



Chelsea Animal Hospital Inc.

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Alternatively Speaking: Homeopathy – Little Doses with Big Effects Dr. Anne Carroll, DVM, CVA

I have always been fascinated with homeopathy, from the first time I encountered it over 15 years ago. I was treating a Shar Pei who had gotten a snout full of porcupine quills and somewhere in his big wrinkled nose a quill was buried. It was festering and he was congested and miserable and it would not resolve no matter what medications we tried. We were preparing to send him off for surgery when his owner met a stranger on a plane who gave her a bag of little white pellets that he said would help. When she called to tell me, I was incredulous that she would consider feeding some unknown substance to her dog. Before I could protest she announced that not only did she give it, but a huge amount of drainage had come out of his nose within hours of giving the remedy and he had been totally fine ever since. “Dr Carroll,” she asked, “could that stuff really cure him like that?” It turns out that she had given the remedy Silica, and at that time I had no idea, but I certainly was going to look into it. This was my introduction into the world of this subtle yet potent medicine.

For those of you who may not have experienced the wonders of homeopathy, it is a system of medicine developed by the German physician Samuel Hahnemann 200 years ago. He observed that small doses of substances could help treat symptoms; the very same symptoms that would be caused by taking these substances in larger doses. He described this as the Law of Similars, and that “like cures like”, and the name homeopathy reflects this fundamental approach, homeo=same and pathy=disease. Unlike drugs or even herbs, homeopathic remedies are too tiny a dose to have a pharmacological action on the body. Because of this, homeopathy has been surrounded in controversy. However, as advances in modern science progress, electron microscopy and other technologies can see particles smaller than before. This has opened a window into a world we are barely starting to understand, where communications and stimulations occur in the body via ‘nanoparticles’, measured in picograms (one trillionth of a gram), and this has led to the recognition of nanopharmacology, or the ability to impact the body with substances much smaller than the drugs we are currently using.

Back in Dr. Hahnemann’s time, he could not use technology to prove the effect of his tiny doses. He could only show that it worked by using them in real cases, so he faced the same doubts by scientists then as today. Fortunately in the last 20 years homeopathy is gaining grounds again world-wide in both human and veterinary medicine. In my practice I have had the privilege for the past eight years to work with Dr. Betty Jo Black, who is a certified veterinary homeopath and she has brought a whole other realm of treatment options for our patients. Take “Rufus” for example. He is a lovely Manx kitty who was adopted in 2010 by his devoted owner despite a history of stubborn diarrhea. Unfortunately that diarrhea proved to be Inflammatory Bowel Disease, a condition where the digestive tract is too inflamed to work correctly. Usually we can manage this condition fairly well, especially with alternative supports including diet, probiotics, and Chinese herbs. But Rufus would not eat the diets or herbs we prescribed and he preferred to curl up in a ball on a cushy bed when at our office, making acupuncture difficult. In 2011, Rufus was evaluated by Dr. Black for homeopathy. A couple of remedies were prescribed including Belladonna and Sulfur and in 2013 Phosphorus was tried in between all the other therapies we were using. By this time he was taking antibiotics, immunosuppressive drugs, and getting a steroid shot every 2 - 3 months as well. He still had mild diarrhea and would often have a very red raw bottom. He was also very cranky when he did not feel well and would fight with his kitty brother, Romeo. By 2015 he was losing weight, vomiting, and dripping diarrhea. He felt so poorly he would only growl at Romeo and not even chase him to start a fight. Dr. Black gave him Podophyllum, which matched his emotional and physical symptoms at this point. Finally we saw a change. He has needed only one steroid shot since this remedy, and that was six months ago, but more importantly, his stools are normal and he feels great for the first time in years.

Rufus is a good example of the benefits of homeopathy. Remedies can be given dissolved in a bit of water so they are tasteless and easily accepted by even the most stubborn patients. They are also very safe, since being so dilute they have no outright pharmacological actions and therefore no side effects and can be used alongside other

drugs. Yet its tiny nature allows it to work on the most basic levels of body function to restore health when bigger, stronger, more measurable therapies fail.

Rufus's case also shows that it is not easy to pick the right treatment from the over 2000 choices that are available. Each homeopathic remedy has a described action on every system in the body, as well as the emotions. For sudden problems, like being stung by a bee, there are only a few standard remedies to choose from and they usually help right away, so it is clear if you picked correctly. But for more chronic or complicated illnesses, it takes years of study and practice to not only learn the remedies but also how to evaluate the patient in order to know what symptoms are important in guiding to the selection of the right remedy. This process can be time consuming and requires the skill needed to know what strength of the remedy to use, how often to use it, and how to interpret the body's reactions to know whether to wait and observe, or change the remedy. Because homeopathy is providing a small trigger that stimulates the body to respond and correct the issue at hand, it sometimes can take time to work, but it can be very fast too. Generally the longer the problem has been going on, the longer it will take the body to restore a balance and heal, and often there can be symptoms that are part of that 'cleaning house' that are a good sign and not the same as the symptoms of the illness being treated. Often there will be a series of remedies, building upon the progress of the ones before to really eliminate a chronic disease state.

Homeopathy can be used to treat any physical or emotional problem by itself or as part of a more complicated treatment plan. In our practice it is also used for most routine surgeries and trauma cases to help minimize pain, bruising, or bleeding. It can also be used to lessen any adverse effects that may stem from vaccination. Cancers can also be impacted by homeopathy, sometimes dramatically. We think it is homeopathy's effect that can unlock a system stuck in chronic imbalance from a lifetime of accumulated insults and allow it to restore normal function, even in the face of cancer. But homeopathy is not right for everyone. It is a medical approach that requires close observation of the pet's symptoms and frequent feedback to the practitioner. While progress can be quite dramatic as in Rufus's case, it can take patience to find the right remedy and let the body work things out. In treating illness, whether using conventional or alternative medicine, it is far easier to see effective results quickly if used early when things are less complicated. It is not always possible to empower the body to correct and heal fast enough in the face of an advanced or fast moving illness.

For the critics, homeopathy will no doubt remain too unbelievable and denounced as hogwash. But for this practitioner, I don't need to see a nanoparticle or understand quantum physics to know homeopathy works, I have experienced it first hand and that is enough for me and all the patients who have shared the same life changing experience.

Dr. Anne Carroll is owner of the Chelsea Animal Hospital where she practices both conventional medicine and surgery as well as several alternative modalities including traditional Chinese acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine. Her associate Dr. Betty Jo Black brings classical homeopathy to the practice. For more information on alternative veterinary medicine visit their website at www.chelseaanimalhospital.com

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