

## **A Case of Herpes Zoster**

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59 y/o African-American college professor with ulcerative colitis since 1983, for which I was able to provide only very little help with homeopathy and for which he takes Azulfidine. He also has sclerosing cholangitis (for which he takes Actigall) and interstitial lung disease, both of which have been improved with homeopathy.

He presented on 12/19/05 with shingles (having made the diagnosis himself). The lesions occupied his left thorax and had first developed 3 days earlier. His pain and the number of sores were increasing. He saw his primary physician at Kaiser who recommended Valtrex (an antiviral) and Oxycodone (a narcotic analgesic). He consented to take the latter as needed, and sought homeopathic treatment. His pain was markedly worse in the back (especially in his spine) than in the front, was “needle-like” and particularly worse at 4 AM and 4 PM. He was unable to concentrate with the pain, and was moving about very slowly. He felt “tight” in his back, and his pain was much worse with slight touch (as from contact with his shirt). He felt better lying on the painless side, worse with cold and better with heat. He described the pain as “agonizing”. On exam, he had clusters of vesicles from back to sternum, encircling his left thorax along the T-5 dermatome. After repertorization of the above symptoms I prescribed *Arsenicum Album 10M* initially and in water hourly while awake, and called him back the following day.

On the next day he felt worse, with the pain worsened by deep breathing, and partially ameliorated by pressure of the mattress on his back. He slept off and on during the night, took Oxycontin with partial and temporary relief. He described the burning pain in the vesicles as relatively mild compared to the agonizing pain in one spot in his back, near his spine. He described it as “fist size” and with the feeling of a tight fist, a “grabbing” and burning sensation aggravated by breathing. The blisters were worse from touch. I repertorized his new symptoms and chose *Zincum Metallicum 1M*, a dose dry on the tongue and some in water to be given every hour over the next 8 hours. By that night at 9 PM he was tolerating the pain a bit better, but he had increased his Oxycontin dose, making it unclear if the remedy was helping. Two of the lesions had started to crust over. There was, however, a diminution of the focused, most severe, pain. He was to call me in one day.

Two days later he called me again to report that the pain pills weren't working as well. At that point the pains were partly ameliorated by a hot shower, but also by the application of ice. He now had bilateral dorsal pain, which was tight and burning. The focus of intense pain had reasserted itself with agonizing severity. It was worse with the jarring of walking, partly better by lying on the opposite side and by leaning forward when sitting. Now concluding that the *Zincum* had indeed played a role in his relief, I repeated it in three doses—the 1M potency—over the next 90 minutes. I spoke with him three hours later and his pain was clearly better, with no additional analgesics. Six hours later his pain was again worse, but once again not focused in the small spot. He was trying to decide whether or not to travel to Washington, D.C. for a family reunion. I repeated the *Zincum 1M* again and spoke with him 24 hours later at which time he was feeling much less pain, two-thirds of the sores had now crusted and he was using only an occasional Ibuprofen to supplement his pain control. He used a handful of doses of the *Zincum* in water over the next two days and indeed made the trip to Washington, D.C. He and his wife were exceedingly relieved by the dramatic change in his agonizing pain.

Upon his return from the trip he was experiencing mostly itching in the lesions. Two weeks later, 1/10/06, eight days after resuming his normal busy schedule he once again was experiencing pain in the residual lesions, alternating between the chest and back, associated with constant formication, with great sensitivity to light touch once again. He described intense bursts of short-lived aches on the background of the sensation of ants crawling on the affected areas. He was worse from 3 PM until bedtime, was not as ameliorated with the hot shower, better at rest and worse with activity and better with pressure. He had taken a few doses of *Rhus Toxicodendron 1M*, which I had provided him with as part of a contingency package for his trip east, should we need to communicate while he was there. Despite the contradictory modalities and since he had garnered some relief from the *Rhus Tox*, I had him repeat it twice more with the recommendation that he change to *Mezereum 200c* the next day if not additionally improved.

The following day he reported no change in his pain from either remedy, a feeling of being “cut” on his chest and back, alternating with the feeling of formication. I reverted to the prescription of *Zincum Metallicum 1M* once again, as it had helped him despite the change of symptoms and it brought relief once again, making him virtually pain-free.

I heard from him six weeks later, on 2/28/06, with the report that he had a continued residual itch since our last conversation, with no pain whatsoever. The itch was worse during the night if he had to urinate. A single dose of *Mezereum 30c* relieved the itch and he has been free of symptoms from the Zoster since.

In **Chronic Diseases** in the section regarding the back, in *Zincum Metallicum*, Hahnemann described “pressive tension in the back, below the right scapula, down the back and toward the right axilla” and “tensive pressure in the back, on a small spot on the border of the right scapula” and “burning pressure on the spine...” *Zincum Metallicum* was one of eight medicines in the **Repertory (Synthesis 8)** with this symptom, describing the most peculiar—and severe—feature of his pain. Only two of the eight showed up in the first 30 remedies which came up for consideration.