

A HOMOEOPATHIC PROVING
OF
Chironex Fleckeri (Ch-fl) Box Jellyfish

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This paper is adapted from articles placed in the North American Society of Homeopaths Journal in 2003 and The Journal of the Society of Homeopaths UK in 2005. Thanks and acknowledgments to them. It also comes from the recently published proving.

In the 18 provings I have coordinated or participated in over the years, this remedy stands out as being the most dramatic; the most colorful. At a time when, for what ever reason, all sorts of bland substances are being proven in the homeopathic world, this medicine just begged for a Hahnemannian trial. Firstly, there is the sheer toxicology of it. It kills. And in record time. Then there is the bizarre signature. It's a bag that floats, hunts and propels itself through the density of water. Then from the heroism of the proving we find it gives you an erection that lasts for a week. Throw away you Cialis, burn your Viagra. Try some Box Jellyfish before a big night out.

What follows is an introduction to the remedy and proving. The full proving manual can be purchased individually in book form or electronically, or alternatively purchased in Clinical Manuals in Homeopathic Medicine Vol One along with the provings of White Tailed Spider and Moreton Bay Fig. Contact alhomeoz@ihug.com.au.

The Creature Itself

Male, 21 swallowed a Box Jellyfish tentacle stored in a coke bottle in a fridge. *'Then the pain hit I dropped the bottle and fell to the floor, grabbing my throat and screaming in agony. Imagine the pain from a broken arm but a million times worse. It felt as if someone had forced red hot razor blades down my throat. I was shitting myself. All I could think was I was going to die....I was struggling to breathe. Normally your airway is the size of a 20 cent piece, mine was 5 cents. First my chest went numb then my whole body....No body knew what to do with me. Some people thought I should drink vinegar, others thought I should have oxygen. Problem was no-one had ever swallowed a tentacle before.....the*

ambulance got to me in eight minutes and that was from Tully 28 kilometers away. The guys put me on oxygen set to 28L a minute to force my airways open. Normally people will go on 14L a minute but I needed more because I was blacking out and my breathing was packing up.....I woke up in intensive care two days later.....it was a miracle I survived.

From Ralph magazine; August 2001.

The Box jellyfish is one of the most venomous creatures on the earth. It has killed over 70 people in northern Australia since 1900. It looks like a plastic bag with strings hanging off it but can grow as large as a two gallon bucket and weigh up to 6kg. It has four bundles of tentacles with up to 60 tentacles in total. Each tentacle is covered in millions of stinging capsules which inject venom through a tiny thread that pierces the skin. First the venom attacks the heart, sending some victims into cardiac arrest. It then paralyses the breathing. Finally it destroys red blood cells resulting in skin necrosis which causes severe scarring. Each box jellyfish contains enough venom to kill three men. If more than 10% of the victim's skin is stung they will die within half an hour from respiratory failure. A child will die in minutes. Survive the sting without anti-venom and the skin will ulcerate and look like it has been lashed with a burning whip.

- *"The box jellyfish is the most deadly bastard in the world. It kills twice as many people per year as bastard sharks"*
- *Placed end to end, the tentacles of a Box Jellyfish would stretch 60 metres*
- *A gang of Jellyfish is called a 'smack'.¹*
- *'The pain can only be described as exquisite'.²*

....these are nothing compared to the delicate and diaphanous box jellyfish, the most poisonous creature on earth. In 1992 a young man in Cairns, ignoring all the warning signs, went swimming ... at Holloway's Beach. He swam and dived, taunting his friends on the beach for their prudent cowardice, and then began to scream with an inhuman sound. It is said there is no pain to compare with it. The young man staggered from the water, covered in livid whip like stripes wherever the jellyfish's tentacles had brushed

¹ Ralph Magazine August 2001

² Greg Follas, New Zealand Homeopath

*across him, and collapsed in quivering shock. Soon afterwards emergency crews arrived, inflated him with morphine, and took him away for treatment. And here's the thing. Even unconscious and sedated he was still screaming.*³

from Bill Bryson Down Under

Imagine diving into the sea to cool off in the tropical waters of northern Australia, swimming in the sun, and then, 4 minutes later, not only are you dead but your manner of death the most gruesomely painful imaginable. Death by jellyfish. This Jellyfish is Chironex Fleckeri or Box Jellyfish. The order is Cubomedusae. The species is Chironex Fleckeri. The common names are Fire Medusa, Indringa, Sea Wasp

The box jellyfish are very difficult to see in ocean waters as they are pale blue and transparent. They are shaped like a bell or cuboid with four distinct sides and can measure up to 20cm along each side. Pedaliums are projected from each of the four corners of the cube or bell and may contain up to as many as 15 tentacles each and be three metres in length (Australian Institute of Marine Science:2001). Box jellyfish are strong and nimble swimmers and can zip along in bursts of up to five feet per second by alternatively filling the bell with water and expelling it (Hamner (1994:120).

According to Dupont (1999), the box jellyfish has eight eyes which consist of a compound pair of primitive eyes on each side of its cube like bell - one looking up, one looking down and looking inwards through its own transparent tissue and out the other side. But there is no brain to organise or interpret visual signals. There is no thought involved nor a central nervous system but there is a nerve net in their tissue which is a simple feedback loop, a reflex action. It is believed that swimming behaviour is changed when a shadow crosses the eye as the muscles on the particular side or the opposite start to contract and pulsate, causing the animal to turn.

Experiments of isolated groups of up to twelve box-jellyfish in tanks under controlled lighting conditions have taken place with various sized black or white shapes at either end and outside the tanks. In every case the box jellyfish quickly retreated from the dark shapes and ignored the

white ones and the larger the dark shape, the further and faster they swam away. The box jellyfish most likely avoid larger black shapes to escape from predators such as turtles or fish or to navigate around obstructions. As the box jellyfish consists of delicate tissue that is easily damaged by abrasion and prone to bacterial infections, it is assumed the box jellyfish manage to avoid people most of the time but those that are stung are usually running or jumping wildly into the water straight into a box jellyfish (Dupont:1999).⁴

According to Hamner (1994:118), the box jellyfish is the most venomous animal on earth as no other animal's venom can kill a human in four minutes or less. The box jellyfish has killed at least 65 people in the past century but it wasn't until 1956 that the species was described and identified as the creature that inflicted such excruciating pain often followed by death. According the Australian Institute of Marine Science (2001), it was first thought to have been the Portuguese man-of-war but as sightings usually accompanied these stings, it became obvious that it was something else.

The box jellyfish possess batteries of stinging cells, or nematocysts, that are a double-walled structure containing a spirally folded hollow thread with a tiny barb at the end. Projecting from the outside of the nematocyst is a minute sensor which acts like a contact point. When this is stimulated by physical or chemical sensation, the cell explodes. The tiny thread is ejected with great speed and force of up to two metres a second and the barb penetrates the prey's or predator's skin, injecting a poison. One cell may have little effect but usually hundreds or thousands are activated simultaneously (Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage, 1995:2).

The Box Jellyfish is restricted to the warm waters of the indo-Pacific region and can be found in the waters off northern Australia from November to April as well as other territories north of Australia including Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia (Edmonds, 1989:82).

The box jellyfish prey on small crustaceans and small fish and appear to travel towards the shore in calm weather on a rising tide and congregate

³ From Down Under (Doubleday 2000)

⁴ Massive thanks to principal researcher Sharon Walters.

near the mouths of creeks and rivers following rain. It is thought that food is washed down these watercourses to the waiting box jellyfish after rain (Australian Institute of Marine Science: 2001).

At the end of summer, the mature box jellyfish reproduce sexually by shedding eggs and sperm into the water which combine to form a larval stage called planula. The planula then swims into estuarine waters and attach themselves to the underside of scoured out rocks, and once settled, develop into a polyp. The polyp state lasts all winter during which the polyp may bud asexually to form new polyps. During spring polyps detach and develop into a free-swimming medusoid stage to begin their adult life (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Manual (2000:30).

Although highly venomous, sea turtles such as the green leatherback and hawksbill have been observed eating box jellyfish. Scientists believe it could be due to the turtle's skin being too tough for the stinging cells to pierce and that the lining of their digestive system offers some protection (Marine Parks, 1995).

According to Edmonds (1989:82), the box jellyfish is not seen before the incident and the victim usually screams as result of the excruciating pain which occurs immediately on contact. The victim claws at the adherent tentacles and may become confused, act irrationally or lose consciousness and drown.

Local Symptoms. Red, purple or brown multiple interlacing whiplash lines about 5mm wide develop within seconds. These characteristic markings last for some hours and are a beaded or ladder pattern and may develop into large weals, fading if the victim dies. After 7-10 days, necrosis and ulceration develop over the area of contact and often takes on a whitish, frost-like appearance. The skin lesions may take many months to heal if deep ulceration occurs and itching may also constantly reoccur. Pigmentation and scarring at the site of these lesions may also be permanent (Edmonds (1989:84).

General Symptoms. Excruciating pain dominates the clinical picture while impairment of consciousness leads to coma and death. The pain increases in intensity over the first 15 minutes, often coming in waves and diminishing in 4-12

hours. Amnesia occurs for most of the incident following the sting and if death occurs, it usually does so within the first ten minutes. Survival is likely if spontaneous cardio-respiratory activity is present after the first hour.

The victim may develop cardiac shock, appear cold and clammy with a rapid pulse and a disturbance of consciousness. It is also possible that the cardiac state may oscillate within minutes from episodes of hypertension, tachycardia, rapid respirations and normal venous pressure to hypotension, bradycardia, apnoea and elevated venous pressure. The oscillation may give a false impression of improvement just prior to the victims death.

Respiratory distress, pulmonary congestion, oedema and cyanosis may be due to the cardia effects or to a direct mid-brain depression. Paralysis and abdominal pains may occur and malaise and restlessness may persist with physical convalescence required up to a week. Irritability and difficulty with psychological adjustment may take weeks or months to disappear (Edmonds, 1989:84).

According to Hanmer (1994:127), an antivenom was developed in 1970 by scientists at Australia's Commonwealth Serum Laboratories. Sheep were injected with nonfatal doses of venom and produced antibodies that are used to manufacture antivenom. When injected into a Box Jellyfish victim, normal breathing often begins almost immediately, pain relief usually occurs within minutes and later scarring is frequently reduced.

According to Marine Medic.com (2001), first aid treatment of box jellyfish stings should be as follows:

- Retrieve the victim from the water and restrain them if necessary.
- If others available, send them for an ambulance.
- Check victims airway, breathing and circulation. Treat with EAR or CPR if necessary.
- If resuscitation not needed, pour vinegar over the stung area for a minimum of 30 seconds to inactivate remaining stinging cells on any adherent tentacles left on skin. Use tweezers if necessary.

- After vinegar application, apply compression bandages directly over major stings.
- If available, use CSL Chironex antivenom for all major cases.
- Cold packs may be used to help ease the skin pain in conscious victims.
- In severe envenomation, use oxygen if available.

Apart from checking with local authorities for advice before swimming in areas that the box jellyfish is found, it is important to not run or dive into the water. Apart from walking into the water slowly, overalls, wetsuits, body stockings made of pantyhose, lycra suits or any other adequate projective clothing should be worn so as to provide a physical barrier (Edwards, 1989:86)

The Proving

In a superficial comparison with some other seas creatures used in homeopathic medicine Box Jellyfish has ...

- ❖ Sneezing, astac, lim, pect, ch-fl
- ❖ Mucous tenacious, clear, astac, lim, hom, pect, ch-fl
- ❖ Flushing of face, astac, aster, lim, ch-fl
- ❖ Nausea and vomiting, astac, ch-fl
- ❖ Pain, stinging, hom, aster, astac, ch-fl
- ❖ Burning sensations, astac, hom, lim, pect, ch-fl
- ❖ Urticaria, astac, hom, lim, medus, elat, ch-fl
- ❖ Male and female sexual desire increased, murex, astac, aster, salmon, ch-fl
- ❖ Female organs affinity, aster, sep, salmon, ch-fl
- ❖ Sensitive to noise and music, ambr, ch-fl
- ❖ Anxiety in the chest, astac, ch-fl
- ❖ Vertigo, ambr, aster, salmon, ch-fl
- ❖ Nausea and constipation, aq-mar, sep, ch-fl
- ❖ Affections of the breast, murx, medus, sep, ch-fl
- ❖ Approaching misfortune, elat, aster, ambr, ch-fl
- ❖ Melancholy, aster, astac, ambr, gad, lim, sep, ch-fl
- ❖ Sexual desire resembling an irresistible power, giving rise to ideas of violence, despair, aster, ch-fl

Of course we have another very underused jellyfish already in our materia medica; Medusa.⁵

Some clear themes emerged from the Proving of Box Jellyfish.

The Box Jellyfish

- ❖ floats in water
- ❖ is tossed around by the tides
- ❖ can go very very deep
 - a. ease with feelings ease in the world of feeling and the unconscious
 - b. ease of life
 - c. able to negotiate the subconscious easily
- ❖ hovers
- ❖ is a killer
- ❖ but it does not hunt, only kills when something entangles it
- ❖ is transparent
- ❖ is able to be seen through
 - a. clairvoyance
 - b. able to know
 - c. predict the future
- ❖ can predict the weather, knows when storms and cyclones are coming
- ❖ survives through its transparency
- ❖ moves through expiration
 - a. deep expiration >
- ❖ responds to shadows
 - a. shadows <
- ❖ has animal compulsive sexuality
- ❖ has no niceties around sex
- ❖ has overwhelming powerful sexual drive

The themes from the proving symptoms

- nausea
- vomiting
- cleaning ordering
- > drinking water
- > ocean, seaside
- on the edge of flu
- throat pain
- burns
- chemical like burns
- tongue affinity
- calves affinity

⁵ The information we have of it comes from a poisoning in 1842 and is listed in Allen. Known for its use in the treatment of nettle rash, and urine difficulties, toxicologically it affects the speech, and creates anxiety, and there is an affect on the urinary tract and the breasts. There is also an indication for prickling on the skin, numbness and burning sensations and odema. Close remedies are listed as astac, homar, murex, sepia and apis. It is not listed in Herring.

- forehead affinity
- vertigo
- absent mindedness
- sneezing
- coryza
- flushing of the face
- roof of the mouth
- ulcers
- Pain especially stinging and burning.

It is often even more revealing what is not present more than what is present. In this proving there are no ear, urine, heart, neck, perspiration, chill symptoms, only two back and one respiration symptom. There are strong mental, vertigo, throat, stomach, chest, and burning symptoms. The trial itself was thoroughly Hahnemannian.⁶

MIND

Creating Order; provers woke in the middle of the night and furiously cleaned the house or bathroom, often with a strong accompanying nausea. There was compulsive need to clean.

Compulsive and unrestrained sexuality; provers especially male felt strong compulsive sexual desire, any woman would do, difficulty in restraining themselves, sudden bewildering sexual desire that had to be consummated.

Strong sudden and potentially violent anger emerged.

There were also mistakes of concentration and proprioception, guilt, the inability to focus, the desire to go to the beach and beach amel, the indecision/inability to concentrate, heavy foggy overwhelmed feelings, frustrated, failure, alone, impatient feelings and the fixation on house/home/family/livelihood /children. For some there was an immediate primary symptom - Life felt incredibly good and there was an easy/lightness, the ability to focus and concentration >>.

VERTIGO; provers experienced powerful vertigo on standing still, or a sensation of being pulled

from behind, feelings of spacyness, lightheadedness, floating and very pleasant body sensations.

FACE; provers experienced warmth, heat and redness in the face, then spreading throughout the body, as if a fever, burning sensations.

MOUTH; as if acid on it, tingling and burning, as if ulcers, scalded.

STOMACH; Strong hunger, strong nausea, bloating and then undigested stools.

ABDOMEN; provers experienced a strong blow to the abdomen, and anxiety, a stab, rumbling, gurgling, burning in abdomen and explosive diarrhoea.

CHEST; provers developed *sensations around chest/heart of heaviness and oppression, and the need to take a deep, long breath to breathe it out, blow it out.*

These were the most dramatic of literally hundreds of other specific symptoms. For the provers exact words then please look to the proving manual itself.

To those students of Nature Care College of 2001, a heartfelt thanks. It's quite a constellation of symptoms. Unrestrained animal sexuality. Vertigo, nausea, and the desire to clean. Amelioration from deep breathes. Early clinical experience confirms these symptoms. The complete profile will emerge over time as more clinical results are reported and collated. Any clinical information please send to Alastair Gray 9 Numa St Birchgrove Sydney NSW 2041 Australia. alhomeoez@ihug.com.au

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⁶ The substance which was prepared by the good folks at Simillimum Homeopathic Pharmacy, (call them for details +64 4 4999242) and for the methodology of the proving, see the proving document. When it came to the Nature Care College proving for 2001 there were three choices of new remedy: MDMA, Blatta and Box Jellyfish. Box Jellyfish was eventually and blindly chosen.

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