

A case for Nitrogen

by Julie Geraghty

Michael aged 12 came to see me in August 2006 presenting with behavioural difficulties, recurrent nosebleeds and ear infections. His mother described his problems.

“He’s been having trouble at school, he’s always moving, swinging around, taking his shoes off, talking, interrupting, being cheeky, disturbing the other children. Then there are the physical things: he’s plagued with earache in his right ear. He’s had full-blown infections, since he was one or two, nearly every winter. Pulsatilla 30 used to help. Once he had a febrile convulsion and was admitted to hospital. He also gets nosebleeds from the right nostril.”

I asked Michael to tell me about the earache. “I wear a hat and I put a wheat bag on my ear, it’s soothing to have it warm. I quite often get earache after swimming. The pain comes and goes, it can last for a day or for two weeks.”

I pressed him for more information.

“I feel everything is too big, it’s pressing on my ear. There is something inside that is growing, it’s as if things are trying to escape (*makes a gesture opening his fingers out*). It is as if everything is pushing, if you poked it with a pin you would get rid of it. It feels as if my ear is too small and there is a build up of pressure. It’s as if it ought to pop.

“It’s as if it pushes so hard that it feels it will burst. It’s really hot, thumping like a pulse. It gets to such a pitch, it feels as if it’s pushing against the drum, building up the pressure. It needs to pop like a balloon, like having a puncture on a bike (*makes a noise of air releasing*). It would all shrink.”

His mother added, “You can see the painkillers work and then you can see them wearing off, long before he’s due another dose. All three boys get asthma in winter. However, every year his asthma

is better than the previous year but the ear infections are getting worse. The nosebleeds also happen in the night, they last for 20 minutes, always the right nostril.”

Michael described his nosebleeds. “You wake up with a nosebleed. It’s worse when you’re tired, in hot weather and if I bump my nose. I had loads of nosebleeds when my brother was in hospital. He was a very bad asthmatic and my mother was in hospital with him a lot.”

I asked him what he remembered about his brother being in hospital.

“The meals were different, we were having sandwiches and baked beans. We weren’t having roast meals. It is nice to have meals with the family, everyone together. We didn’t know when my brother would be back from hospital. It wasn’t nice thinking of him feeling ill.”

His mother commented, “If I can plan out the day for him, he’s much better. If things are vague or we change plans, the tension level tends to rise. If there isn’t a routine, he won’t concentrate on anything, he flops about, interfering with others, being very, very annoying. Before you know it you have a huge family row.” She left the consultation at this point.

“How do you feel about that?” I asked Michael.

“I feel cross with my brothers if they don’t want to do something with me, as if they can’t be bothered. Nobody cares about me, although I know that they do. They fuss about my little brother too much. I know he needs the care, but I feel as if I am nothing.”

What did he mean by “I am nothing”?

“My older brother is the oldest, my sister is the only girl, my younger brother is the youngest. I feel I’m in between and I am nothing.”

“What does it feel like to be nothing?” I asked.

“I feel quite cross, I do something that afterwards I feel sorry about. I upset the game that they’re playing, I annoy them. I have to get out of the feeling of being nothing, I play the guitar loudly, I eat sweets, something to take my mind off it. I try not to get cross, then I do something and I get into trouble. I shout or something on the spur of the moment to get a reaction out of them. If I ask them to do something and they say ‘No’, I get cross, so I annoy them or distract them, I just go and do it anyway. I want them to suggest we do something together! I feel left out.”

I questioned Michael about his school, what he liked and disliked doing and his favourite foods.

“At school, someone does something and you get the blame. I’m not always listening to the teacher. I’m more hyperactive after lunch, or if I don’t understand something, I get cross and then I muck around, I joke. I distract everyone else.

“I love cricket, it’s such an interesting game, a team game, working together. Everyone encourages you, helps you, and gives you tips. I love to go for bike rides with my sister and brothers.

“I hate long car journeys. My brother and sister read but I get car-sick and there’s nothing for me to do. I get angry. You can’t do anything in the car and no one else has any ideas, so I distract the others. I feel as if I’m left out.”

Michael loved MacDonalds, roast dinners with gravy, meat, vegetables, but he didn’t like ham. Then I asked him about his dreams.

“I dream of something good happening the next day, doing something interesting with friends, going out



Photo: istockphoto.com/Stuart Hannagan

together. I like doing things with my family, having fun together, all going out together for a walk.

“When I’m ill, I have this funny thing of big circles getting closer, you shrink but everything gets massive. It’s like different size shapes, squares, circles, getting really big, you hear wailing sounds, like sirens as they get real close to you, they come right up to your face. There are different colours, they flash, when they go back, they spin around, they’re hot. They are tiny, but they expand as they come in towards you. It is like a dot miles away and then it flashes bigger and bigger as they come towards you. It’s scary, you can’t dodge, your feet are stuck. It gets real close, then it dissolves, shrinks.”

The remedy

I prescribed Nitrogen 200c, three doses, then once weekly and to repeat when he had an earache. This is a relatively new addition to our materia medica. Although the remedies *Argentum nitricum* and *Nitric acid* are very well known, Nitrogen itself was only described by Dutch homeopath Jan Scholten in the early 1990s. Nitrogen is a gas, forming 78 per

cent of the air we breathe. It is essential to life on earth as a major component of human tissue and amino acids. Nitrogen and water are essential nutrients for plant growth.

It is also used in explosives, like nitroglycerine, gunpowder and dynamite. It is a component of drugs that dilate the blood vessels. Scholten has described the homeopathic qualities of Nitrogen as the fun-loving, assertive patient who wants to live life to the full and enjoy the good things. But in this high energy state tension builds up, with the need to expand, to express, to release and they feel claustrophobic when constrained or constricted, even to the point that patients say they feel they will “explode”.

I felt that Michael was full of life but was aggravated by school and family constraints. He was not free to express his energy or his need to have fun. His description of his earache is an exact metaphor for his own experience, the pressure building up behind the drum, until it pops or bursts. Even his dreams show this sensation of expanding, enlarging which scares him, and the opposite, shrinking.

Follow up September 2006

Mother said, “There were improvements initially. On the first day he was very dopey, then for the first week he was like a changed child. Each time he improves after the remedy, but he’s not as good by the end of the week.”

Follow up October 2006

“He’s had earache for the past week. He was quite poorly and is on antibiotics. Three doses of the remedy didn’t help much. Behaviour-wise, it’s helped a little. We don’t want to douse his sparkle, because he’s such a fantastic kid, but we want him to be more aware when he’s annoying people. But I do feel there’s been a change in him, he’s more reasonable, sensible. There are definitely more good days.”

Michael said, “At school I’ve noticed that I sat still and listened a lot easier. Some days, I’ve struggled but it’s definitely easier to concentrate. I feel better at the beginning of the week, after taking the remedy, then it gets harder by the end of the week.”

His mother added, “We’ve noticed that his method of getting to sleep is to bang his head on the pillow. He accom-



panies it by singing different songs to get himself to sleep. His head moves with the tune. He sings beautifully.”

I advised them to continue the Nitrogen 200c once weekly.

(Subsequent follow ups are by telephone with the mother, as they live some distance from the clinic.)

Follow up November 2006

“The teacher said there’s definite improvement, she hasn’t had to tell him to stop fidgeting. He’s definitely calmer, but every now and then we have some difficult moments... it’s like holding a cork under water. He’s going to sleep in the car; he’s more able to relax. It’s easier for him to get to sleep at night. He hasn’t had earache and only two short nosebleeds. We haven’t had any big rumpuses at home – he’s found it easier to accept when things haven’t gone his way.

“Last year things built up and built up and his behaviour just seemed to be getting worse. The remedy has definitely made a difference, I’m really encouraged. But his behaviour is definitely not as good on days six and seven. The family are asking can we give it to him sooner?”

I suggested Nitrogen 200c every five to six days. Sometimes a high potency needs to be repeated more often when the state is an intense, high energy one but this should be done under supervision of a homeopath. Also note how accurately his mother describes the Nitrogen state, the “pressure building up”, “like holding a cork under water”, not wanting to “douse his sparkle”.

Follow up February 2007

“He had an ear infection, we gave him a pill and the next morning he was poorly with earache and fever, but he perked up straightaway after the second dose, which was brilliant, normally it would last a week. His behaviour at school is mostly satisfactory, or very good. He’s had no unsatisfactory reports for ages. The school are really pleased; they’ve noticed a big change. Occasionally I give him the remedy a little before the week. Usually, we’re all ready for him to have his pill... two hours later we breathe a sigh of relief. No nosebleeds.”

Follow up April 2007

“Initially it seemed to go well and then we had two bad weeks, he was in a lot of trouble at school. He began the singing himself to sleep at night, bouncing his head on the pillow. Five days after the remedy he gets hyperactive, jiggling about, and he had a couple of temper tantrums. But no earache and just two minor nosebleeds.”

The Nitrogen state seemed to be reappearing, the 200c didn’t seem

strong enough, so I increased the potency to 1M every week.

Follow up July 2007

“He’s doing very well, the remedy is working a treat. We give it every six days or longer in the holidays. The most definite pointer is that he starts singing himself to sleep again. We’ve had ever so many comments that he’s much more mature. He’s finding it much easier to apply himself to things he enjoys, like playing the guitar.”

Follow up September 2007

“He settled back at school very well, but was hyped up at home in the first week of term. The school are very impressed with the improvements. He is growing tremendously fast and is a real beanpole, I think that’s why he needs the remedy once a week.”

The remedy has been effective for more than a year and has made a great difference to Michael’s quality of life, as well as that of his family. I hope to reduce the frequency of the dose as he matures, but this boy could well have ended up on Ritalin and a weekly dose of Nitrogen is a much better alternative.



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