Fall Series Webinars
with Karen Allen CCH

Critical Thinking Skills for Homeopaths
Thinking Up Our Plan

Basics of Pattern Recognition:
Understand how pattern recognition techniques apply to homeopathic case taking and analysis

Constructs of Critical Reasoning:
Understand how decision making occurs and recognize rational and irrational decision strategies

Developing Your Skills: you will be prepared to make smarter, more reasoned remedy selections!
Homeopathic Concepts We Need (Challenges for All Homeopaths)

- Potato-ness of a remedy
- Granularity of data: Boulder, Rock, Sand, Silt
- Bias of Keynotes, Usage
- Relationship of Materia Medica to Repertory
“Like Cures Like” is dependent upon identification of similarity: a matching of patterns, so we must understand pattern recognition.

Each client has a pattern. We identify this through case taking and analysis.

Each remedy has a pattern. We identify this through provings and clinical experience.
We Need to Understand:

- How is a pattern defined?
- How is a pattern recognized?
- How much of the pattern must be present?
- How do we account for pattern variation?
We Are Using The Terms:

- **Pattern**: a form, template or model, or an abstract set of rules that define an entity. A pattern allows the entity to be built, recreated or perceived. The built or perceived entity 'exhibits' the pattern. It can be named.

- **Recognition**: Detection of underlying pattern through checking for the defining elements of the known pattern. More complex than pattern matching because the patterns are less well defined; test case data ambiguous.
Patterns Are Defined By:

- **Rule:** a regulation, law or guideline that is always true for a pattern. Within a pattern definition it represents an invariable fixed point. Good for chess, less useful for homeopathy.

- **Example:** A case in point for a pattern. A definition can be built up through the accumulation of many examples. Not exact enough for chess. This is how remedy states are learned - e.g. all Aconite provings and clinical experiences.

- **Analogy and Reference:** A description of something else that has the same features or character as the pattern being defined. Not useful at all in chess, but used in homeopathy to understand comparisons of remedies - Aristolochia = Sepia + Pulsatilla
Definition Allows:

- **Recognition**: we can identify those entities that exhibit the pattern. E.G. Pattern = stripes. We recognize American flag, zebra, tiger, geological sedimentary striations in this pattern.

- **Generalization**: based on the defined pattern, we can form a hypothesis of any other entities we might find which exhibit the pattern. E.G. Pattern = waltzes. We recognize Blue Danube waltz, and can also detect or create Three Quarter time in other pieces and conclude they are waltzes.

- **Abstraction**: We can separate the pattern from the entities that have it, and use the concept separate from the entity. E.G Pattern = potato-ness of remedies.
Let's Try It

• 3, 6, 9, 12, ___
• ABC, CBA, DEF, FED, GHI, ______
• 0XX0, 0X0X0, 0X00X0, ______
• red, blue, green, blue, yellow, blue, pink, ________
• Pattern matching is a simple task when patterns are rigidly definable without ambiguity
Let's Try It

• 3, 6, 9, 12, ___
• ABC, CBA, DEF, FED, GHI, _______
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• Pattern matching is a simple task when patterns are rigidly definable without ambiguity
What Completes The Pattern (1)?
What Completes The Pattern (2)?
What Completes The Pattern (3)?
What is or is not Included in the Pattern?

Assume a pattern called 'Greet Friend' which involves recognizing a friend and saying 'Hi'.

- **The important data is identity of friend:** Friend can be dressed in anything; in any location; in frontal or profile view. These background details are not part of the relevant pattern.

- **In a variant pattern called 'Greet Customer', the important data is the location of the person entering a store.** Again clothing and angle of view is unimportant. In this case, the identity is also unimportant, but location is now important.

- **Separation of pattern from background is crucial.**
Patterns are Formal or Informal

Formal Patterns are like a Chess game: rule oriented
- Complex with known variation
- Fixed rules apply and are non-intersecting (no royal pawn or gay king - each piece is only itself, never another piece)
- Complete pattern always present
- All data in each test case is useful (which piece, in which square)
- This requires pattern matching

Informal Patterns are like a homeopathy: referential
- Complex with unpredictable variation
- No specific rules, no fixed points
- Partial patterns always present
- Test case data usefulness is random; subject to interpretation / distortion
- Test case always contains multiple pattern fragments within it
- This requires pattern recognition
Chess vs. Remedy Examples

White Queen checks Black King. Decide an action:
- There are many (finite) options
- Every option is known
- Value of each option can be compared
- No spurious data to distract decision-making
- Multiple reasonable solutions are equally acceptable

Man falls down stairs; contusions. Decide an action:
- The remedy state may be acute or chronic; multiple therapy options
- Every remedy option is known, but case presents only part of remedy
- There is much data unrelated to the presenting stimulus/response that is relevant for remedy selection
- Multiple reasonable solutions are tightly interwoven, but not equally successful
Remedy patterns are defined on various levels:

- Physical symptom details - modality, location, sensation
- Idiosyncratic presentation of SRPs
- Miasmatic affinity
- Themes of mental / emotional state
- Concomitant

The full pattern is complex and extensive, and will never be seen in full in any one case. The pattern encompasses the full remedy state.
Remedy State is the Pattern

Remedy state is a definition of all entities that exhibit a representative pattern of symptoms

- Remedy states overlap with each other
  - Same symptom in multiple remedies (Lyc and Chel: < R side)
  - Same symptom, increasing intensity (Fear in Ars and Acon)
  - Same miasmatic pattern in multiple remedies (Calc and Sulph)

- Remedy states have remarkable variation within them
  - Imagine a Platina shy little 4 year old with recurrent UTI
  - Imagine a Platina 42 y.o. gay man with trigeminal neuralgia
  - Imagine a Platina 17 y.o. teen boy with eating disorder
Remedy States are Complex and Ambiguous

“To understand is to perceive patterns.”

Isaiah Berlin

Inventor of Value-Pluralism:

“The idea that there are several values which may be equally correct and fundamental, and yet in conflict with each other. An example of value-pluralism is the idea that the moral life of a nun is incompatible with that of a mother, yet there is no purely rational measure of which is preferable.” This complexity and ambiguity is similar to the difficulty of recognizing remedy patterns where the validity of one choice does not imply invalidity of another choice.
Bias Prevents Recognition

- Recognition must be based on the match between the elements in the case and the known pattern of the remedy.
- Expectation, bias, agenda, conjecture all interfere with valid pattern recognition. These problems often result from confusion about which data are “useful” and which are “irrelevant.”
- Research consistently confirms that expectation influences outcome.
Recognizing Partial Patterns

- **Threshold**: A minimum point, beyond which a condition is met. Used in electoral policy, laser technology, sensory perception.

- **Recognition threshold**: How much of the pattern must be present to be recognizable? How much of an elephant do we need to see in order to recognize that it is an elephant? What else shares features of an elephant? (Fable of the elephant and the blind men)
Recognizing Partial Patterns

Requirements of an acceptable solution:

- Consider bell curve of response. Simillimum will act most profoundly, but several remedies will act. Find a reasonable remedy.
- Match enough elements to decrease uncertainty to an acceptable level; decision is made on preponderance of data. Is there enough of a match to feel confident this remedy will act?
- Prioritize individualizations: modalities, SRPs, sensations, most limiting. Focus on the pattern, not the background.
- Conflicts when “boulders” and “sand” match different remedies
- Some cases are indeterminate based on the data provided. Ask more questions. Get the full case. LISTEN TO THE DIALOGUE OF THE VITAL FORCE! The vital force will lead you to more exact remedy selections.
How do we accommodate pattern variation?

- **Expect a remarkable variability** in presentation; “forewarned is forearmed”.

- **Eliminate expectation of fixed points**; It's not Chess.

- **Learn variation within remedy states**. The variation exists just as much in the remedy state as it does in the client case presentations.

- In variable patterns it is crucial to **stick with facts** and avoid assumptions.
Conclusions for Case Work

- Remedy patterns are complex and extensive
- Individual case pattern will always be a partial presentation of the full remedy pattern
- There is remarkable variability in case presentation
- Expectation of or adherence to fixed points interferes with partial pattern recognition
- Pattern recognition requires thoughtful consideration, rather than conjecture
Effective Thinking IS:

- **Factual**: opinions welcome when noted as such
- **Relevant to the case**: showing how the remedy applies
- **Congruent** with the prioritization and repertorization
- Use **all levels of granularity** of data
- **Well referenced** to MM and Repertory
- **Free of bias**, conjecture, situation, fiction, negative logic
Constructs of Critical Reasoning

SIX STEPS TO EFFECTIVE RATIONAL THINKING

- **IDENTIFY** the problem: what are we looking at in this case?
- **DEFINE** the context: what evidence of limitation and pathology?
- **ENUMERATE** choices: identify 3 - 4 likely remedies
- **ANALYZE** options: what is the considered best remedy choice?
- **LIST** reasons explicitly: exactly why are we making this choice?
- **SELF CORRECT**: looking again, what did we miss?
Intuitive vs. Reflective reasoning: we all use both

- **Intuitive reasoning is a cognitive short cut, gut reaction**
  - *Instantaneous perception; "Time Slicing"
  - *Does not have considered reasoning
  - *May or may not be accurate

- **Reflective reasoning is deliberation in unfamiliar ground**
  - *Allows for abstract conceptualization
  - *Considered evaluation of reasonable options
  - *Reliant on well articulated reason
  - *Self regulatory with reflection of thought to improve accuracy
Humans decide in a way that preserves cognitive resource

- **Satisficing**: Done when a 'good enough' solution identified
- **Temporizing**: This choice is 'good enough' for now
- **Availability**: Recent information is more readily recalled
- **Association**: One word of keynote supports a decision
- **Affect**: Positive or negative emotional reaction anchors perception
- **Dominance Structures**: One good enough option diminishes others; the resulting investment in that option can motivate subconscious reframing or redefinition of the problem or options to support the 'to-be-chosen' option.
Constructs of Critical Reasoning

Irrational thought: incomplete, immature judicial process

- Biased interpretation of data, evidence, statements
- Failure to identify or hasty dismissal of relevant considerations
- Ignore or superficially evaluate obvious alternatives
- Decision based on fallacious / irrelevant argument or unwarranted claims
- Does not justify results or articulate reasons for decision
- Regardless of evidence, maintains or defends preconceived viewpoint
- Evidences close-mindedness or hostility or apathy to reason
- Imagine Homer Simpson in problem solving mode
Rational thought: complete, mature judicial process

- Accurately perceives evidence
- Identifies salient and relevant considerations
- Thoughtfully analyses and evaluates possible options without bias
- Decision based on warranted, judicious, valid conclusions
- Justifies decision, explaining considerations and assumptions
- Fair-mindedly follows where the evidence leads
- Imagine Albert Einstein in problem solving mode
Who Do You Want as a Homeopath?
Exercise #1: Interpretation / Analysis
Choose a well known proverb (Google can help you find MANY...). Write a sentence describing what it means. Then come up with a different, also possible, alternate meaning. Continue until you have at least 5 different variations. Ask a friend or colleague to do the same. Compare results. This develops your ability to derive meaning from idiomatic phrases.

Exercise #2: Inference
Review a case you have taken (or published cases in homeopathic journals). Noting the final remedy choice that acted, read over the case again to identify all of the supporting symptoms that were part of the pattern of the remedy. This develops your remedy pattern recognition by linking the remedy to the factors of the symptom pattern.
Exercise #3: Evaluation / Self Regulation
Pick a well known pathology (flu, ear infection, diarrhea) and choose 3 clear modalities for a theoretical client with this complaint. Get into 'Homer' mode and do some fictional case building for a ridiculously unlikely remedy choice based on biased repertory rubrics / selective materia medica interpretation – create the most extreme example you can. Then do the opposite and create an 'Albert' evaluation. This develops your recognition of when you are using ineffective critical thinking skills.

Exercise #4: Explanation
Choose an object on your desk or in your office. Describe the object's appearance and function, as if to a space alien who has just arrived from Mars, taking nothing for granted. Then compare the object's appearance and function with another item in your office, and explain the similarities and differences. This develops your ability to articulate your thought process to yourself and others.
Webinar: Critical Thinking Skills for Homeopaths

December 12, 2013

This document serves as verification that: ______________________

has completed 1 hour of training with Karen Allen CCH in homeopathic case assessment skills development.

These hours can be used to meet the pre-requisite formal training or continuing education criteria for the Council for Homeopathic Certification.

Please print and keep as your record of attendance.