



Carbon

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It would be impossible to understand the carbon remedies fully without the work of Dr. Scholten on the periodic table. The refinements of this work suggested by Dr. Sankaran in his two-volume text, *Structure*, has deepened this understanding further. To cut to the chase, I would like to summarise the experience I have with Carbon remedies.

Pointers to Carbon

There are different aspects of carbon cases and no one case will have every component. In practice, there are several main doorways that lead me to consider a Carbon remedy.

Confusion

Most Carbon compounds have the ability to pass readily through the blood-brain barrier causing mental impairment, intoxication, disorientation and weakness of memory. When I examined provings and cases of Carbon remedies I was struck by the universality of these characteristics. The patients who are affected in this way often describe slowed thinking and various levels of "brain fog". Reading is prominently affected and often provokes symptoms such as headache, fatigue, and vertigo. The confusion need not be the primary complaint of the patient, but especially in the failed state of the remedy it is likely to be very prominent. (See the case of *Pix liquida* from *Malcolm Smith* in this issue.)

Lost

This aspect is intimately connected to the above confusion. *Glonoinum* and *Petroleum* are the strongest remedies for the rubric, "Lost in well-known places." Many patients repeatedly use the word "lost" to describe their experience during the interview.

Over and over we find descriptions in the literature of patients who get turned around, go north instead of south, become

befuddled, lose the location they parked their automobile, etc. But even more common is the feeling of being lost in the bigger picture of life. What should they do and where should they go? They need direction but no direction makes sense. The patient will often say he feels ill-equipped to deal with life – almost as if he were a young child. (Note this issue's case of *Carbo vegetabilis* from Dr. Sankaran.)

Downward

In the vast majority of cases, the patient will indicate the direction down or use the word "sinking". There are often dreams or fears of falling. His bank account will be described as falling. Somewhere in the case there is very likely to be the impression of going down. Dr. van der Zee and Dr. Sankaran have discussed remedies in relationship to childbirth and this is remarkably true in the second row remedies. Dr. Sankaran analogised that Carbon relates to the final phase of the birth process – as the baby leaves the womb. We can easily understand from this the nearly universal sensation in Carbon cases of sinking or falling. Furthermore, Carbon is immediately next to *Boron* (with its famous fear of downward motion) in the periodic table. The most frequent hand gesture noted in Carbon cases is a downward swoop.

Vitality

As noted, Carbon has to do with life itself. When a patient needs a Carbon remedy, often the very life force is at risk. In the majority of cases that I have seen or that have been sent to me from generous colleagues, the patient presents with an initial complaint of severe fatigue. The patient tries to make the homoeopath aware that the fatigue is something extraordinary, beyond any fatigue that he experienced in his life before the illness. The language is fairly consistent. The patient uses phrases like, "Life force is gone" or "Core energy failing" or "Vitality is sucked out of me". These words are meant to convey an experience

that most of us will (thankfully) never have of such depletion that no amount of rest or sleep can overcome. Not only *Carbo vegetabilis*, but all of the Carbon group can lose this life force in their pathology creating weakness, fainting, and the feeling of deadness. Thus Carbon cases are some of the most important remedies in chronic fatigue syndrome. (Note the case of *Gunpowder* by Jenny Hwozdek.)

Estrangement

Carbon cases nearly always feel isolated or fear becoming abandoned or isolated. Paradoxically, most of these patients simultaneously – either consciously or unconsciously – push away those who are nearest and dearest. Like the old adage, "You can't live with them and you can't live without them." The patient instinctively seeks separation but pays a dear cost. Think of a Carbon remedy when the most striking aspect of the case centres around feeling of no support (see Resources below) in the world but the patient simultaneously mentions that he has severed ties with his family. This can also take a childish form where the patient literally clings to his loved one with great dependency while abusing him and throwing tantrums (note the *Gallicum acidum* case of *Nancy Herrick*).

Resources

Carbon patients feel that they lack the resources necessary for life or could come to need. Food, shelter, love, protection. This produces intense fear and longing. It is really quite rare to find a Carbon case that does not speak of fears about money. In many cases it is nearly an obsession. This may be stated in the context of complaints that resources are not forthcoming from his family. Often there is instead a feeling of estrangement from the family – that he is cut off from resources. He longs to be in a protected cocoon where there is no want and no threat. (Again consider the case of *Carbo vegetabilis* from Dr. Sankaran.)

S U M M A R Y

This article discusses remedies that have Carbon – the chemical basis of all known life forms – as their main constituent. The author summarises aspects in a case that can point to a carbon remedy as a simillimum, the inner story of a carbon case, and on how to differentiate between the many different Carbon remedies.

KEYWORDS Carbons, Periodic table, Aliphatics, Aromatics, Alcohols, Amines, Carboxylic acids, Double-bonds, Nitriles, Nitrates, Nitrites



Good Confirmatory Characteristics

Chemical sensitivity syndrome

About half of the patients coming for treatment of chemical sensitivities require a Carbon remedy. Even trace amounts of perfumes, solvents, detergents and other chemicals will provoke weakness and confusion. However, another small set of patients show just the opposite – a craving for the smell (or taste) of tar, aromatics or smoke in general.

Paradoxical relations to temperature

Though *Mercurius* is our most famous remedy for sensitivity to both heat and cold, many plant remedies and most of the Carbon remedies have this symptom much more prominently. What is interesting about Carbon remedies is that they often have paradoxical relations to heat and cold. They may feel heat and cold simultaneously. Many are very chilly remedies but ameliorated by cold both generally and locally. Famously *Camphora* and *Carbo vegetabilis* require cold air or cold bathing despite being among the chilliest patients in our materia medica.

Sun

Many of our Carbon remedies have drastic reactions to the sun with sunstroke, headache, skin reactions, etc. Many patients will note a searing sensation in the head from exposure to sun. Even many of the Carbon remedies that are not listed for such reactions to sun will complain of this phenomenon.

Alcohol

The majority of cases will have a strong relationship to alcohol. Many have a history of alcoholism or a family history. Another common symptom is the feeling of intoxication with seemingly tiny amounts of alcohol. Of course it will not have escaped the reader that alcohol is a Carbon remedy (*Alcoholus*).

Head

For some reason, the majority of Carbon cases have trouble with the head and especially the vertex. Constricting or pressure headaches are very common. Also sensations of heat, flushes, and sun intolerance are all centred on the head and vertex. Most patients point to, rub, handle or fiddle with their head during the interview.

Food

The main cravings are for sweets, carbohydrates, smoked flavoured foods and alcohol. Even more often there is a strong aversion to sweets.

The Inner Story

When we bring the patient to his most fundamental experience we often encounter images, delusions, dreams or feelings of birth, infancy and being very young. They describe their feeling as being like a baby or more often like a toddler. Of course those who follow the Sensation method know that this is true of most of the remedies in the second row. Dr. Sankaran has compared the remedies of the second row to the birth process.

Carbon is metaphorically the stage relating to the moment that birth is taking place. If we imagine that the baby senses that birth must happen now – he must be born but has no idea what to expect. What is the strange new world that he is coming into? How will he cope? The world is confusing and disorienting. Remember that we are speaking metaphorically here. However, this approximates the experience of many patients needing a Carbon remedy and in fact this metaphor is amazingly often used by the patient himself. You may find yourself wondering (as I do) if the patient hasn't somehow read the books of Dr. Sankaran.

When a Carbon patient speaks of his insecurities, he mainly speaks about having fears concerning his very survival (vitality). When asked to explain this feeling, generally the patient alludes to images of being a toddler or very young child. A toddler has his own life, is separate from the mother but remains dependent. When the parent is not available he is vulnerable on the most basic level – food and shelter. The word that most typically arises in this context is “resources” which are felt to be lacking. This is a generic word indicating nutrition, money, material things as well as the need for contact, love, reassurance, protection. In this we see a similarity with the fourth periodic row but up an octave. The fourth row needs a job, the second row needs a parent.

In the uncompensated patient, this feeling of childishness results in frank dependency, severe anxiety disorders, agoraphobia and a seeming refusal to enter into an adult life. Most patients however reach a type of ac-

commodation with this inner state. Do not expect the patient to exhibit this infantile feeling in any overt way. Rather this comes through from an exhaustive interview into the central sensation. In many cases we can arrive at the need for a Carbon remedy through the sensation method and the patient's inner experience.

Case Analysis

However, our next set of problems occurs once we have decided upon a Carbon remedy. Huge strides have been taken in understanding the mineral remedies in homoeopathy. The seminal work of Jan Scholten has given us a framework for understanding the entire periodic table of elements. And certainly from the characteristics that Dr. Scholten has emphasised we are often led to Carbon directly. But when we begin to study the Carbon remedies, we find a gaping hole in our knowledge. That is, once we identify that a patient requires a Carbon in some form – What next? There are about two hundred homoeopathic Carbon remedies in our materia medica. How do we determine which of these many remedies to give our patient?

Of course, from provings and cured cases, we know many keynotes for the various Carbon remedies. When the patient presents with these keynotes we have it made. At other times the patient will often name the actual source of his remedy (for example, mentioning a severe physical reaction to aspirin when this is the needed remedy) or they may speak eloquently of deeper Sensations that allow us to identify the Source – for example, feeling of existing in tar (*Pix liquida*) or the feeling of hardness and sparkling of diamonds (*Adamas*).

But life is rarely that easy. Many colleagues have written to me, “I know this patient needs a Carbon remedy. Can you help me choose?” When we have exhausted our materia medica (or the patient's ability to go to the Source) without finding an answer we can often gain insight based upon certain key findings in the patient that lead to various subgroups of Carbon. These characteristics are presented below.

The search for some easy guidelines toward choosing specific Carbon remedies led me to an unusual conclusion: in Carbon cases, not only the chemical formula is important. Instead, we must also look at the intimate details of the structure of the molecule.

Those familiar with organic chemistry will know that the remedies *Aetherum* (diethyl ether) and *Butyricum adicum* (ethylacetic acid) are four Carbon molecules with oxygen and hydrogen. Yet the homoeopathic symptoms are utterly different. How can that make sense since they are composed of exactly the same elements? The answer lies in the two very different structures of the molecules – one is an ether and one a carboxylic acid. They act very different chemically. They are different remedies with the same constituents. Perhaps more remarkably the two racemers (rotations) of the identical chemical – *Lactic acid* and *Sarcocollatic acid* – had very different proving symptoms. Even remedies made from only Carbon (*Graphites*, *Carbo vegetabilis*, *Adamas*) have very different homoeopathic symptoms based upon their structure. Thus, uniquely in Carbon we are forced to understand not just what elements are found in the remedy but also the intimate structure of the remedy – not its chemical formula alone. That's the fun part.

For those of us who are deeply involved in the Sensation method, we have additional headaches and help. First the help. Say that you have understood that your patient needs a remedy from the second row. That is an excellent first step. However, you may find yourself confused because at times the patient gives you the impression of Nitrogen – he breaks free or he is pulled back. At other times he gives the impression of Carbon or some other element. Your first tendency is to choose one or the other – Carbon or Nitrogen – and you may spend a long time trying to differentiate, “Which one is it?” But then the idea finally comes, “Maybe he needs a remedy that is composed of both Carbon and Nitrogen.” This nearly miraculous mental jump leads us to look for remedies that contain both elements. Now comes the headache because there are four distinct families of remedies that can include both elements: Nitrates and nitrites. Cyanides. Amines. And Ammonium salts.

Next you will want to know, are there a few important groups of these Carbons and are there simple ways of differentiating the groups? Luckily there are. For more details and to see the method of deriving these pointers, see my book *Carbon*. Remember that this information is not derived from their chemistry but rather the reverse. Working from cured cases and provings, this information becomes evident. Below is the Cliff Note version of a few of these groups.

Aliphatic or Aromatic

The first question we must ask ourselves when dealing with a case clearly needing a Carbon remedy is *aliphatic* or *aromatic*. These are two different ways that the Carbon skeleton of the molecule is joined. The electrons are shared very differently and there are strong signatures of each form.

- The **aliphatic group** is passive, feels invisible, slow and appears to be waiting for an invitation to life itself.
- The **aromatic group** (composed of six high-tension bonds in a circle) is active, mentally overstimulated, oversexed and often loquacious.

All of the other subgroups I'm about to describe exist in both aliphatic and aromatic forms. For example, *Glonoinum* is an aliphatic nitrate and *Picric acidum* is an aromatic nitrate. In my experience this difference is quite crucial in remedy choice.

Alcohols

Alcohol groups are composed of oxygen and hydrogen. The main characteristic is great inhibition interspersed with extreme disinhibition and immoderate behaviour, unpleasantly affectionate, abuse of loved ones. Naturally, the tendency for alcoholism (a common characteristic of Carbon remedies) is especially strong in this group. Most of the remedies belong in the sycotic miasm. Alcohol remedies include *Alcoholus*, *Kreosotum*, *Thymolum*, *Carbolicum acidum*.

Amines

Amines are composed of nitrogen attached to various numbers of carbon. Resentment, withdrawal, isolation and disappointment with life characterise this group. They have great difficulty in communication with others and find life a bitter affair. Physical complaints centre around the kidneys and urinary tract. Amine remedies include *Alloxanum*, *Anilinum*, *Urea pura*, *Thiosinaminum*, *Skatolum*.

Carboxylic Acid

Composed of two oxygens attached to a Carbon skeleton, one of the oxygens is double-bonded. Closely related are all of the sugar remedies. This group of remedies has intense fear about health, safety and espe-

cially physical attacks and murder. They express this through a tremendous need and demand to be held, carried or attended to. They often fear to leave the house and will even become agoraphobic. Physical complaints include deformative arthritis or gout, mouth ulcers or painful aphthae, heartburn and indigestion. Being most often typhoid miasm remedies, the group naturally includes diarrhoea and intestinal disorders. Carboxylic acids include *Aceticum acidum*, *Oxalicum acidum*, *Gallicum acidum*, and all of our sugar remedies.

Double-bonds

These include carbon to carbon double-bonds but also carbonyls with double-bonds between carbon and oxygen. Triple-bonds are even more unstable. These unstable bonds are vulnerable to breaking which translates in the patient into the feeling of stress. When the patient needs a remedy with double-bonds the main feeling is one of attack or persecution. The patient often responds to this by being aggressive and domineering. Double-bonds are found in *Carboneum oxygenisatum*, *Carboneum hydrogenisatum*, *Camphora*, *Alloxanum*.

Nitriles

The chemical name for cyanide (triple-bonded nitrogen and carbon) is nitrile. The main feeling in this group is extreme betrayal, similar to the halogens. In fact chemically the name for cyanide is the “false halogen”. The betrayal here is a life and death matter and it is no wonder when one looks at the role cyanide plays in criminal executions, murder, the Holocaust. Cyanosis, cardiac and neurological disorders predominate in this syphilitic group. Cyanide remedies include *Hydrocyanicum acidum*, *Kali cyanatum*, *Kali ferrocyanatum*.

Nitrates and Nitrites

This group, composed of two (or three) oxygens double-bonded to nitrogen, carries the well-known theme of explosion. The organonitrates are some of the most explosive chemicals known – including nitroglycerine (*Glonoinum* to you). The patient senses danger or accidents everywhere requiring vigilance to avoid making most of these remedies part of the cancer miasm. There may be marked volatility that re-



quires much self-control and fear of losing control. Physical complaints centre upon the circulation with flushes, palpitations and cardiac disorders. Nitrate remedies include *Amyl nitrosum*, *Glonoinum*, *Benzenum dinitricum*, all of the picrates.

Other Points about Carbon Remedies

One other twist to keep in mind is that many minerals create salts with various carbon molecules. The **carbonates** include some of our most important remedies such as *Calcareo carbonica* or *Kali carbonicum*. Also the various **acetates**, **ferrocyanates**, **lactates**, **oxalates**, **succinates**, **tartrates** and others have strong elements of carbon. These patients often begin by giving us lots of information about the cation (positively charged ion), looking, for example, like *Calcareo* but with strong Carbon themes thrown in. We can also derive information about these organic salts to be used in case analysis. For example, Dr. Scholten has brought much information about lactates. Each of these organic salts has its own signature just as the various organic groups mentioned above do.

Additionally there is a variety of remedies made from fractions of complex carbon-

based mixtures. For example, our remedies *Keroselinum*, *Petroleum*, *Gasolinum*, *Anthrokokali* and others are not discrete carbon chemicals but rather slurries of many different and poorly related carbon chemicals. Thus they show very strong characteristics of Carbon remedies but cannot be fitted into one of the groups mentioned above. What is interesting is that these mixtures of chemicals are some of our most important dermatologic remedies.

There are also quite a few remedies made from slurries of plant-derived carbon chemicals such as *Kreosotum*, *Terebinthina*, *Mentha piperita*, *Camphora* and others. These remedies show marked symptoms of Carbon and at the same time symptoms of the plant family from which they were distilled. For example, *Camphora* patients nearly always show strong Carbon symptoms but also relate to the Magnoliaceae.

Finally, an additional complication arises since many of our remedies have more than one category. For example, *Alloxanum* is both an amine and also contains double-bonds. It is fascinating (though we should have expected it) that the pathologies of both groups are present in its proving and cured cases. Thus we see both the feeling of persecution and domination from the double-bond and the withdrawal and disappointment of the amine.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would encourage everyone to keep this important group of remedies in mind especially when you have failed repeatedly in a case. They are quite common in practice and easily overlooked. I am not deluded enough to believe that the pointers I have given are the only ones or even the best ones for each group. I hope to learn much more of the group from your successful prescriptions.

References

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