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## THUJA

All the world's a stage  
And all the men and women only players  
They have their exits and their entrances  
And one man in his time plays many parts

William Shakespeare<sup>1</sup>

Thuja is a remedy which in many ways stands alone. While it is not the only conifer in the materia medica, it is the only one to have such a clearly defined constitutional picture. Nevertheless this remedy is enormously important in veterinary homeopathy; while it is capable of initiating wonderful cures, it is sometimes one of the easiest to prescribe. At other times the remedy state can be difficult to recognise, for in the same way that Nat. mur. creates a wall of indifference behind which to hide, so Thuja creates a mask.

The source of the remedy is the fresh green twigs of *Thuja occidentalis*, the white cedar (although 'cedar' is a misnomer as it belongs to the cupressus family); it is also known as American arbor vitae, 'tree of life', due to the medicinal nature of its resin.

Thuja grows in northern climes, where it prefers damp conditions and grows slowly. It has a conical shape, a twisted trunk, and at maturity can be up to 15 metres tall. Cones remain on the tree throughout the winter. On examining the foliage one may be struck by its unyielding nature – the evergreen leaves are quite brittle and break rather than bend. The tree itself, however, is capable of withstanding the elements by bending in the wind, and the nature of an individual specimen depends very much on its specific environment; on a cliff it may be small and stunted, while in a swamp it may stand tall and proud. This ability to 'fit in' is a characteristic of the Thuja patient. The animal often knows just how to behave to remain unnoticed, hiding behind a 'mask' which obscures their true nature. Humans in this remedy state feel ugly, and live in fear that their real character will be discovered; these emotions can be without doubt be inferred in the corresponding animal patients. Underlying their robust appearance there

lurks an emotional brittleness which leaves the Thuja individual easily discouraged, and prone to depression. As a clear contrast to the 'mask', the Thuja patient has a tendency to excess, hence its fame as a treatment for overreaction to a vaccine. Physically, the issues of excess and covering up are reflected in a thickening of the skin. In similar vein, the cones of the conifer are reflected in the traditional use of Thuja tincture for the treatment of warts. The corresponding homeopathic remedy is also indicated for this purpose, and this use extends to the treatment of any benign tumours, such as lipomas, sebaceous cysts, epulis, perianal adenomata, and polyps of the ear or vagina. It is also a valuable remedy for the treatment of sarcoids in the horse. The materia medica of Thuja contains a large repertoire of skin symptoms, where hair loss and pigmentation are particularly featured. However, one characteristic pattern involves skin lesions which occur only on covered (thus hidden) parts – this is most easily seen in horses, when eruptions occur only under the saddle. The axillae and groins may be greasy, thickened and pigmented, and the remedy is indicated in horses suffering from 'greasy heel' or thrush. There may be profuse, offensive discharges from the ears.

Gassy stools containing much mucus accompany colitis in the Thuja patient. A characteristic aggravation at 3 a.m. can be highly inconvenient to a dog's owner, but they may also notice a pattern in the morning whereby the first stool the animal passes is normal, the following one is loose, then the next ones get progressively worse until thin watery diarrhoea is passed. This is virtually pathognomic for Thuja. On the other hand, less commonly, the first diarrhoeic stool appears after the morning meal ('breakfast'). The excess of gas in the bowels causes them to rumble; this may prompt the owners to remark 'It's as if there is something alive in his abdomen'. Hence, Thuja is a major remedy for inflammatory bowel disease in the dog or cat, especially if it follows vaccination.

It is also indicated in the treatment of convulsions, and while Silica is maybe top of the list for epilepsy induced by vaccination, Thuja comes a close second.

In the urogenital system, balanoposthitis, vaginitis and infections of the clitoral fossa are characterised by profuse yellow or green discharges, and prostatic swelling and inflammation may also be indications for Thuja. Similar discharges are seen in chronic upper or lower respiratory disease.

Thuja symptoms are often left-sided and are often aggravated by damp weather. Hence it may be indicated in left-sided joint pains.

On the subject of vaccinations, it is important to emphasise that not every patient who reacts adversely to a vaccine goes into a Thuja state; the specific reaction depends on the miasmatic and constitutional tendency of

the individual, and hence it is not uncommon to see such remedies as Pulsatilla, Ignatia or Sulphur indicated in such circumstances. Naturally, if an animal is already operating in a Thuja state as a consequence of its constitution, then the reaction will follow that pattern. On the other hand, many patients present with local symptomatology that clearly fits Thuja but whose constitution or totality is less clear. This follows the principle that if the deranging force is physical then the symptomatology will tend towards that plane. In consequence, many patients who need a prescription of Thuja do not exhibit the full picture of the remedy state. In such cases, while Thuja is the remedy needed at that juncture, following its action, another remedy state may be presented. We can also view this in terms of the 'masking effect' of the imposed Thuja state which, when removed, reveals the true nature of the patient underneath.

Thuja is without doubt the most Sycotic of our remedy states. The patient tries to cover over their weaknesses and when threatened they over-react. On the physical plane we have profuse discharges, excess tissue in the form of benign tumours and thickened skin, and an affinity for the urogenital system. We may, however, inevitably recognise traces of all the other Miasms, not least Tuberculosis.

Constitutionally, the Thuja type is often thick set and not particularly pretty. They are often dark skinned individuals with large folds of skin; older females have pendulous mammae with thickened, pigmented, usually black, teats. They may develop patches of alopecia, especially on the pinnae of the ear, which may also show thickening and hyperpigmentation. Nails may be deformed, and crack or split easily, whereas nose and pads may be thickened to the point of hyperkeratosis. They are generally chilly, and they are intolerant of onions which aggravate their bowel symptoms.

Mentally the Thuja individual may present in two different forms, and with this remedy, the 'young' and 'old' forms may also be appropriately described as 'overt' and 'hidden', respectively.

The 'young', 'overt' Thuja patient is boisterous and extrovert, but because they find it difficult to communicate with other animals, they easily get into fights, albeit inadvertently. At other times they can be mischievous and provocative, seemingly stirring up trouble for the fun of it. They can also be obstinate and difficult to train and in this respect may appear almost Tubercular in nature; in this context we are reminded of the connection which exists between Thuja and Tuberculinum. Thuja patients also have a high sex drive; females may develop ovarian cysts and may continue to come into heat while pregnant; males are hypersexual and are prone to mounting other animals of either sex. They are playful, but tend to be obsessive and rather a nuisance, constantly wanting attention.

However they are not affectionate, seeming to lack the patience to stay around long enough for a cuddle.

Owners use expressions such as 'OTT' ('Over The Top'), 'exuberant' and 'a handful'. At this point, the Thuja individual may actually be hiding behind a mask of exuberance, but as yet they have not learned how to 'fit in'.

In contrast, the 'old', 'hidden' Thuja individual has even less personality, and as such they can easily be mistaken for a Mineral patient. They are withdrawn and a little shy, and have now realised that their skill of hiding can get them accepted in their social environment. Furthermore they often act as if they know they are ugly, hiding away from view and spending a lot of time alone. Their faces can remain almost completely lacking in expression, and they can appear similarly unenthusiastic about walks, toys or any of the things which would normally excite an animal. Questioning the owner about the patient's character can be frustrating, for this individual now has the ability to fit in anywhere – they know how not to get into trouble, by giving off the signals of indifference rather than appeasement. Moreover, apart from being a little chilly, they exhibit no obvious desires or aversions, and no fears either. However they can be sensitive to reprimand, in which case they will take themselves off to sulk behind the sofa; owners will sometimes describe them as 'fragile', though never 'delicate'. Similarly 'hiding' or 'ugly' may feature in reports; one owner described her Thuja dog as 'the ugly duckling'. On a walk, they may mix in with other animals or people, and interact just enough to get along with their acquaintances, but they don't seem to communicate well enough to actually make any friends, or for that matter any enemies. In their physical appearance the Thuja patient may have a thick neck, but their limbs are usually relatively slim.

With their propensity to tumours, exuberant nature and difficulty in communicating, the Boxer dog represents the archetypal Thuja individual. The breed standards even include a description of the required features of the 'mask', and hence they have been bred to have a face which is virtually expressionless. To compound matters the breed was traditionally docked, so they didn't even have a tail with which to signal. With such handicaps and a Sycotic nature, it is no wonder that poor communication leads to misunderstandings, overreaction and occasionally a reputation for being aggressive. Other breeds prone to this constitution include spaniel types such as Tibetan and King Charles, but, as I have already suggested, this remedy can be of use in a great many animals who do not represent the constitutional type

The 'overt' Thuja dog bounds exuberantly into the consulting room, and unless they are restrained they will immediately jump all over you and

Thuja present clear physical symptoms, and a history of a causality in the form of a vaccination (or another type of injection); these provide enough clues for an accurate prescription. This is all 'fine' (another word which readily springs to the lips of the owner of the Thuja patient), but it leaves me prescribing on the surface appearance, a process that only requires me to operate in the plane of the physical. Consequently, with these patients, I derive none of the satisfaction I normally gain from a homeopathic consultation, when I hope to encounter another sentient being on the level of its inner self. Rather, I feel like I have somehow skimmed off the surface of the patient, and I sometimes feel slightly irritated that they would not open up and communicate with me. Hence, when they leave, I feel as if I have examined an object rather than an animal, and that my task has been intellectual instead of emotional. Nevertheless, I have done what is required of me, played the role, and, probably, fitted into the situation perfectly.

### Thuja Haiku

Mask of brittle nails

Vaccine covers warty skin

Breakfast loose at 3

- The Thuja patient hides behind a mask; they feel brittle; nails are brittle.
- The causation is often a vaccination; the patient covers over their insufficiencies; physically they cover themselves with thickened skin; they have a propensity to warts, and skin problems generally.
- Stools may be loose after breakfast; symptoms are aggravated at 3 a.m.

### Reference

- 1 Shakespeare W. *As You Like It*, Act 2: Sc 7, line 142. *William Shakespeare, Complete Works*. Basingstoke: Macmillan; 2007. p496.