

Dott. Massimo Mangialavori

Case of Picricum Acidum (1)

Amintore is 62 years old and he comes to his appointment with his elder sister. They are a strange couple which seems to have come from a book from the turn of the century: their language, their body movements and what they say about what they do all day gives the impression of a couple of bigots who have not yet figured out we are at the end of the twentieth century. They live together and they never got married: the Lady comes across as the dominant one and during the visit she acts like an apprehensive and bossy mother in relationship to her child. Amintore takes it all without a fight, with a not so smart looking look and like a dog that has been beaten, I often have to intervene to let him speak. His sister decided he needed to be seen and she has decided to come to me because one of her friends, who is one of my patients, mentioned my name.

The woman begins:

"Ever since he was a little boy he has been confused. But I am not his mother and I cannot follow him around it's about time that he would stop being so needy also because I have already had to spend so much money with doctors and medicine and we are always at the same starting point. We have been going to doctors forever"

I ask Amintore what this is all about but his sister answers:

"He no longer sleeps at night and he doesn't let me sleep either because I can't sleep knowing that he is awake in the house, I don't know what he's up to and then he sleeps during the day instead of going shopping and I have to take care of all the housework by myself"

I insist asking the same question to Amintore and I motion to the lady to let him speak:

"I have been suffering from insomnia for years but until now I did OK with the various medicines I was taking, now they no longer have effect on me and I am very tired during the day, so much so I am unable to keep my eyes open, and then at night I can't fall asleep. I lay awake for hours looking at the ceiling and during the day I am unable to stand up, my eyes close and I have to sleep."

I ask Amintore what type of remedies he has tried in the past:

"I spent years in the house trying various cures, if I count all the months I spent being treated. I even had electroshock three times"

I ask him what type of problems he used to have and his sister intervenes:

"I was losing a lot of weight and he never would eat we saw many doctors but he had some real internal problems and he would always get wasted and he almost lost his sight a long with his mind"

I motion to the Lady to let her brother talk:

"I remember they used to tell me I had satyriasis because I would have nightly losses and more than once I would really get thin and would be wiped out"

I ask for further explanations:

"I started wetting the bed when I was 12 and after a few years I went through months when it would happen even for a month in a row and I was not doing too well and I couldn't do anything, not even go to school. They had me do so many bromide treatments, the stuff they used to give to soldiers, and then in the end they shocked me, three times and then the problems went away."

The sister intervenes: "He is starting it all up over again and ever since he started to follow our doctor's new cures he is unable to sleep again, just like he used to do so many years ago which is why I decided to take him here right away to take care of him before he gets as bad as he was so many years ago that he looked like a corpse"

I ask Amintore what he used to do in the past:

"I worked as a phone operator for a few years in the city hall and then I retired with a disability pension"

I ask some more about his work "I have always been a simple person ever since I was in school. I was really shy and I was always afraid of making a mistake, even when I was a phone operator and I had to speak to people without seeing their face. When the office manager would call me I felt bad and I would sweat a lot even when I was a boy in boarding school I was unable to speak and when I was at the board and I really didn't do too well in school"

I ask him why he had to go to boarding school and the sister answers again:

"My poor parents sent him there because he just couldn't study. Our city had a very good religious boarding school and they sent him there because they said he really had no system, but even there it was a problem for my parents because he simply refused to study"

Amintore shyly intervenes:

"I couldn't study, I was always sick and I have never been able to remember things, I hated to read and to be in front of a book for hours on end and then the Salesians scared me to death with their punishments. They even made me read the same things one hundred times while kneeling on beans"

I decide not to push too much since I notice how the patient is feeling very embarrassed and sullen, and furthermore I really don't think the answers are very free and truthful especially in the presence of his sister the hag. As I am looking at the list of symptoms the Lady adds:

"Also tell him that you don't eat hardly anything and that you are always getting thinner, if you keep eating without cooking no wonder you are not able to digest anything!"

I ask Amintore for an explanation:

"I have never been able to eat cooked food, they used to scream at me also when I was little but it burns my stomach if I don't let the food cool down, I have to eat things that don't burn and drink things that don't burn otherwise I will ruin my stomach. I am simply unable to drink hot things I really like them much better if I add ice"

The sister intervenes once again:

"But not even all frozen, why should I cook if you are going to let it get cold"

Based on the symptoms listed in the medical materia I decide to prescribe PICRICUM ACIDUM 200K since it appears to be the remedy which matches the symptoms presented by the patient. A few days later the hag calls me back to complain that her brother is getting worse because his nocturnal emissions are much more frequent even if the sleeping patterns have improved. I try to calm the lady down but the task is quite a

challenge. Three months later Amintore calls me to tell me he is calling while his sister went shopping and that he has been trying to reach me for a few days and that he is glad to get a hold of me. Amintore wants to know if he can take the remedy again without a prescription because he says he has been feeling much better and he has been sleeping well and feeling very well over all. I calm the patient down and I ask him if he would like to come back to see me without his sister. I feel he is tentative about it and I let him know I am willing to meet him when his sister is out of the house and a further tentative try on his part makes me understand that if we met it would be economically difficult for him and I assure him that the meeting would just be a control and that he would not have to pay anything. I therefore meet the patient on his own about a month after the first visit and I feel he is a lot less uptight and his general appearance is a lot less stupid looking.

He spontaneously reports:

"I really feel good. A lot better than I had for years. I sleep well now but I wanted to talk with you by myself because I was embarrassed in front of my sister. I understand now that you are not a typical doctor and I trust you"

I ask him to explain what he means about feeling better:

"I feel stronger and less confused I sleep well now and I don't think it is only because of the medicine I am thinking that I cannot handle my sister anymore and that perhaps even she can help me. I had trouble sleeping because I also knew what could happen during sleep, even years ago I was afraid of sleep because I was afraid of all those losses. As time went by it became a habit and I didn't sleep any more during the night"

I asks Amintore If he remembers any dreams:

"I don't dream about women, many times I ejaculate without any excitement at all and I find myself all wet and if I get up to wash myself I end up getting wet again whereas if I leave it like it is it is easier that it may not happen again"

I underline I was not just interested in erotic dreams:

"I often dream about a river that is overflowing and that I am throwing paper boats in it but I don't know if it is a dream or a memory from when I was little, we used to live near the Po river"

I ask about his eating habits:

"I really don't pay much attention to it, as long as it isn't hot I eat everything in sight but I feel hot food all the way down my esophagus, whereas cold food makes my insides feel good and I feel better"

I ask him if he remembers anything from the times he was hospitalized:

"I remember all the days spent in there, but I changed places often until they shocked me. I did all right there, I went there willingly because I felt protected and because they told me I would get rid of that disease..it was really embarrassing to always have an erection without any external excitement and to loose so much it seemed as if it would never end. I have never understood where all that stuff came from, even the doctors where amazed at how much semen came out, where did it all get into me"

I ask him if he remembers anything about his days in the boarding school:
"I was very timid and then I really didn't understand anything they were trying to teach me. My parents spent a lot of money to give me a good education but I was never able to repay them it was something stronger than myself but if I really put myself in front of a book it felt as if I were in front of somebody I didn't know, somebody who was not possible to get to know."

I ask something about his relationship with his sister:

"She runs my life_ she stays right after me. I have always lived with the family and she thinks about everything, also about my retirement. I had some troubles in that regard I have no money because my sister takes care of all the books, like all the other stuff around the house."

I ask him if he wants to tell me something about his relationship with women:

"I am a very practicing catholic, what can I say I have been with a prostitute a few times but it was really too much for me. Women are not an important aspect of my life."

I ask him to tell me what's important in his life:

"Health and God, if you don't have these things nothing else really matters"

I prescribe PICRICUM ACIDUM 1000 and we agree to meet next whenever possible. Within six months I receive a phone call from Amintore who is

very happy about how he is feeling also because his nocturnal emissions have subsided but he is starting to have some insomnia again. After a placebo which had no effect whatsoever I prescribe 10M. Six months go by and Amintore is back again after making an appointment like anybody else.

"I have changed late but at least I have changed. I went to live with a friend and I left my sister. I couldn't take it anymore I talked about this for a long time with my spiritual father who told me that if I wanted live my life like this I should. But I don't want to live by myself, I can't after sixty years but I know I can't live with my sister any more even if that means I have to live on my own. I cannot also ruin the last years of my life, but it really upset her and she is upset with you because she says that after your treatment I got these ideas and that now I am unthankful to her after all these years."

I ask him about his sleep:

"I sleep now whenever I want to and when I am tired I sleep well. I eat whenever I feel like it and I even eat spaghetti with ice which I ate at the Unita' festival. I had them teach me the Japanese recipe. I have had no more nocturnal emissions and I feel much stronger and more in control of myself. I also retired on my own and in the evenings I play cards with my friend never for money I have no vices. The only vice I really have are romance novels, I found a collection of them in the newspaper stand and I avidly read them without much effort and I feel very satisfied"

Over several years Amintore is doing fine and he is still living with his friend. I have occasionally prescribed the remedy in various dilutions during a few flu episodes and the remedy has worked up until now.