

Inspiration, Motivation and Magnificence, Miranda Castro at the School of Homeopathy

Abstract

Gill Graham reviews Miranda Castro's recent lectures 'Sharing Gems and Treasures' which took place at the School of Homeopathy, Hawkwood College in Gloucestershire, May 26th-27, 2012. She adds reflections as to the impact this teaching had on her personally in the current UK homeopathic climate.

Introduction

To be fair, I would never normally think of reviewing or writing about any ones lectures. However, this weekend of extraordinary homeopathic teaching had a profound effect on me. Having been out of academia for a few years now, and practicing on my own, I was in need of a huge intellectual, inspirational boost to motivate me in what is an 'uneasy' homeopathic climate in the UK. Being something of a 'peripatetic' homeopath at the moment and living between the UK and Canada (practising mostly in the UK) I was delighted to be able to attend this weekend. The last few weeks in the UK have seen homeopathy once again a target for 'reform' with The Medicines Act (1968) looming over our head, which if enforced to the letter, could be catastrophic for lay homeopaths in Britain. Am I really going to take bus loads of patients to one of the 5 homeopathic pharmacies, in order that they may receive their remedies? I think not. The utter absurdity of the situation and the personal frustration that ensued had left me feeling completely de-motivated and angry with what we as talented healing professionals have to endure on a regular basis.

Preoccupied and distracted I began the journey to Stroud to the School of Homeopathy. Clearly, not in a good space, with my mind elsewhere, an altercation with an unexpected traffic jam resulted in my crashing into an indignant Gloucestershire farmers car (no amount of charm was going to pacify him); this was not a good end to a bad week. So with bruised professional pride and a serious dent in both my wallet and my car, I was in a negative state and was in desperate need of renewed inspiration. None of this is irrelevant; my hope is to demonstrate how the energy and experience of someone like Miranda Castro can alter a 'state' and motivate and encourage positive thinking, engender confidence and reaffirm what an incredible art and science homeopathy is.

On arriving at the School of Homeopathy my first impressions were of a beautiful haven, where one can focus, in peace; (my pulse rate was slowly returning to that of a normal person.) It is located at Hawkwood College which is an early 19th century grade II listed country house, situated at the head of the Cotswold valley surrounded by acres of woodland. The gardens are spectacular, the views, sublime. An air of serenity exudes from every part of the estate, which also boasts divine food and biodynamic gardens. The founder and Director of the school is Misha Norland, the Principal is Mani Norland. His lovely, welcoming wife Amanda runs the school on a day to day basis. Miranda is one of the schools patrons.

Review

As a true professional, Miranda commenced by defining the scope of the lectures; specifically what she was going to talk about, which on this occasion, was 'Challenging Cases.' What follows are the highlights of the lectures as I saw them, and my understanding of various concepts and the impact they had on me. Clearly, I cannot speak for everyone that attended.

From the start, Miranda's passion for homeopathy was evident. Her exuberance shone through, making every part of the lectures interesting, and understandable. She commenced by showing a picture of a beautiful owl, camouflaged amongst the flora; then a similar picture of trees, where if one was incredibly observant, an outline of the artist Toulouse Lautrec could be defined. The message here was clear; look beyond what you actually see, on first sight. We are more than we appear to the naked eye. Seek out what is characteristic in a case. Often we are presented with too much information. Write down only the patients' words. Strip a case, write key words, and then group words and/or phrases into themes. Most important however, is where the centre of gravity of a particular case? Is it in the emotional or physical sphere? By doing this, often a challenging case will start to make sense. She referred to 'getting lost' in a case as 'going off piste' a great analogy which adequately sums up what can often happen if we get overwhelmed with too much information, or make assumptions or extrapolations.

Delve in to the psyche of a patient, and do not project your values and culture on to them. Step back, become 'the unprejudiced observer.' This led on to an interesting discussion about reflective versus reflexive practice which was incredibly useful and highlighted to me the differences within these two terms, which at times, can be confusing. My understanding of reflective practice is that it is a process of self analysis achieved through reflecting on actions undertaken, which allows us to continuously learn. Conversely, reflexive practice is basing our subjective understandings of reality: i.e.: how we perceive someone, which comes from our own values and upbringing; what we think is right according to our own assumptions and culture. It is important to consider the wider context without projecting our own values. Reflexive practice for example, is particularly useful when dealing with teenagers, who invariably 'inhabit a different world.' In other words, do not presume everyone is like you. I strongly identify with the term 'Be as stupid as possible, so as not to not walk in the tracks of our bias' that was cited by Miranda, which comes from Jungian Psychologist and Homeopath Edward Whitmont's 'Psyche and Substance.'

Reflective/Reflexive Practice can also be applied to what do we do if a patient arrives and we take an immediate dislike to them, or what they are saying? Miranda stressed that it is important to acknowledge this, try not to 'roll your eyes', take a deep breath! Why are they pressing my buttons?

Many different sort of challenging cases were discussed (difficult, maddening, complicated), to cases where a homeopathic prescription was not necessary due to a maintaining cause. Specific, complex cases will be very briefly discussed, to demonstrate how to think creatively for a solution, whether homeopathic or simply, to remove the obstacle to cure.

A 'Salutary' Case

A mother called about her baby, who was screaming incessantly. She presumed the baby was teething. Chamomilla 6c was given (as it was the baby's first tooth). Days later the distraught mother called back, the baby was still screaming. Chamomilla 30c was prescribed. 2 days later, no improvement. Had this been the correct remedy, it should have worked. At this stage, Miranda engaged the mother in a rerun of the day the baby started screaming, covering every moment of the day that she could remember. The mother finally remembered that the older sister had fallen down a few stairs but subsequently found out that she had dropped the baby who had banged her head on a sharp corner. The

mother had given Arnica 30C., the baby slept for two hours, had woken up screaming and really hadn't stopped since. The Arnica had destroyed the evidence! There was no bruising. So what had to remain was a very painful headache. Natrum Sulphuricum 200c was given, with immediate relief. This demonstrated the importance (particularly with young children and babies who are unable to speak for themselves) of observation and note taking and the value of writing down every single little prescription – including the Arnica 30c's. Also, an interesting and very useful observation from Miranda:

'For this little baby to have reacted so strongly to the fall there had to have been a predisposition, a weakness. I anticipated that we might need to have Natrum sulphuricum to hand for as and when she next fell or banged her head. For several years this little person did, indeed, suffer with headaches after each head injury, however minor. And Natrum Sulphuricum helped each time, eventually removing that particular weakness altogether.'

An Unusual Case

A four-year-old girl, small, pale with fair hair. She has not eaten properly since she was twenty months old. Her diet consisted of soft, non edible substances, sponges, polystyrene, flowers, clothes, upholstery etc. Normal food was taken, but only minimally. The most characteristic symptom in this case, as well as the above (which are clearly SRPs!) was that she craved tea, up to 5-6 cups a day. The remedy given was Alumina. After taking the remedy, all symptoms and cravings disappeared. It would be difficult to imagine another system of medicine that could have treated this child so sweetly and effectively.

The background to this case is important. It was discovered during the consultation that at eighteen months old she had been hospitalized and the eating 'disorder' had started shortly after. We all saw how easy it was to project all sorts of emotional and even physical trauma (from allopathic medicines) on to this little girl. How easy it would have been to go 'off piste' and make up all kinds of stories about her leading to all kinds of prescriptions. Miranda talked about she had made a mistake by giving Carcinisin at one point after which the little girl completely relapsed. Luckily a repeat of the Alumina brought her back to a state of health. One bright student suggested that since Alumina had worked, maybe she had lost her sense of identity after the traumatic hospitalization.

A Difficult Case

A fascinating case of a young woman, eventually solved by herself, having visited doctors, specialists, acupuncturists, healers and Miranda. Chronic, debilitating abdominal pain persisting over several years, nothing either allopathic or homeopathic helped. So what was missing? Eventually she was asked by a 'probing' psychotherapist 'what do you think is the cause of this? She persisted in stating that 'there is something wrong, I feel like there is something moving about in my abdomen' and she was empowered to investigate. She was right. A scan revealed that an IUD, (a copper 7) had moved through the uterine wall into the abdominal cavity. Her gynaecologist presumed that she had 'passed it with a stool, when she had reported the string had gone missing. The IUD had lodged between one of her kidneys and her spine. There are many morals to this story not least of which is to think 'outside the box' and to explore every single possibility, even the strangest ones. Miranda urged us to consider what we might not be seeing or understanding and to 'shake ourselves down' if ever we find ourselves saying the words 'I wonder if this person is attached to their disease' or 'she doesn't really want to get better'. Miranda insisted that our patients never want to suffer; they have come to us for

a reason, to feel well again. Cases such as these are thought provoking and amazing learning curves, demonstrating that until a maintaining cause is removed, they will remain outside of the realm of homeopathic help.

Many homeopaths, by careful questioning can identify these maintaining causes although it is often not easy, as established with the woman above. Other 'obstacles to cure' can be environmental toxins, unnecessary supplementation of vitamins and minerals, and obviously, pharmaceutical drugs.

A further example is seen in the following case of a woman who presented with severe eczema that was unresponsive to any homeopathic remedy for nearly two years. There was no clear aetiology and it took Miranda this period of time to eventually uncover the aetiology; the patient had taken five times the maximum daily recommended dose of Vitamin A for many months. The remedy given was a single dose of Vitamin A 30c and the eczema improved along with her insomnia and her fatigue.

Miranda's cautioned us to consider the wisdom of taking supplements long term without a very good reason. Supplements are chemicals that are manufactured in a laboratory and they should be only taken if a deficiency is evident and that mega doses should never be taken on a long term basis.

She went on to talk about a patient with terrible constipation and behavioural issues who lived in an old house with wooden, sash windows. How the patient had been contaminated with lead from the dust from old paint that filled every room. Homeopathic remedies helped the patient heal while the house was systematically cleaned up.

Other chemical maintaining causes discussed including asbestos, fluoride, vaccines and chemicals in farms. She urged us to consider the proliferation of environmental toxins. This is why the homeopathic consultation is so valuable. All aspects of a person's life are covered.

The Importance of a Healthy Diet

Miranda talked about the increasing numbers of patient who are skipping breakfast and sometimes lunch and how deleterious to the health living on adrenalin can be. Combining this lifestyle of 'dietary self neglect' with caffeine can be tantamount to taking speed or cocaine on a daily basis with regard to the effects on the body (appetite suppression, poor sleep, speediness, irritability and so on). She gave some great pointers for counselling patients on this issue and stressed that this is not nutritional advice but food management guidelines in order to make sure people are getting their basic needs met.

Professionalism

What sets Miranda and her practice apart from many, is her complete professionalism. She has developed COMPASS, a software program for managing a successful homeopathic business, a complete paperless office for homeopaths. This ensures an impressive communication system for the patient, from introductory letters, mission statements, objectives, through to invoicing and automatic outcomes audits.

She recommended regularly assessing the Vital Force of one's practice, and asking oneself what needs to be healed in order for the practice to be healthier and more vital. This should be treated accordingly.

Conclusion

A vast amount of useful information was covered during the course of the weekend. The subject of 'Challenging Cases' was explored on a deep level, prompting much food for thought. To see a 'complete' picture of a patient is often difficult. What particularly struck me was how important it is to see beyond what one first sees, look 'outside the box.' Listen; observe closely, particularly the eyes. What are they saying? Are they evasive, direct, do they convey hurt or desperation? Can the patient actually look you in the eye? Observe body language and speech patterns and do not let the patient run away with the consultation; we as the homeopath are in charge. Be reflective and reflexive; 'clarify, verify and enlarge' symptoms. Use humour (appropriately) if it is natural to you, this can often make a patient more comfortable and the consultation more productive. Ask detailed, obvious questions to ascertain there are no obstacles to cure should a clear aetiology not be evident.

Miranda's delivery of these lectures was dynamic. Her enthusiasm, experience, insight and passion for homeopathy matched her inner vitality, which was infectious. I developed temporary amnesia about the state of UK homeopathy, but on remembering, became far more positive that the situation will be resolved; we have survived over 200 years of 'reform'; I am fairly certain, we will continue to do so. There are after all, over six million people in this country alone using it. In short, I left feeling revitalised and confident; even seeing my rather 'injured' car did not detract from an overwhelming sense of gratitude that I am, indeed, in the right profession.