

Eye Disease from a Homeopathic Perspective

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Abstract: There has been a dramatic increase in the incidence of eye disease worldwide. Homeopathic principles not only help us understand the reason for this increase but also help us provide effective treatment. Homeopathic practitioners should not avoid the treatment of chronic eye disease but use homeopathic principles with confidence.

Keywords: *Bothrops, Causticum, Calcarea phosphorica, Sepia succus*

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, age-related eye disease including cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration are expected to dramatically increase from 28 million today to 43 million by the year 2020. The Archives of Ophthalmology published a study in the year 2003 looking at 10,500 patients. In this study, the age-related macular degeneration increased 27.1% between 1991 and 1999. The prevalence of diabetic retinopathy among persons with diabetes increased 17.4%. Why is this happening? Can homeopathic laws explain this increase?

The normal eye consists of the cornea, the anterior segment, the lens, the vitreous cavity, and the retina and macula. Light passes through the cornea, then enters the anterior segment, passes through the lens, and then is focused on the macula, which is a highly-developed area of the retina consisting primarily of cones for the focus and discrimination of detail.

Macular Degeneration

Symptoms of macular degeneration include loss of central vision, which is painless and usually mild. Central blind spots, also called scotomas, usually occur late and sometimes become severe. Symptoms are usually bilateral. Findings on eye examination include pigment changes, hyperpigment, and depigmented changes in the retina, drusen, which are like tiny warts, which are accumulation of waste products, and areas of chorio-retinal atrophy. One of the common methods for evaluating macular degeneration is grid testing. The patient is instructed to look at a graph paper or grid and document any areas of distortion, such as wavy lines or distorted lines or gaps in certain areas of the graph.

Glaucoma

This study also looked at glaucoma. Primary open-angle glaucoma has increased by 13.8%. The percentage of glau-

coma suspects has increased from 6.5%, and the percentage of narrow-angle glaucoma has increased by 2.7%. Primary open-angle glaucoma is a condition where there is a blockage of the outflow of aqueous fluid, which results in an increase in intraocular pressure. This intraocular pressure causes a decrease in circulation to the optic nerve, which results in death of this very delicate neurological tissue.

In making the diagnosis of glaucoma, usually there is an elevated eye pressure, although not always. There is a condition called low-tension glaucoma. In addition you need visual field changes, which consist of loss of peripheral vision, and also changes in the optic nerve.

Suppression

I'd like to address suppression as an explanation for the increase in eye disease. This presentation is to show how conventional treatments are causing suppression, and homeopathic principles can explain this increase in eye disease.

Why is there an increase in eye disease? There has been a decline in nutrition, increased use of preservatives, chemicals, and genetically-modified organisms (GMO) in our diet, plus heavy metal poisoning. A recent article reported that lead and cadmium levels accumulate in human ocular tissue, particularly in the retinal pigment epithelium and choroid, and these heavy metals may be linked to an increase in degenerative disorders.

The biggest contributor to eye disease, I believe, is the pharmaceutical industry. The largest contributing cause to the increase of all eye disease is suppression produced by modern medicines.

Here are some examples of suppression:

- Antibiotics for conjunctivitis
- Treatment of chronic blepharitis
- Steroid eye drops
- Cataract surgery
- Laser surgery and injections for retinal disease

I'd like to address each of these items in more detail.

The most commonly prescribed drugs to treat infection and inflammation in all eye diseases are steroids. Many side effects are listed for steroids.

Some of the side effects or the results of suppression from using steroid eye drops:

- There can be an increase in intraocular pressure, sometimes leading to glaucoma.
- Steroid eye drops can cause cataracts
- Infections
- Herpes simplex
- Corneal ulcers

Antibiotic suppression can cause:

- Overgrowth of non-susceptible organisms, including fungi
- May retard corneal wound healing
- Cause the development of punctate keratitis or areas of dry spot on the cornea
- Erythema or redness
- Increase in lacrimation or watering
- Edema or swelling
- Lid itching

Glaucoma eye drops can particularly be suppressive when used to lower the intraocular pressure. Glaucoma medications suppress the natural production of aqueous humor, which is essential in transporting oxygen and nutrients to the eye.

Does the risk of macular degeneration increase after cataract surgery? Data from three major population-based studies were pooled. The odds of having macular degeneration were found to be 1.7 times higher after cataract surgery than without cataract surgery. Once again this is not due to complications of surgery, but due to surgical suppression.

There are three levels of pathology in relationship to the eye, and each layer of the eye represents the disease going deeper. The superficial areas of the eye are the conjunctiva and cornea. The iris and the choroid are the middle, vascular layers, and the retina and optic nerve are the deepest, neurological layers.

Many cases of eye pathology are poorly represented in the materia medica and repertory. Since the eye is derived from the neuro-ectoderm, the skin section of the repertory has important value. Symptoms associated with certain organs, such as the liver, can also be valuable in searching for a remedy.

Emotional states must also be looked at when searching for the simillimum, and also use of the Generalities chapter in the repertory.

There's a strong history of homeopathy in ophthalmology. The New York Ophthalmic Hospital was a homeopathic hospital in 1852 and it was under homeopathic management until 1867. In 1931 it treated over 31,000 patients. The

College of New York Ophthalmic Hospital was also under homeopathic management from 1878 to 1939. They even offered post-graduate courses in homeopathic ophthalmology.

The American Homeopathic Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology Society existed from 1877, and was still in existence in 1941. It conducted a drug proving, a 665-page reproving of Belladonna in 1906. There existed a Homeopathic Eye, Ear, and Throat Journal, and also the Journal of Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology, and Laryngology.

Some standard homeopathic works on ophthalmology that I like are *Homeopathic Therapeutics in Ophthalmology*, published in 1916 by John L. Moffat, M.D., and also *Ophthalmic Diseases and Therapeutics*, published in 1872 by A.B. Norton, M.D. Dr. Norton published an article on "The Homeopathic Treatment of Incipient Senile Cataract, with Tabulated Results of 100 Cases." This was published in the *North American Journal of Homeopathy* in 1891. It was a retrospective study of 295 patients, whose charts were reviewed, plus 100 current patients who had been under treatment for at least three months. The results were that under homeopathic treatment there was an improvement in vision in 58% of the cases, and no change in 42% of the cases. This was remarkable, since cataracts do not improve over time.

The top three remedies in Norton's study were:

Causticum - used in 64 out of 100 patients

Calcarea phosphorica - used in 15 out of 100

Sepia - used in 9 out of 100

Case 1

A 57-year-old radiologist presented with a history of sudden onset of blindness in the left eye. He was very loquacious with a pressured-type speech. He got mad very easily and he couldn't tolerate rudeness. He also had the peculiar symptom that the vision was better in a dark room and worse in the light.

Medical history is positive for a five-year history of insulin-dependent diabetes.

Physical exam revealed vision of 20/40 in the right eye and bare light perception in the left eye. There was no afferent papillary light defect. This papillary abnormality would indicate damage to the optic nerve. The left pupil was slightly larger than the right. In the fundus in the back of his eye, there was marked retinal ischemia with a classic cherry red spot in the center, which is diagnostic for a central retinal artery occlusion.

He was given *Bothrops* 12C twice a day, with a complete return of his vision in three days, and he was doing well two years later.

"This remedy, together with *Lachesis*, *Arnica*, *Latrodectus mactans* and *Lycopodium* should be our main remedies for coping with the first hours following heart infarcts and brain thrombosis. Amaurosis is a strong symptom. Day blindness - can scarcely see her way after sunrise." This is a quote by George Vithoulkas.

Case 2

A 78-year-old female with macular degeneration, cataracts, and a severe balance problem. Her vision was very dim and she had trouble reading and dancing. She also had vertigo and ringing in her ears. She was so weak that her arms and legs shook.

An important aspect of her life was ballroom dancing. She particularly liked ballroom dancing because of its provocative nature. Her sexual drive was never very high.

Physical exam revealed 20/300 in her right eye, with scarcely the ability to read the big E on the eye chart, and 3/100 in the left eye, which indicated that she was able to see the largest letters on the eye chart at the distance of 3 feet. She had advanced cataracts in both eyes. On fundoscopic examination she had myopic degeneration with atrophic changes in her retina.

According to A.B. Norton in his article, "The Homeopathic Treatment of Incipient Senile Cataract," *Sepia* is the number one remedy to think of in females with advanced cataracts. She was given *Sepia* LM1.

On her eight-month follow-up she could read the menu. There had been a seventy percent improvement of her vision. Street signs were becoming clearer and the colors were more vivid. No more dizziness or vertigo. She was stronger and more confident in walking. She had no more ringing in her ears, and her vision had now improved to 20/200 in both eyes. An additional note: she resumed her ballroom dancing.

My Top Twelve Remedies for the Eye

I reviewed all of my charts from 1990 and did a computerized search on the top twelve homeopathic remedies that I used in my eye practice.

- *Arnica montana*
- *Aconitum napellus*
- *Belladonna*
- *Euphrasia*
- *Mercurius solubilis*
- *Phosphorus*
- *Rhus toxicodendron*
- *Ruta graveolens*
- *Symphytum*
- *Silica*
- *Staphysagria*
- *Sulphur*

Arnica

Arnica is the number one remedy for trauma, and also it's the first remedy to think of for ocular trauma.

I also have found it to be very successful for the treatment of a subconjunctival hemorrhage. A subconjunctival hemorrhage is bleeding under the conjunctiva which produces a marked redness of the eye with very little pain and discomfort.

Ecchymosis from coughing

It's also a remedy to think of for retinal hemorrhage.

A characteristic of *Arnica* is that there's inflammation and pain, aggravated by heat.

Aconitum

Aconitum is the homeopathic remedy to think of when conjunctivitis from a cold dry wind or reflection of the snow presents.

Ultraviolet light producing keratitis from snow blindness.

Interestingly, I have found that *Aconite* is a very good remedy for post-excimer laser inflammation. The excimer laser is an ultraviolet laser which is now being used in refractive surgery, the Lasik operation, and refractive keratoplasty. I have had good success using *Aconite* postoperatively in these cases.

Inflammation from injury. Of course the differential is *Symphytum*. *Symphytum*, *Arnica*, and *Aconite* are the three big remedies for inflammation after injury.

The characteristic of *Aconite* is that there tends to be profuse watering from the eye.

Photophobia from sunlight.

Of course we always have to look at loss of vision after fright, anxiety, very cold or hot weather.

Belladonna

Belladonna is a big remedy for the sudden onset of inflammation. Characteristically the pupils are dilated and sluggish.

I've also found it to be very valuable in elevation of intraocular pressure in glaucoma, especially for acute angle closure glaucoma where there is a very rapid onset of an elevation of intraocular pressure.

It is also a remedy I think of for retinal congestion, where you have venous stasis retinopathy, where the venous system is blocked in the eye. Typically you get an appearance of marked congestion of the retina with bleeding.

Think of this remedy for optic neuritis and iritis, especially when of a sudden onset.

Characteristically there's a flushed face and ocular proptosis, which is bulging of the eye.

Photophobia.

Euphrasia

Euphrasia or Eyebright is an extremely valuable remedy for inflammation, primarily of the cornea and conjunctiva.

There's a constant acrid lachrimation, aggravated from wind, similar to *Pulsatilla*. Remember, a differential with *Euphrasia* and *Allium cepa* is that in *Euphrasia* there is an acrid lachrimation from the eyes and a bland discharge from the nose. With *Allium cepa* there is a bland lachrimation from the eye and acrid from the nose.

Burning, swelling, and sticking together of the eyelids. Margins itching and burning.

There is also a foreign body sensation in the eye.

There is a thick acrid discharge, differentiating this remedy from *Mercurius* which has a thin discharge.

Photophobia.

Mercurius

The characteristic of *Mercurius* is that every cold settles in the eye.

The upper lid is thick and red.

There are also thin acrid discharges.

Mercurius is a valuable remedy in cases of chronic blepharitis or inflammation of the eyelid.

Vascular keratitis.

Kerato-iritis, retinitis, choroiditis, and optic neuritis

Tearing and burning pains are not limited to the eye, but can extend to the forehead.

A characteristic *Mercurius* symptom is that the eye pain is much worse at night, like all syphilitic remedies.

Phosphorus

Phosphorus is highly ranked in the homeopathic literature for glaucoma.

Characteristically in *Phosphorus* there are lights and hallucinations of vision. Any time the patient presents with an eye problem and there are symptoms of lights, hallucination of vision, seeing colored objects, particularly objects like red floaters, *Phosphorus* should be in the differential.

Hemeralopia – day blindness.

Hyperemia of the retina, choroid, optic nerve.

Of course, *Phosphorus* is one of the important remedies for retinal hemorrhage.

Atrophy and paralysis of the optic nerve.

Diabetic retinopathy.

Pulsatilla

Pulsatilla is useful for conjunctivitis and allergies, especially when there tends to be a yellowish-green discharge, bland and profuse.

Burning and itching, rubbing ameliorates.

Pain and itching ameliorated by cold application, like *Sulphur*.

It is also an important remedy, along with *Silica*, for obstruction of the nasolacrimal duct.

It is also an important remedy for styes, along with *Staphysagria*.

Rhus toxicodendron

Characteristically the lids are inflamed, agglutinated and swollen.

Upon opening the lids, tears or pus gush outward.

A.B. Norton, in his textbook, describes a case of endophthalmitis following cataract surgery. Endophthalmitis is a severe ocular infection which encompasses the whole eye. In Norton's patent the eye was filled with pus, and he was treated with *Rhus toxicodendron* successfully. This occurred during the time when antibiotics were not being used to treat infections.

It is a remedy to think of in orbital cellulitis and panophthalmitis or endophthalmitis.

Suppurative conditions.

Ruta graveolens

Ruta is a big remedy for ailments from straining the eye, especially from fine work and exertion of vision. Now with so many people using computers and smart phones and straining their eyes with close work, *Ruta* should prove a very valuable remedy in treating these problems.

There tends to be a sensation of stiffness of the eye muscles.

Conjunctivitis, pain and heat, as if the eyes were on fire.

Disturbances in accommodation, or the ability to focus. The remedy *Physostigma* also has this disturbance of accommodation.

Silica

Silica, along with *Pulsatilla*, is the remedy to consider for inflammation and obstruction of the nasolacrimal duct.

I have had success using *Silica* in infants with nasolacrimal duct obstruction. Typically, when this diagnosis is made the pediatrician will consider waiting for three months, and, if there is no resolution in the nasolacrimal duct obstruction, a surgical procedure will be performed in which a small wire probe is placed in the lacrimal duct to open the duct. *Silica* should be a remedy to consider as the first line of treatment of this condition.

Also *Silica* is a good homeopathic remedy for the treatment of styes, especially styes that are very hard and long-standing.

Characteristic of the *Silica* patient is a great sensitivity to cold, especially in the head.

It's also a remedy for ulcers and abscesses of the cornea

Wounds that heal slowly. I've used this after cataract surgery and other ocular surgical procedures in which the incision heals very slowly.

Symphytum

Symphytum is also called *Arnica* of the eye, given that it has proven an important remedy for eye injuries.

It's a big remedy related to injury to the eye.

There's a desire to rub the eye after an injury.

Pain after an injury with soreness.

I looked at my cases and I looked in the homeopathic literature to try to differentiate *Arnica* from *Symphytum*. There seemed to be one keynote—if a cataract develops after an injury to the eye, *Symphytum* the preferred remedy.

Staphysagria

Staphysagria is a remedy along with *Silica* for styes. In my patients successfully treated for styes with *Staphysagria*, there has always been a history of indignation, which is consistent with the remedy's well-known association with ailments from indignation.

Photophobia.

Iritis.

Lacerated or incised wounds.

I have used this also for surgical cases which heal very slowly. Years ago we did a surgical procedure called radial

keratotomy in which incisions were made in the cornea to flatten the cornea. When I was doing these procedures of radial keratotomy, I found that when complications developed or when the cases healed slowly that *Staphysagria* was the indicated remedy.

Sulphur

Conjunctivitis with sensation of “sand in the eyes.”

Like *Pulsatilla*, it’s ameliorated with cold compresses.

It’s a very important remedy for blepharitis. The margins of the eye are red.

Iritis.

Purulent discharge. Agglutination in the morning on waking.

Disturbance of vision before headache.

In conclusion, homeopathy can be a very successful modality for the treatment of ocular disorders. I feel very

strongly that the increase in eye disease is related to suppression. As homeopathic practitioners we have to be aware of suppression as a causation of ocular disease. We can be confident using homeopathic remedies to treat these eye disorders.

About the author: Board-certified in ophthalmology and Fellow of the College of Syntonic Light Therapy. Ophthalmology practice since 1977. Certified Classical Homeopath, with homeopathic practice since 1990. This paper was originally presented at the International European Homeopathic Congress in Riga, Latvia, May 2011. Other papers: “Homeopathy in the Treatment of Macular Degeneration” in New England Journal of Homeopathy, January 2000, and “Homeopathy in the Treatment of Chronic Eye Disease” to the American College of Alternative Medicine in November 2001.

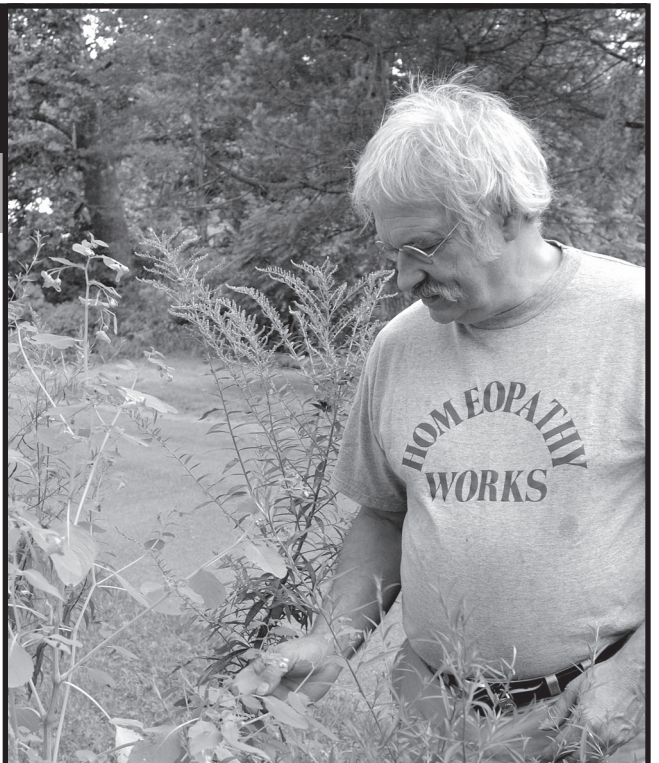


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