

Eye Disease from a Homeopathic Perspective

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Presented at the International European Homeopathic
Congress
May 19, 2011
Riga, Latvia

A little background about myself. I'm Board-certified in ophthalmology and I've been practicing ophthalmology since 1977. I'm also a Certified Classical Homeopath and have been practicing homeopathy since 1990. Since 1990 I've been incorporating homeopathy in my ophthalmology practice. I'm also a Fellow of the College of Syntonic Light Therapy. I have my medical license in Arizona, my homeopathic license in Arizona, and medical license in Pennsylvania.

There's been a dramatic increase in eye disease worldwide. Why is this happening? Can homeopathic laws explain this increase?

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%.

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.

Here we see the normal anatomy of the fundus, which consists of the optic nerve, the macula, and this highly-specialized area in the macula, where there's a high concentration of cones.

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.

There's a normal-appearing macula on the left, and you can see on the right there's areas of hyperpigmentation and some hemorrhage.

This is an example of distortion, which is produced by macular degeneration.

One of the common methods for evaluating macular degeneration is grid testing. This is where the patient is instructed to look at a graph paper or grid, and they are to document any areas of distortion, which consists of wavy lines or distorted lines or gaps in certain areas of the graph.

Here's an example of drusen, which look like tiny warts which develop in the macula of the retina.

This is an example of a macular hemorrhage. This central area is an area of bleeding.

Glaucoma

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

This is an example of a visual field tester. The patient places his head in this device and a computer measures his response to various light intensities which are flashed in the periphery.

This shows damage to the optic nerve. On the left you can see this elevated white area, which is called the cupping of the optic nerve, and in glaucoma this area increases. This indicates a loss of the nerve fiber layer, which is a key element of the optic nerve. On the right is a normal-appearing optic nerve head.

These are corresponding visual field changes. Typically in glaucoma you develop either a superior or inferior altitudinal defect.

Suppression

I'd like to talk about 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? One thing we need to look at is there is a decline in nutrition, use of preservatives, chemicals, and genetically-modified organisms (GMO) in our diet, and also heavy metal poisoning.

A recent article reported that lead and cadmium levels accumulate in the 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 big pharma, or 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 talk a little bit more about each of these items.

Here is a presentation of marked conjunctivitis. Typically this condition is treated with antibiotics and steroids.

This is an example of chronic blepharitis, which leads to irritation of the eye and in some cases the development of a sty or a chalazion.

Cataract surgery is the removal of a diseased human lens, which has become cloudy or opacified and is obstructing vision. This slide illustrates a surgical procedure to remove that lens.

The most commonly prescribed drugs to treat infection and inflammation in all diseases are steroids. Many side effects are listed for steroids. From a homeopathic perspective, steroids do not produce side effects but they produce symptoms which are the result of suppression.

Here are some of the side effects or the results of suppression in 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

There could also be more serious suppression from steroid eye drops. Peter Shaw in the December issue of the British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology suggests they could have an effect on the nasal septal perforation. He published in the November issue of Eye a case of exogenous Cushing's syndrome related to ocular steroids.

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 vascular layers, and the retina and optic nerve are 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 Otology 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, Otology, and Laryngology.

Here are some standard works on ophthalmology by homeopaths. In particular I like Homeopathic Therapeutics in Ophthalmology, published in 1916 by John L. Moffat, M.D., and also I like Ophthalmic Diseases and Therapeutics, which was 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.

Here we see an example of a cataract.

This was a retrospective study of 295 patients, whose charts were reviewed, and 100 patients who were under treatment for greater than three months were included in the study.

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 – occurring in 64 out of 100 patients
- Calcarea Phosphorica – occurring in 15 out of 100
- Sepia – occurring in 9 out of 100

There was also a study looking at Similasan eye drop in the treatment of allergies. The homeopathic ingredients in Similasan eye drops are Apis, Euphrasia, and Sabadilla. Thirty-two patients with ocular allergies were included in this study. It was double blind, meaning there was a control group. The end result was a significant reduction in signs and symptoms using this homeopathic eye drop.

I have published “Homeopathy in the Treatment of Macular Degeneration,” which was published in the New England Journal of Homeopathy in January 2000, and also “Homeopathy in the Treatment of Chronic Eye Disease,” which was presented to the American College of Alternative Medicine in November 2001.

I’d like to present a couple of cases now.

Case #1

This was a 57-year-old radiologist who presented with a history of sudden onset of blindness in the left eye. His presentation was interesting in that he was very loquacious with a pressured-type speech. He gets mad very easily and he can’t tolerate rudeness. He also has the peculiar symptom that the vision is 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 is no afferent papillary light defect. This papillary abnormality would indicate damage to the optic nerve. The left pupil is slightly larger than the right.

This is the appearance of the fundus in the back of his eye. There is 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, and the patient had complete return of his vision in three days and is 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

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

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, which is barely the ability to read the big E on the eye chart, and 3/100 in the left eye, which indicates that she was able to see the largest letters on the eye chart at the distance of 3'. She has advanced cataracts in both eyes. On fundusoscopic examination she has 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 8-month follow-up she can read the menu now. There's been 70% improvement of her vision. Street signs are becoming clearer and the colors are vivid. No more dizziness or vertigo. She is stronger and more confident in walking. She has no more ringing in her ears, and the vision has now improved to 20/200 in both eyes. An additional note is she has resumed her ballroom dancing.

I'd like to talk about the top 12 homeopathic remedies for the eye. I reviewed all of my charts from 1990 and did a computerized search on the top homeopathic remedies that I used in my eye practice, and here is the list.

- Arnica
- Aconite
- Belladonna
- Euphrasia
- Mercurius
- Phosphorus
- Rhus Toxicodendron
- Ruta
- Symphytum
- Silica
- Staphysagria
- Sulfur

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

Aconite

- Aconite is the homeopathic remedy to think of when there's conjunctivitis from a cold dry wind or reflection of the snow.
- 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 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 for elevation of intraocular pressure in glaucoma, especially for acute angle closure glaucoma where there's a very rapid onset of an elevation of intraocular pressure.
- It's 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.
- It's also a remedy that has good value in optic neuritis and iritis, especially those 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 lacrimation, aggravated from wind, similar to Pulsatilla. Remember, a differential with Euphrasia and Allium Cepa is that in Euphrasia there's an acrid lacrimation from the eyes and a bland discharge from the nose. With Allium Cepa there is a bland lacrimation from the eye and acrid from the nose.

- Burning, swelling, and sticking together of the eyelids. Margins itching and burning.
- There's also a foreign body sensation in the eye.
- There's a thick acrid discharge, and the differential with Mercury is that the discharge is thin.
- Photophobia

Mercurius

- The characteristic of Mercurius is that every cold settles in the eye.
- The upper lid is thick and red.
- There's 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 also extend to the forehead.
- Also a characteristic Mercury 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.
- Hemeralopia – day blindness
- Hyperemia of the retina, choroid, optic nerve
- Of course, Phosphorus is one of our big remedies for retinal hemorrhage
- Atrophy and paralysis of the optic nerve
- It's a big remedy to think of in diabetic retinopathy

Pulsatilla

- Pulsatilla is a big homeopathic remedy 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's also a big remedy, along with Silica, for obstruction of the nasolacrimal duct.
- It's a big 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. Essentially the eye was filled with pus, and this patient was treated with Rhus Tox 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

- 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 can be 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 of 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've had success in using Silica in treating infants with nasolacrimal duct obstruction. Typically when this diagnosis is made the pediatrician will consider waiting for three months, and if there's no resolution in the nasolacrimal duct obstruction at birth, then they'll do a surgical procedure 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 longstanding.
- Characteristic of the Silica patient is they're very sensitive 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.
- 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 with Symphytum and to see if there were any keynotes that could possibly lead to a differentiation. There seemed to be one keynote, that if a cataract develops after an injury to the eye, this seems to more heavily emphasize Symphytum than Arnica. So if you have a patient who develops a cataract after an injury, Symphytum is the remedy to consider, not Arnica.

Staphysagria

- Staphysagria is a remedy along with Silica for styes. In the patients that I have observed that Staphysagria has treated the styte successfully, there has always been a history of indignation, and we know that Staphysagria is a big remedy for 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 big 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 the etiology of the increase in ocular disease. We have to be confident in using homeopathic remedies to treat these eye disorders effectively.