

Homeopathy

A Conversation with Jennifer Koepke, DVM

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Jennifer Koepke has been practicing veterinary medicine for 15 years. She became interested in studying homeopathy after experiences with two dogs in very serious liver failure. The first, a 6-year-old German Short Hair, had been living with a liver condition for about a year and it had progressed to the point where the dog needed a liver transplant. This dog was anemic, had poor energy, and chronic diarrhea. Basically everyone had given up. It was treated homeopathically and lived another 3 years. Although he was as yellow as yellow could be, his energy and appetite returned, and chronic diarrhea resolved. He had a good quality of life before he died.

The second dog was a 1-year old German Shepard. It is not certain why he was in end stage liver disease, but a biopsy showed a shrunken up little liver similar to alcohol cirrhosis. While surgically taking a liver biopsy, Jennifer quickly closed this dog up because she thought he would die under anesthesia it looked so bad. The owner was into alternative medicine so she started homeopathic remedies and anti-oxidants. This dog made a full recovery. He had a normal year and a half until a car hit him. As Jennifer said, "These 2 cases turned my head. I began to wonder what is this system of medicine?" Jennifer began studying homeopathy 5 years ago with Dr. Pitcairn, an eminent authority of veterinarian homeopathy. Once Jennifer began the study of homeopathy she says, "That was it, I never looked back. There were 25 of us ranging in age from 25 to 45 years old. Most were very allopathic; some were trained in chiropractic and acupuncture. When we all completed the course we realized this was a form of medicine to be taken very seriously." In April of 2002, Jennifer started the Agape Holistic Mobile Clinic, a mobile veterinary service dedicated to holistic treatment.

Grace: What is Homeopathy?

Jennifer: Homeopathy is a healing system based upon the principle of the "Law of Similars." It is a system of medicine that works to move disease out of the body and is based on 10 constant principles. These principles address treating the patient, choosing the proper remedy, and determining if the patient has been helped or not. The guidelines are specific. The curative relationship between medicine and the patient is based on the similarity between the patient's symptom picture and the symptoms specific to the remedy. Homeopathic remedies are given to augment the normal healing process. The assumption is that the body moves toward health. For example food poisoning will stimulate the body to get rid of the poison through vomiting and diarrhea. Sometimes the body gets stuck and you may become too dehydrated for your body to complete the process. The remedy will go into your system and help to complete the healing process. An allergic skin rash is another example of a healing process. The body is trying to get rid of an allergen and gets it to the surface of the body but it then gets stuck. The animal may be scratching and miserable. The remedy goes in to

help finish the process. Homeopathic remedies help the body achieve a state of health. The Homeopath treats the animal as a whole (considering body, mind and soul) in 1 state of health or illness at 1 time. All symptoms are perceived as different aspects of one condition.

Hypocrites said, "That which has the power to make the body ill can make the body well". This is one of the basic premises of homeopathy. However, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, a chemist and medical doctor, is credited as the founder of Homeopathy in the 1800's. Hahnemann spent his life organizing and compiling medical books describing how to treat disease with like substances. Dr. Hanuman initially found that when he gave a substance, Peruvian bark, to a healthy individual, symptoms similar to malaria began to develop. He then thought "What happens if I give Peruvian bark to a person with malaria?" He did and the person with malaria recovered. Hahnemann published 50 volumes on how to treat diseases with like substances.

Grace: What is your definition of health and wellness?

Jennifer: I look at mind, body, and spirit functioning together to determine the health of an animal. A healthy animal is comfortable in their body; the immune system is able to react to colds or flues. Contract the illness and recover. A dog, having a bout of diarrhea after eating garbage or getting a skin infection or an ear infection is able to recover or throw the illness off. It is not unhealthy to have symptoms, however, it is unhealthy not to be able to resolve symptoms or have a set of symptoms control ones life. A healthy animal has a bright look in its eye, and looks forward to and has a purpose in life.

Grace: For what disease processes, is homeopathy most effective?

Jennifer: Chronic ear and skin problems, allergies, diarrhea, chronic abnormal stool, chronic eye discharge, poor dental health, dry unhealthy coat, urinary tract disorders, aggression and destructive behaviors, thyroid disorders and cancer have all been treated successfully using homeopathy. There are some limitations; you cannot set a bone and some wounds heal better if they are taken care of surgically. There is a need for surgery with this type of work. You can use the homeopathic around the surgery. You do not necessarily need to use antibiotics or steroids.

When a cancer or a tumor is present you need to think about the reason. The immune system allowed the cancer cells to take hold. If the tumor is on the skin, perhaps the body has worked very hard to put that cancer on the surface. It could have put it on the liver, the pancreas, or the spleen, but when it puts it on the skin the body has worked very hard to get it out there. If you remove that tumor all you have done is upset the balance. Now the body will have to work hard to put that tumor someplace else. In homeopathy the tumor will go away naturally or slough off if you are truly curing the animal.

Grace: What is generally the length of time for a treatment?

Jennifer: The average is 2 years. The initial homeopathic exam lasts 2 to 4 hours because you want to know everything about the animal. You are looking at their mind, how they think, their soul/ spirit, and their body. I have people complete a questionnaire prior to our initial appointment. After the initial assessment and interview I prescribe a homeopathic remedy and then follow-up in about 2 to 3 weeks to insure the animal is on course. I will check in over the next 1 to 2 months to see how things are progressing. Once the animal is on a curative path then the owner will contact me if the symptoms begin to reoccur, which generally happens in 3 to 6 months. It is variable because each animal heals at a different speed. When the symptoms return I may dose the animal with the same remedy or a different one if the symptoms have changed. The remedies are gentle and safe without the toxic side affects of antibiotics or cortisones.

Grace: Has homeopathy changed the way that relate to animals?

Jennifer: Oh yes, they *all* take on unique personalities now. Of course I have always adored and loved my animal and thought he was unique but now I have to capture the uniqueness of each client's animal and in the process I come to know the unique characteristics of each animal and owner, which is a blessing. The owners are there because they love their pets and want to do the best for their animals. They also become my friends. When I have a new patient I make sure I am well rested and I try to quiet my mind a good half - hour before meeting the animal. The animal's energy is coming through that owner as they tell their animal's story. It seems that I connect with the animals more quickly. They realize I am so much more comfortable with me now and with them. Even in the exam room with the allopathic practice, the animals are calmer with me than they used to be because I am calmer myself.

Grace: It seems that you have more parameters to look at when you assess your patients.

Jennifer: Yes, I am looking at more things and more interesting things. I care that your cat is fascinated with the water faucet and wants to come into the bathroom with you and watch it drip. The unique things that your animal wants to do are important to me because it helps to establish their individuality and helps to guide the homeopathic remedies. How else are you going to separate them? I see many cases of diarrhea and I need to be able to separate each one by their response to the diarrhea and individual make up. In the allopathic model you might see 10 cases of diarrhea and you would treat them all the same. With homeopathy there are so many parameters that I am considering for each animal that each case is completely different.

I have a better grasp and understanding of why there is disease and how to treat it. I do not have fears anymore about immune diseases. Where did they come from and what should we do about them? I understand it from this grounding.

Grace: What percentages of animals are able to achieve the level of wellness you describe through your practice with homeopathy?

Jennifer: In allopathic medicine you look at one specific symptom that you want to treat and base your treatment plan on relieving that symptom. It is a different type of client that comes in for homeopathy. It is usually one who is interested in going beyond that and realizes that health is a process. Not just 1 shot and you are healthy. We all come into this world with a certain level of health. For example, if a young dog comes in with a skin problem you change the diet, discuss vaccinations, and start a treatment plan. You hope that after about two years of treatment that that animal will not require your help again for years because there should be a period of health for quite a long time. If you were starting with a 10 or 11 year old it would be harder to achieve that level of health.

Grace: I find it very interesting that in homeopathy, consideration of the soul is one of the parameters that are included in the initial assessment. Could you speak more about that? Could lack of support for soul development hinder an animal from healing on a physical level?

Jennifer: Yes, it would be a very similar situation if a human were in a stressful or abusive environment where their soul was dampened. That can affect healing. But the type of client that would be coming to me is one who is more in touch with their animal so I do not have as much of a barrier as I would treating a human with habits that they do not want to give up. A stressful environment must always be addressed.

Grace: Do you see parallels between what is going on health wise for animals and their human caretakers?

Jennifer: Yes you see that. Sometimes I think it is energy transference with the human and the animal being so close to each other. When I see an animal improve on all levels, we always talk about diet and vaccines. When the animal improves overall and experiences health the owner may begin assessing their lifestyle. When you are treating a human you put the responsibility of their health back on them. They need to take responsibility for what goes into their body.

Grace: Could you talk more about the application of homeopathy for emotional and mental issues?

Jennifer: One of the very powerful historical uses was in mental illness. Because of the way the remedies are made when they enter your body they are in an energetic form. Thus they will affect the mental or emotional aspect of the human or animal as well as the physical. This connects mental, emotional and physical aspect of homeopathy. You are not simply healing the physical aspects of an illness you are healing the emotional and spiritual aspects as well. You can treat fear issues homeopathically. There are many anxiety-ridden animals that can be helped with homeopathic remedies.

Grace: Can you talk about the aggression and fear issues related to the Rabies vaccine?

Jennifer: The way I look at the vaccines, especially the rabies vaccine, is host susceptibility. You can vaccinate 20 dogs and a certain percentage of those dogs

will be sensitive to the vaccine and it will trigger or bring fourth a problem. One dog might become more anxious after the vaccine due to his susceptibility. That dog may become more aggressive or anxious over time. The vaccine acts like a trigger to a dog that is susceptible. Sometimes the trigger takes the picture or the root of what the vaccine is vaccinating for. With rabies, a susceptible animal might look more aggressive or paranoid. When you are vaccinating for parvo with a susceptible animal then you might have an animal that has more sensitivity to food or gastrointestinal issues. The vaccine triggers an underlying imbalance.

A healthy balanced immune system lowers susceptibility. Susceptibility is then lower for colds, vaccines, and allergies and the body will naturally recover when challenged. You can overwhelm the susceptibility by exposing an animal to a very pathogenic contagion. For example if you introduce a healthy dog to a parvo infected animal and you slowly introduce the healthy animal to the infected one over a period of time, the immune system of the healthy animal will be stimulated naturally. You could, however, overwhelm the healthy animal's immune system if you just put the two animals together rapidly and the healthy animal may then contract the parvo disease.

Grace: Could you speak about the concept of miasms?

Jennifer: The general thought is that the human race and the animals are becoming weaker and weaker because of over vaccinations, poor diet, and high stress. After 20 years of research, Dr. Hahnemann introduced the miasm theory in his 2-volume treatise entitled "The Chronic Diseases". In it he proposes the miasm theory to explain where disease originates and how patterns of disease are inherited through generations. It is an energetic explanation of illness. An understanding of miasms enables the homeopath to prescribe deep acting remedies to quiet the disease process, improving the health of present and future generations.

Grace: How do you deal with the death of your patients now?

Jennifer: Because life is a process, I feel it is part of my job to help the person and the animal deal with death. Since death is inevitable, the whole emphasis should be on the quality of care and keeping guardians with their animals in the last stages. Animal should not be separated and isolated in a hospital. I like to keep the animals at home as much as possible. It is also important that pain be controlled and alleviated. It should not be a battle to keep that animal going for the next so many weeks or months. We talk about battling cancer. It is not as much about battling disease or death but optimizing the animal's health and maintaining quality throughout their lifetime. We are our animal's stewards.

Meg, Molly, Penny and I have known Jennifer for many years. She helped care for Meg throughout her life. Jennifer is a caring and loving veterinarian. Since our interview Jennifer has relocated from Truckee to McCall Idaho.

-Grace