

The proving of Adonis vernalis and a case of advanced valvular aortic stenosis

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Abstract

Adonis vernalis is often used, especially in low-potencies, for cardiac insufficiency. The symptoms listed in the Materia Medica are based on toxicological information, clinical observations and symptoms derived from a proving done by using the crude substance (Mohr, 1888).

In 2003 Adonis vernalis was proved for the first time as a potentized substance, using 30CH. The proving was conducted as a double-blind, placebo-controlled trial during 6 weeks and met the ECCH proving criteria. The proving not only confirmed the well-known cardiac symptoms but contributed many interesting new symptoms on the physical, as well as, mental level. The new symptoms obtained by this proving makes Adonis more accessible in the treatment of a wider spectrum of cardiac problems. Due to the mental picture obtained by this proving, it is now also easier to differentiate Adonis from other similar heart remedies. The new knowledge obtained from this proving was extremely helpful in prescribing Adonis as a palliative remedy in a case of progressive valvular aortic stenosis. Not only did the breathing and cardiac symptoms improve notably, there was also a remarkable improvement in the mental sphere over an observation period of over 3 years. Adonis assisted the patient in regaining a good quality of life and in remarkably reducing his symptoms, without undergoing cardiac surgery. This case clinically verified many of the symptoms obtained by the new proving. The proving of Adonis provides the homoeopathic community with valuable new symptoms, a clearer mental picture, as well as, new and interesting therapeutic possibilities.

Adonis vernalis: the plant

Adonis belongs to the Ranunculaceae family. It is found in Europe in mountainous areas but, unfortunately, have become rare. It is therefore on the list of endangered plant species in Europe. It has a beautiful, radiant yellow flower and blooms very early in spring. The latin term «vernalis» means Spring.

Mythology

Adonis is well known in mythology. Adonis was the lover of Aphrodite. Her jealous husband transformed himself into a wild boar and, when Adonis was out hunting, he was killed by this wild boar. Aphrodite was overwhelmed by sadness and her tears mixed with the blood of Adonis dropped onto the earth. Where they fell, the plant, Adonis, grew and flowered.

Adonis: Pharmacology

The plant contains cardiac glycosides of the 2nd order. That means, that their action is similar to the cardiac glycosides contained in Digitalis but Adonis has less side-effects and is less toxic compared to Digitalis, since it does not accumulate in the body.

It has a positive inotropic effect on the heart and a strong diuretic action.

Adonis : Toxicology

Adonis, as a herbal preparation in large quantities can be toxic and may cause the following: constriction of the peripheral arteries, an increase in blood pressure, cardiac arrhythmia, nervous excitement, vomiting, stomach pains and diarrhoea. Furthermore, it is contra-indicated in patients using Digoxin.

Adonis: Phytotherapy

Due to its potential toxicity, Adonis is used nowadays only as a standardised herbal preparation in phytotherapy. It has been used since years in herbal medicine and is effective in functional heart disease, cardiac insufficiency, myocardial weakness, edema.

Adonis: Homoeopathy

Until recently, Adonis has been used as a homoeopathic remedy in low potencies. The symptoms found in the Materia Medica and Repertory are based on clinical experience, toxicological reports and experience as a herbal preparation.

Adonis is known to have a calming and diuretic effect on the organism. And is used to treat heart conditions eg. arrythmias, cardiac complaints due to hyperthyroidism, rheumatic fever or as a complication after influenza.

“This remedy is a heart tonic ... it regulates the pulse and increases the cardiac contractility.” (M.S. Jus, Praktische Materia Medica)

Adonis: Proving method

In 2003, the 1st homoeopathic proving using the potentized substance took place (B.K. Bose Foundation, Switzerland: Dr. Mohinder Singh Jus, Dr. Martine Cachin Jus, Dr. Nicoliene Potgieter Steiner).

Adonis vernalis was proved in 30CH. It was a placebo controlled, randomised, double blind proving over a minimum duration of 6 weeks. 18 provers received Adonis vernalis 30CH and 5 provers placebo. The proving was conducted according to ECCH proving guidelines and Hahnemannian principles.

Adonis: The Proving

All symptoms listed in the Materia Medica and Repertory were confirmed in our proving. Additionally, we found many more symptoms especially on the mind level, as well as, urinary, respiratory and especially heart symptoms. Due to limited time, we have summarized the main physical symptoms, as well as, the striking Mind, Respiratory, Urinary and Heart Symptoms, as follows:

Mind

- Great fatigue. Lethargy. Extreme fatigue with a feeling of warmth on chest.
- Anxiety
- Irritability, discontentment
- Lack of concentration. Makes mistakes in writing, says the wrong name. Thoughts wander.
- Foggy, empty feeling in head. Mentally absent-minded.
- Forgetful
- Strong desire to be in nature, in the sun. Feels connected with nature (also > in nature, in the sun).

Main physical symptoms

- Tension in neck.
- Drawing pain in right side of neck. In the beginning unable to turn head anymore; later stiffness when turning the head.
- Weak nape of neck, esp. right side.
- Left shoulder joint painfully blocked; like stuck, anchored, when I want to lift the arm, i.e. to comb my hair, or when I steer the car and the arms are horizontally on the steering wheel. Pulling up of the shoulders is painful, feels blocked. Cannot lift anything.
- Stiffness in back.
- Edema, swelling of extremities.
- Pain in the joints, rheumatic feeling.
- Extreme tiredness of the legs, legs feel like lead.
- Formication, as if insects were crawling under the skin.

Urinary Tract

- Scanty urine
- Albuminuria
- Uncomfortable, dull pressure in bladder, kidney region and urethra.
- Burning pain in urethra, bladder and perineum.
- Frequent and copious urination

Respiratory Tract

- Frequent desire to take a deep breath.
- Deep breathing from heaviness on chest.
- Sensation of a heavy weight on chest.
- Shortness of breath and feeling of constriction in chest.

Heart

- Palpitation
- Rapid (racing), irregular and interrupted pulse.
- Weak pulse, slow pulse
- Heartbeat is felt precisely and accurately.
- Congestion behind sternum (heart).
- Sudden stitching in the heart, as of an arrow, had to stop breathing.
- Pressing pain in heart.
- Sensation, as if, a whole bunch of blood vessels are felt on the left side of the heart.
- Stitches from within the heart outwards through the chest.
- Weakness in chest.
- Fluttering behind sternum.
- Electric drawing pain in left chest, extending to left upper arm.
- Stitching pain in chest, < taking a deep breath
- Dyspnoea with constriction in chest.
- Pressing, radiating feeling in chest.
- Oppression in chest.
- Heart problems with difficult breathing.

Sleep

- Bad, restless, unrefreshing sleep, awakes often.
- Wakes up between 3 and 4 am.
- Extreme tiredness and drowsiness.

Generalities

- Strong desire to sit in direct sunlight.
- Strong desire for fresh air.
- No desire for activities, only wants peace and quiet; slowness.
- “I’m resting all the time. I feel like a plant that withdraws all its leaves into the soil in autumn until it cannot be seen anymore. It feels, as if, I’m still on earth but completely withdrawn. A kind of quietness in myself: empty, quiet, as if in a vacuum. A very pleasant feeling.”

Modalities

Amelioration:

- fresh air
- walking in open air
- being outdoors
- in the direct sun
- pressure
- strong pressure with fingertips on temples (headache)
- after eating
- physical exercise

Aggravation:

- cold
- motion
- lifting arm
- on / after waking in the morning
- 3 – 4 am
- thinking of symptoms
- mental work, reading
- deep breathing (stitching in chest)

Adonis: Patient Profile

- always tired
- cannot concentrate
- not enough drive
- When he's upset, his pulse and heart immediately start racing. This can also be caused by anxiety or deep breathing. He feels constriction in the chest, starts perspiring (axillae), his face is red, he feels hot, there is formication under the skin. He feels, as if, he's under enormous pressure.
- He needs to urinate but the urine is scanty (albuminuria).
- Edema of arms and legs, sometimes swollen upper eyelids.
- Shoulder feels blocked, stitching pains
- Shoulders and neck feel stiff
- Sensitive towards smell
- Epistaxis with bright red blood

A case of advanced valvular aortic stenosis

A 83year old male consulted me in January 2014 with following complains: tiredness, lack of motivation and shortness of breath on exertion since September 2013. He had a syncope twice which was diagnosed as orthostatic syncope.

Cardiological examinations revealed a severe valvular aortic stenosis (valve area 0.9 cm², as well as, an AV-Block 1st degree. He was under the following medication: Aspirin Cardio 100mg/d, Beta-blocker (Metoprolol 50mg/d).

He refused any surgical intervention and wished homoeopathic treatment.

Mind symptoms

- Very tired, unmotivated, just wants to sit and watch TV
- Once a very cheerful and talkative person who loved to travel and to sing, he now just wants to rest and have his peace
- Slowed down (physically and mentally)
- Poor concentration, dullness of mind, absent-mindedness, problem in finding words. His thinking became slower and he could not even follow simple conversation. So much so, that his wife thought he was getting dementia

General and local symptoms

- Strange feeling in the heart (can't describe) and mild vertigo with frequent and marked desire to take a deep breath, > afterwards
- since a few years : stiffness of whole body, < shoulders and back; Rheumatic pains in both hands, dull pain with formication, > pressure
- since 2 years: Frozen shoulders with stitching pain on movement
- since one year: Sleeping disorder, wakes up between 3-4 am

Personal history

- Prostata CA, Prostatectomy 1998
- Varicosis both legs since youth
- Myocardial infarction 2012, 2 stents

Prescription

As the cardiac condition was irreversible, I thought of a palliative medicine covering the totality of the symptoms and having a strong action on the heart. Based upon the most striking symptoms (frequent desire to take a deep breath, great fatigue and lack of motivation), Adonis vernalis was prescribed: Adonis vernalis D6, 5 drops/d, 5d/week. The patient was instructed to shake the bottle vigorously 10 times each time before taking the drops. Allopathic medication remained unchanged.

Follow-up

The effect of Adonis was very quick and impressive. Already one day after taking the medicine, the patient was cheerful, talkative, and told his wife "why don't we make an excursion today?". In the following weeks, the mental and physical state improved steadily. The motivation and the presence of mind returned to the state prior to onset of the disease. His concentration improved. He started to read books again, take part in conversation, show an interest in politics and in all the things he always liked. His cardiac symptoms clearly improved. The strange feeling in the heart region, as well as, the desire to take a deep breath became less often and he even experienced weeks without it. His shoulder pains, the stiffness of the body and his sleep improved slightly. But the rheumatic pains in the hands remained unchanged.

In the following months, I often tried to reduce the remedy or to change to placebo. But every time the symptoms returned.

1.5 years after the beginning of the treatment, he presented with a slightly different picture: he complained of breathlessness on exertion, especially after eating, even of small quantities. He had again a syncope - the first one since the beginning of homoeopathic treatment- after an outburst of anger. A new mental symptom developed: he was irritated at trifles, reacted very sensitive to noise and music, he had the feeling that everything was too loud, even being with his grandchildren was difficult. His pulse was lower than usual (52/min).

Based on this picture, Digitalis C30, 2x/d for 3 days was prescribed. He reacted well to the medicine: the sensitivity to noise and music improved. The pulse became normal again and the dyspnoea improved as well. In the following weeks, I tried to change to placebo. After 6 weeks he had a relapse and showed the same picture as in the beginning. Adonis D6 was again prescribed successfully.

Today, 3.5 years after starting the homoeopathic treatment, he is doing fine. His mental state is excellent, he is cheerful, motivated, still drives his car and loves to undertake small excursions with his wife. According to his age and cardiac pathology, he is doing very well. He goes several times a week for a 15-20 minute walk and almost daily climbs the stairs to his flat on the third floor. The last examination in May 2017 showed that the valvular aortic stenosis is stable (0.9cm^2). A routine ECG revealed a trifascicular block. He had no syncope anymore in the past 24 months. He continues taking Adonis D6 5x/week and is pleased with the results of the homoeopathic treatment.

This case documents a wonderful palliative action of Adonis in a case of advanced cardiac condition. The prognosis of valvular aortic stenosis without surgery is poor. The homoeopathic treatment brought not only stability, but also improvement of the mental and physical state. His general condition is more than satisfactory.

Clinical confirmation of the homoeopathic proving symptoms

Through this case, many homoeopathic proving symptoms could be confirmed. The characteristic symptom "frequent desire to take a deep breath" was observed in several other cases of Adonis.

The following symptoms of the proving were clinically confirmed by this case:

Mind

- Great fatigue
- Lack of motivation, desire to sit
- Lack of concentration
- Dullness of mind, absentminded
- Slowness
- only wants peace and quiet

Heart & Respiratory

- Dyspnoe on exertion
- Frequent desire to take a deep breath

Back & Extremities

- Tension and stiffness in shoulder and back
- Stitching pains in shoulder, shoulder joint painfully blocked
- Rheumatic pains
- Tingling sensations, formication
- > pressure

Sleep

- Wakes up between 3 and 4 am

Conclusion

The new knowledge obtained from this proving was extremely helpful in prescribing Adonis as a palliative remedy in a case of progressive valvular aortic stenosis. This case clinically verified many of the symptoms obtained by the new proving. The proving of Adonis provides the homoeopathic community with valuable new symptoms, a clearer mental picture, as well as, new and interesting therapeutic possibilities.

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