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Thoughts, the Culprits Behind the Disease: In Light of Psycho-Neuro-Immunology -*The Body is the Servant of Mind. When the Mind is Sick, the Body Suffers.* (Sogyal Rinpoche)

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ABSTRACT:

Psychoneuroimmunology is essentially an integrative discipline. It aims to understand the mechanisms of bidirectional interactions between the immune system and the nervous system, with an emphasis on the influence of stress and psychosocial factors on immunity. With the increasing spectrum of the vivid diseases, a question affirms: How could negative thoughts effect our neural activity thus influencing our immune system? Stress may cause your body to have the same sickness response as infection or illness. The only difference is that it originates in the brain instead of being triggered by your immune cells. Your brain produces cytokines in response to stress exactly like it does in response to a message from your vagus nerve. As the field of PNI grows and develops, many discrete pathways of chatter between psychology and immunity are being discovered. This article is an attempt to relate disturbing thoughts and disease in the light of psycho-neuro-immunology.

Keywords: Stress, disease, defense system, immune system, sickness, psycho-neuro-immunology

INTRODUCTION:

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) is defined as the study of interactions between behavior, neural and endocrine function, and immune processes. It explores how the mind and body influence each other through chemical messengers, affecting health and recovery from illness.

The brain communicates with the immune system through autonomic nervous system and neuroendocrine activity. Both pathways generate signals that are perceived by the immune system via receptors on the surface of lymphocytes and other immune cells. Conversely, an activated immune system generates chemical signals (cytokines) that are perceived by the nervous system. Thus, bidirectional pathways connect the brain and the immune system and provide the foundation for behavioral influences on immune functions.

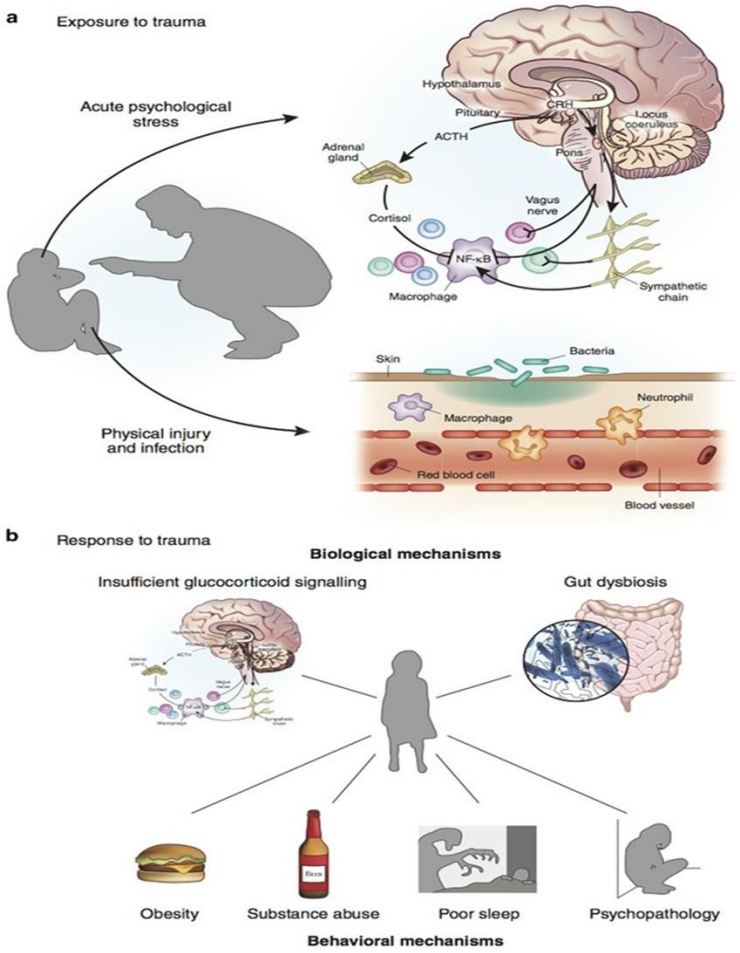
The birth of psychoneuroimmunology

Robert Ader is considered to be the father of modern PNI. His research, involving conditioning in rats, opened the floodgates for the study of brain-immune interactions. Ader, a psychologist by trade, worked closely with Nicholas Cohen, an immunologist.

In Ader's version of Pavlov's dogs experiment, he fed rats different quantities of saccharin solution and simultaneously injected them with Cytoxan (drug that induces gastrointestinal distress and suppresses the immune system) and the rats were conditioned to avoid drinking the solution. Then, he ceased injecting the rats but continued to present the saccharin-laced water. The rats avoided the solution but some of them died. He noted that the avoidance response and the level of mortality varied depending on the amount of saccharine water they had been presented with. The results intrigued Ader; it seemed that in addition to conditioning the avoidance response the immunosuppressive effects [of Cytoxan] was also conditioned." [1,2] It was this observation that truly changed the game of brain-immune interactions.

How does the brain talk to the immune system?

As the field of PNI grows and develops, many discrete pathways of interactions between psychology and immunity are being discovered. One of the best understood networks is the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the impact of psychological stress on this network. [3]



The mind's impact on health

The body's first defense against illness or injury is called the "sickness" response because it's what makes the body feel sick. It's what that produces a fever, reduces the appetite, makes the body feel anxious and also releases stress hormones such as cortisol. The sickness response is the body's attempt to save energy for fighting an infection.

Few examples that shows how psychology influence the immune system:

- **Bereavement:** stories of recently bereaved individuals dying soon after their partner are common. These tales are not just apocryphal. There is more to this than a metaphorical "broken heart"
- **The gut:** it is well established that there is a strong association between sustained stressful life events and the onset of functional gastrointestinal disorders such as inflammatory bowel disease and irritable bowel syndrome
- **Cancer:** health professionals working with cancer patients know very well that a patient's outlook and their quantity and quality of psychological support can hugely impact the outcome of their disease
- **HIV (human immunodeficiency virus):** studies have found significant evidence that elevated stress levels and diminished social support accelerates the progression of HIV infection
- **Skin & respiratory complaints:** psoriasis, eczema and asthma are all known to have psychological aspects to them. A stressful day at the office can make you reach for the asthma pump
- **Wound healing:** the speed at which a surgical patient heals has been linked to psychological factors. For instance, increased levels of fear or distress before surgery have been associated with worse outcomes, including longer stays in the hospital, more postoperative complications and higher rates of re-hospitalization.

What always sounded like medieval quackery is now considered a scientific fact; the mechanisms that underpin immune-brain interactions are steadily being uncovered. [3]

Connecting PNI with the three pillars of homeopathy:

❖ **VIEWS OF AUTHORS IN HOMOEOPATHIC PHILOSOSPHY ON PNI: [4]**

Why are we not able to link endocrinology much?

Endocrinology is a new subject with technical terms which explains the intricate inter-relationship of the ductless glands and there is also lack of definite information to the number of hormones and their functions.

- **DR. H A ROBERTS:**

Dr. Robert says, to be a good clinical endocrinologist, one must first be a good internist, and the time is not far distant when in order to be a good internist, one must be a good endocrinologist. He mentions that the qualities of physician must include:

- ✓ Knowledge of anatomical structure and arrangement of the autonomic nervous system.
- ✓ Functions of endocrine glands
- ✓ Vital life processes of body over which we have no control, depend in great extent upon the maintenance of a delicate equilibrium between the parasympathetic and sympathetic divisions of the autonomic nervous system which is markedly influenced by the internal secretions of the ductless glands.

With this concept of the importance of the endocrine glands in maintaining health, and with the almost infinitesimal amount of some of these glandular secretions, we can hardly fail to see the important relationship the homoeopathic remedy may hold to the manifestations of endocrine dysfunction and to the balance of the ductless gland themselves.

- **DR. WERNER VIEWS:**

He cites the influence of emotions as well as the reaction of various drugs, on various functions, with the reflex action on the glands through the nervous system. He also mentions that a vast array of symptoms is due to glandular dysfunction, and therefore constitutional homoeopathic remedy will be useful here.

- **DR. HAHNEMANN VIEWS:**

According to Dr. Hahnemann symptoms of dysfunction of endocrine glands are manifestations of miasms. Orthodox school works on objective symptoms, subjective symptoms being concomitants to them and homoeopathy takes note of the peculiar mental and physical symptoms instead of the organ affected. He mentions that we don't need new drugs, rather we need to add fresh proving of their action on the endocrine organs as we can only briefly outline a few outstanding remedies having general influence on glandular structure.

❖ **LINKING PNI WITH THE SYMPTOMATOLOGY OF PHOSPHORIC ACID:**

According to Dr. Philip M. Bailey in his book HOMOEOPATHIC PSYCHOLOGY: [5]

- The most characteristic feature of the mentals of Phosphoric Acid is a peculiar emotional neutrality. The sense of neutrality is so complete and continuous that the patient reports 'It is as if I were not alive'. No emotions at all are experienced (except fear at times), and the patient feels like a ghost, drifting through an unreal life in which he performs almost automatically (Kent: 'As if in a dream'), with no motivation, and no sense of satisfaction
- The mental pathology of Phosphoric Acid usually precedes the physical. In my experience the emotional pathology of Phosphoric Acid is the first to appear, followed later by intellectual impairment, and lastly by physical problem.

According to Dr. Sankaran in THE SOUL OF REMEDIES: [6]

- The main theme of an acid is *struggle followed by collapse: exertion and exhaustion.* The theme of struggle and collapse is clearly expressed in certain symptoms common to all the acids: hurry, industry, the feeling that their efforts are unsuccessful, fear of failure, and also fatigue, Indolence and indifference.

Dr. Phatak describes in his Materia Medica: "Apathetic from unequal struggling with adverse circumstances, mental and physical."[7]

❖ **RELATING THE REMEDY WITH REPERTORY [8]**

While working in the repertories, we find many rubrics which beautifully describes the relation and impact of mental generals on the physicals. Below are some rubrics of phosphoric acid which explains about this mind-body interaction.

Synthesis repertory

- MIND - INDIFFERENCE emaciation and weakness, with: (1) PH-AC.
- MIND - INDIFFERENCE unequal struggle; from: (1) Ph-ac.
- MIND - PROSTRATION of mind - diarrhea suppression of; prostration of mind from: (1) ph-ac.
- MIND - PROSTRATION of mind - followed by respiratory complaints: (1) ph-ac.
- MIND - PROSTRATION of mind - followed by weakness; physical: (1) ph-ac.
- MIND - SADNESS - walking - only while walking longer he walks the worse he gets; the: (1) Ph-ac.
- EXTREMITIES - HEAVINESS - mental exertion agg.: (1) Ph-ac.
- SKIN - DISCOLORATION - yellow - grief; from: (1) ph-ac.
- GENERALS - WEAKNESS - love, from unfortunate: (1) Ph-ac.

Complete repertory

MIND - AILMENTS from - homesickness - drowsiness, particularly with: (1) **PH-AC.** MIND - AILMENTS from - love - disappointed, unhappy - drowsiness, with: (1) **PH-AC.**

HEAD - HAIR - affections of - falling out, alopecia - grief, from: (1) *Ph-ac.* HEAD - PAIN - LOCALIZATION - Occiput - grief, after: (1) **PH-AC.**

How to Manage Your Stress?

If inflammation explains the link between childhood trauma and later disease, research in this area can have important clinical implications for secondary and tertiary prevention.

Secondary prevention refers to the possibility of reducing the risk of onset of clinical conditions after trauma exposure. Strategies to reduce inflammation in the context of secondary prevention may include broad interventions targeting unhealthy behaviors including over-eating, lack of physical activity, substance abuse and poor sleep. Tertiary prevention refers to the possibility of reducing the severity of clinical conditions in affected individuals with a history of childhood trauma. [9,10,11]

The 4 A's to help you reduce your chronic stress. These A’s include avoid, alter, accept, and adapt.

Avoid. Learn to say no to events and people that cause stress. Don't take on extra tasks that overload your schedule.

Alter. For situations you can't avoid, try to do what you can to change them.

Accept. Strategies include learning from your mistakes, trying to forgive, therapy and practicing positive self-talk.

Adapt. Think ahead 5 years and ask yourself if what you're worrying about will matter in 5 years. [12]

CONCLUSION

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) delves into the complex interactions between the nervous system, endocrine system, and immune system, revealing how psychological stress can influence physical health. A notable component of this interaction is the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which regulates the body’s stress response. When activated by stress, the HPA axis releases cortisol and other hormones, potentially leading to immune responses similar to those triggered by infections.

Homoeopathy offers a holistic approach to addressing the imbalances and disturbances that arise from such stress-induced conditions. It operates on the principle of treating the individual as a whole, considering both mental and physical symptoms. By employing remedies based on the concept of "like cures like" and using minimal doses, homoeopathy aims to support the body's innate healing mechanisms.

In situations where hormonal secretions are so subtle that they approach the levels used in homoeopathic treatments, homoeopathy's individualized approach can be particularly effective. This method seeks to restore equilibrium by addressing the interconnectedness of mental and physical health, offering potential relief for conditions stemming from stress and endocrine disruptions. By focusing on the whole person and their unique symptoms, homoeopathy aims to provide a comprehensive and personalized healing approach.

Thus, with great interest in the investigation of the endocrine system, and look of an expectant eye of the explorer upon our homoeopathic remedies, we may meet and cure even these little- understood conditions.

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