes deep diathetic roots.

According to our experience, as a curative remedy, the remedy has to be prescribed in high dilutions and in increasing intervals. On the contrary, in the acute attacks it may be used in middle dilutions (30D-15C), in frequent intakes, from the beginning of the crisis (from each 2-3 hours to 15-30 minutes).

As in children, *Belladonna* is complementary to *Calcarea carbonica*, in migraine it is complementary to *Aurum*, which helps to stabilize the unstable circulation of *Belladonna*.

## 2. Hypertensive syndrome

Belladonna, due to its remarkable vascular tropism, is one of the major remedies for arterial hypertension, especially when the congestive symptoms of the head are prominent and the reactional model of the remedy is present. During the hypertensive crises, it appears a feeling of pressure in the occipital area, together with a pulsating sensation; the face is congestive, the eyes bright, specific sensorial sensitiveness, and psychological irritability.

Arterial hypertension may appear in the young or middle-aged adult, or in the pre-menopause period. Typically, the diastolic pressure values are steadily increased, 100-110 mmHg; but in acute crises they may dangerously rise. In this case, it works well with *Aurum* or *Thuja*, which have a deeper action, reaching the level of the formation of deposits of lipids on the vascular walls. Their effect decreases as arteriosclerosis sets in and the vessels lose elasticity, thus, the ability to react speedily to the influences of the vegetative system. In this state, more chronic remedies, as *Plumbum* or *Baryta carbonica* are more useful.

On the contrary, it is one of the first choices in the pre-apoplectic state or at the beginning of an hypertensive cerebrovascular accident. Certainly, conventional therapy is the rule, but *Belladonna* may be associated in order to decrease the extension of the lesions and to limit the symptoms.

## 3. Vertigo syndrome

Vertigo may be associated to all the acute syndromes of the remedy, but it may also appear alone, persistent and quite resistant to treatment.

It may appear as rotatory vertigo, with the sensation that everything around is whirling, or it may be described as a state of dizziness, as after drinking, aggravated by walking, noises, light and more especially, vertical motion: upon sitting or raising from a seat, elevators, and airplane take-off or landing. Even the simple motion of raising the head or the stare may aggravate it.

It is associated to a feeling of haziness in the vision or the mind, noises in the ears, which compel the patient to rest, lying with the head higher than the rest of the body. Lying on the back almost always aggravates the vertigo and may trigger nausea.

It may appear after triggering events, but very frequently it appears without any ascertainable cause.

At times it may become severe, and aggravates by the least motion (as in migraine), motion in bed or raising from bed, the motion of the eyeballs or even the impression of movement, as when crossing waters in motion (single remedy). Triggered by sunlight (single remedy).

For the diagnosis of the remedy there are always also needed small symptoms, which depend on the aspect of the patient, especially dilated pupils (a small rubric in the repertory, where *Belladonna* has the highest degree).

#### **4. Epilepsy**

It may be the case of convulsive „grand mal” crises or just absences (3<sup>rd</sup> degree). It is a major remedy for seizures in general, epilepsy in particular.

For the diagnosis of the remedy, the symptoms due to the epileptic seizure are less important than the triggers, the typical neuro-sensorial sensitiveness to any kind of excitation. A pathognomic form is the crisis triggered by the sight of shining surfaces (water, mirrors, snow).

The crisis is usually preceded by an aura, which presents the congestive features characteristic of the remedy; many consist in sensorial delusions and hallucinations. The most typical (3<sup>rd</sup> degree), present also only in *Sulphur*, is the feeling of rats moving on the skin of the upper limbs.

The seizure crises are associated to the congestion of the head, the face is red, and at times it is preceded by rage; it affects especially the upper part of the body, particularly the upper limbs (3<sup>rd</sup> degree): in milder forms it may manifest only at this level, with convulsive motions that appear in the night, especially in the hands, fingers or thumbs.

#### **5. Maniac psychoses**

Together with the other major *Solanaceae*, *Belladonna* is one of the main remedies for the maniac phase of the bipolar disturb (and here it is complementary to *Aurum*, specific for the depressive phase), but is equally important in delirium tremens. The symptoms are extraordinarily violent, with rage, violent acts, bites and hits those around, jumps around and tears the hair from his/her head; desire to escape; many sensorial delusions and hallucinations. The aspect is congestive, the face is red and the eyes injected, extraordinary powerful; at times, fright alternates with rage. Suicide tendencies have been remarked.(11)

#### **Final remarks**

*Belladonna* is one of the most complete, reliable and fascinating remedies in the homeopathic materia medica. Well employed, as a remedy and in its dilutions, may effect true „miracles” and help patients in many conditions. It is the living image of the medicine symbol: as much a poison as a powerful healing means.

If I was to take only three remedies to a desert island, one of them would certainly be *Belladonna*. The other two, I leave to the reader the pleasure to find them by him/herself...

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