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The art of interrogation by Pierre Schmidt, MD: A book review

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Abstract

Case taking is an art. In Homoeopathy “case taking and interrogation” involves unique technique so as to individualize a patient, i.e., how this patient is different from other patients who are suffering with the same disease. This “art of case taking” is explained in number of books by many stalwarts theoretically, but still Physicians often find it quite difficult practically implementing at sick bed. The author Pierre Schmidt is well known homoeopathic physician for his distinct contributions to Homoeopathy. This article is about a short review of the book “The art of interrogation”, contributed by Pierre Schmidt, M.D.

Keywords: Homoeopathy, case taking, art, interrogation technique

Introduction

Pierre Schmidt, M.D. was born in Neuchatel, on 22nd July, 1894. He wanted to become doctor since childhood. His father illness was cured with Homoeopathy. So Pierre Schmidt's father, was inspired by Homoeopathic cure and wished one of his sons to become Homoeopath. So he presented Hahnemann's “Organon” to young Pierre, who was fascinated with it. He has witnessed miraculous cures with Homoeopathy, and went to United States to study it. He is the one who re-introduced classical Homoeopathy in Europe.

Pierre Schmidt contributed to “Kent's Final General Repertory of the Homeopathic Materia Medica”, and he wrote “The Art of Case Taking”, “The Art of Interrogation”, “Writings on Case taking”, “Defective Illnesses”, “The Privilege of Liberation through Homeopathy”, “A Symposium on Dosage”, and many other publications.

The present book “The art of interrogation” is based on the compilation of the lectures on case taking by Dr. Pierre Schmidt. This book discuss about the most discussed and less understood part of Homoeopathy, i.e., “interrogation technique”.

Details of the book: Name of the book.

The Homoeopathic Consultation: The art of interrogation includes Pharmacopollaxy (repetition of the dose).

Author: Pierre Schimidt, M.D.

Publication: 30th Impression: 2012

Published by: Kuldeep Jain for B. Jain Publishers (P) LTD.

Number of pages: 37

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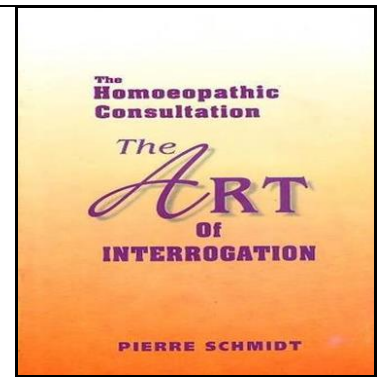
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The book has 2 sections

1. The art of interrogation
2. Pharmacopollaxy.

The section “one” has 4 sub sections they are

1. What are the basis of interrogation
2. What classification is to be adopted
3. How to formulate questions
4. How now, to know if the questions are well asked and consequently well answered

**Highlighting points of each section****The homoeopathic consultation**

A. The art of interrogation: In this section the author spotlights the motive behind the selection of this particular theme, “The art of interrogation”, i.e., to make practitioners understand and utilize properly the directions of Hahnemann. The author mentions theoretical principles are different from practical applications. He says Hahnemann has devoted 63 paragraphs about examination of patient, and many others stalwarts also given ample advises regarding interrogation of patient but still young practitioners have doubts in their mind “how to question the patient.”

Further the author mentions about Dr. Constantine Hering “rules for tracing the picture of disease” which can be summed up into 4 words- To listen, to write, to question, to co-ordinate, in which the author discuss about the 3rd precept “the questioning” in this book.

The author comments the main purpose of Homoeopathic consultation is to explore the evolution of the disease and how precisely this patient is different from other patients bearing same diagnosis by giving some examples.

The author mentions the interrogation should be methodical and according to the principles of homoeopathy, i.e.

1. To avoid direct questions, for we know, if the patient answers “yes or no”, the question is badly framed.
2. Never to ask a question putting an answer, so to say, into the patient’s mouth, thus making sure not to bias his answer.
3. To avoid all the questions where the patient is obliged to choose between two different alternatives, and respect the sacred rule to leave the patient always his own choice.

The author directs that, the questions should be framed by using knowledge of Materia Medica, and allow the patient to speak more. Never hurry the patient.

Author gives examples for 1. Direct questions, 2. Suggestive questions, 3. Questions where the patient must choose, and explains the method of framing the questions. He suggests to avoid these torpillage methods as they are dangerous especially for beginners.

Subsections

1. **What are the basis of interrogation:** The author suggests the basis of questions must be ruled by “value of symptoms”, and he recommends that every physician should be well versed with all the lectures of Kent’s philosophy.
2. **What classification is to be adopted:** In this sub-section the author explains which questions are to be asked first. Never start interrogation with mental

symptoms, preferably he says to begin the interrogation with general symptoms. About Sexual symptoms it’s better to avoid in first consultation.

Here the author gives about list of symptoms to be taken into consideration regarding 1. General symptoms 2. Mental symptoms 3. Aversions and alimentary cravings 4. Sleep and dreams 5. Symptoms concerning the menses and the sexual sphere 6. Rare, strange, and peculiar symptoms.

3. **How to formulate questions:** In this sub-section author gives details of framing questions for all the above 6 considerations.
4. **How now, to know if the questions are well asked and consequently well answered:** The Author instructs the Physician to closely observe the way Patient answers, and highlight by underlining the PQRS. Physician can cross question the patient.

In this section, author gives an example about a case where he was prejudiced with Condurago, as the case has cracks on corner of mouth, but Dr. Sir John Weir, convinced him by explaining why the case was “Sepia”. He moves to further discussion and explains many more examples about the ignorance of physician in selecting remedy without full and proper interrogation of the case.

B. Pharmacopollaxy: “Pharmaco” means Remedy, “Pollaxis” means the Repetition of the remedy. In this section the Author gives directions about repetition of doses. The remedy should be repeated every time with slight change in degree of dynamization in order to cure with greatest success. Here author gives 12 conclusion points about repetition of the remedy.

Discussion and Conclusion

The author through this book tries to explain the common mistakes committed during case taking and give suggestions about how to avoid them. He gives list of questions to be asked to patient, which guides the physician to proceed with interrogation. Many examples are given to explain how a physician can cross question the patient towards the end of homoeopathic consultation to confirm the authenticity of questions answered by the patient. The author used very simple language so that it can be easily understood by all. Author cites many examples from his personal experiences. This book is very useful for every practitioner to improve interrogation technique.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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