Can Bee Venom Cure Incontinence?

and Other Tales of Natural Remedies

BY MARK MATHEW BRAUNSTEIN

I n 1999, I died into a river and emerged paralyzed below the waist. What? One’s journey out of disability is more edifying than any injury that led to it. Indeed I’ve experienced significant recovery, including getting off my ass and walking withutches, as well as getting my shit together and regaining bowel function.

Pardon my bad pun, but I will “pray for piss.” I do the prune, but can’t do anything about it, so I relieve myself a stick tube up my plumping, which increases my susceptibility to urinary tract infections (“I’m telling you!), yet among my 17 years as a paraplegic, I have never had a UTI. For this last, perhaps someday I’ll be listed as a medical marvel in the book of Guinness World Records.

Fear or not, fear not, as I safeguard against UTIs in several ways. Ambulating helps prevent urine stagnation in a puddle in the bladder. I also drink copious amounts of filtered well water and unadulterated juices — to the tune of at least seven full bladders a day. And since age 18, 20 yearsymphlagra, I have maintained a whole foods vegan diet that keeps my urin sterile. Cleanliness in urination inhibits the growth of bacteria, while an alkaline environment fosters their growth.

Neither before nor after paralysis did I consume anything dangerous, such as the following:

- white flour, white sugar, animal protein, fried foods, soft drinks, caffeine, alcohol and pharmaceutical drugs.
- Please do not think for one minute that my diet is anemic. I eat plenty of salads, greens, grains, beans, seeds, sprouts, nuts, avocados, mangos, melons, cherries, berries (notably not cranberries, too tart to eat unsweeted), plums, peaches and apples.
- However, a year ago, a snake slithered into my Eden. I began bedwetting. Never while awake, only when asleep at night. And not just once, but often twice, and sometimes three times a night. While I do feel fullness of bladder, that sensation is not quite fully normal, and I do sleep very soundly, two factors which could contribute to the bedwetting. But why did it begin 16 years post-injury? Belladonna, prescribed by a naturopathic physician, had for 15 years effectively treated my neurogenic bladder during my waking hours. But while sleeping, suddenly I was having problems.

Ouch!

I was losing sleep over this mystery. By the time urgent discomfort eventually woke me in the middle of the night, I already needed to change my soiled underclothes, and despite precautionary measures, sometimes my soiled bedding (”Feed to piss.”) Kissing goodbye to salty nights of sexual passion, I was beginning to feel like an old man. Maybe this is normal for age 55, as incontinence does increase with aging, but I hardly look or feel much in all other regards.

You might expect this to make me unhappy camper, except that the camp that I call my home is among my sources of joy. I live alone in a nature preserve, not quite wilderness, but nature nonetheless. My neighbors are rabbits and deer, whose acoustics are small. As do not eat animal protein, my odor is not that of a predator. Rabbits and deer do not feel me.

Another thing to my acceptance in nature is my wheelchair, by which I can be recognized from a mile away. Seated, I’m his height, so hardly intimidating. For those morning visitors who have shared seated among deer are more spiritually enriching than any other experience of my life. And I could not enter into this communion with nature any better.

My communion with nature extends also to interaction in my kitchen with ants, whom I try not to kill but just brush aside, and in my one minute that my diet is anemic. I eat plenty of salads, greens, grains, beans, seeds, sprouts, nuts, avocados, mangoes, melons, cherries, berries (notably not cranberries, too tart to eat unsweetened), plums, peaches and apples.

Bingo! My light bulb flashed on! A year earlier, immediately after a routine annual bone density test and shortly before my flight with plumbing, I had decided to stop taking a daily pill of 500 mg of calcium and 250 mg of magnesium. Did I say magnesium?

As a purported preventative against osteoporosis, I had been taking a minimal dosage for the previous 10 years. But tired of popping pills, and all the unconvincing of our efficacy in the prevention of osteoporosis, I dropped them from my daily regimen. The average American diet provides ample calcium, and with a healthy dose of vitamin D, I considered my diet much better than average.

A mix of trace magnesium to two parts calcium to four parts phosphorus is an ideal balance provided by most whole foods. The problem for many Americans larks in their unhealthy diets of excessive phosphorus that throws that ratio out of balance, and in their decadent lifestyles that impede assimilation of calcium, ample dosage or not. Sum and substance, calcium supplements do not prevent osteoporosis if further adjustments are made in one’s diet and lifestyle.

My condition verges on osteopenia, a stage before osteoporosis, and my concern is not inadequate intake of calcium, but inadequate exercise. Namely, walking. While I walk with crutches, I do not walk enough, as I walk only outdoors. Indoors at home and at my full-time job, I use a wheelchair in order to free my hands.

I do not routinely pop vitamins or mineral pills just for vitamin assurance for the same reasons that I do not take pharmaceutical drugs, but those reasons are entirely another story. (See my chapter, “Take the Pain,” in From Here to Here: Stories of Adjustment to Spinal Cord Injury, edited by Gary Karp and Stanley Klein, published in 2004 by No Limit Communications.) Vitamin pills, mineral pills and herbs are my first resort for remedy of acute ailments, or even for chronic conditions such as bedwetting.

The day after reading about magnesium as a treatment for bladder spasms, I reinstated daily supplementation of 500 mg calcium and 250 mg magnesium. And I am happy to report that my bedwetting was “relieved within a matter of days.”

So now I understand the destiny that I was driven to by that song, to whom I owe my newly regained condition.

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