

# Migraine and Epilepsy

Jan de Vries



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By Appointment Only series

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## *Foreword*

THE MAJORITY of illnesses can be helped by herbalism. Illnesses fall broadly into those which are self-limiting, because they tend to get better in time, without any help, chronic conditions which fluctuate but never seem to clear up entirely, as well as those caused by various types of stress. Only a small proportion (20%) of these are the result of an acute medical condition. It is this last category which may fail to benefit from herbal medicine, but even here many herbalists feel they can help if they can catch such serious conditions early.

I am not decrying the benefits of modern medicine. I would be the last one to refuse surgery for an ectopic pregnancy, but then all surgery is not necessarily of the life-saving variety. Much of it could be avoided by the intelligent use of preventative medicine, and it is here that herbalism proves so useful. A good herbalist is very much concerned with prevention. The problem is that most patients, in my experience, do not consult a herbalist until the damage has been done and very often as a last resort, having dragged themselves from one specialist to another, hoping for what increasingly becomes “a miracle cure”, as their condition deteriorates.

I know that Jan de Vries encounters this scenario as often as I do but I suspect he handles it with much more patience, humanity and foresight! This excellent book is one of a series he is writing which instructs the public about self-care. I am delighted that he is setting himself the task of capturing a lifetime's experience in words and passing on that treasure to other people. He has an extraordinary combination of in-depth knowledge and highly developed



intuition and inventiveness. He displays more compassion and heart-felt concern than any other practitioner I have encountered. Above all, he is extremely practical. He would readily agree that although comfrey root poultices were used in the old days to mend fractures, an X-ray and a cast are preferable today. After all, a fracture may need to be surgically pinned. He knows more readily than I that acute appendicitis teetering on peritonitis calls for emergency surgery, not enemas and abdominal packs. But, like me, he sees a heart-breaking number of patients who, for example, have been on drugs for high blood pressure for ten or twenty years. This is surely not correcting or healing the condition. Such dependencies are the result of many years of ignoring or improperly treating the initial signs of high blood pressure or the malfunctioning organ system that induces the blood pressure to rise in the first place. If caught early, most cases of high blood pressure can certainly be cured without drugs. Time and again both of us see acute illnesses that have been badly handled and as a result they degenerate into chronic disease where drugs are then administered in an endless stream.

It seems today that antibiotics are prescribed like Smarties for the mildest bacterial infection and often for viral ones as well — where they are absolutely useless. There are some effective herbal antibiotics but where, rarely, allopathic antibiotics are required and their use justified by life-threatening illness, they would work superbly if the patient were not already antibiotic-resistant. This is the result of sipping away at too many antibiotic courses as well as eating hidden antibiotics in animal produce. It is Jan de Vries' great concern to teach his patients how to live and eat properly as well as helping them with appropriate herbal medicines.

The overall problem with a surgical or drug-based approach to illness is that it concentrates on symptoms as they arise, and therefore a patient is often at the furthest

reach of the disease pattern before decisions as to how to treat it can be made. But most diseases begin years before such radical intervention is required. I am always somewhat bemused by patients who tell me they have just developed arthritis over the last six months. This is a classic example of a disease that takes years and years to build up in the body before manifesting its symptoms of pain, stiffness and swelling. Various types of headaches are endured for years and the painful symptoms vainly suppressed with allopathic medication. More than anyone else I know, Jan de Vries appreciates that by ignoring or suppressing such symptoms as they manifest themselves from babyhood or childhood on, we are pushing the body towards catastrophe. It is our experience that such catastrophe is hitting people at an earlier and earlier age. He tells me about treating diverticulitis in young children, being presented with juvenile diabetes in seven-year-olds and polyarthritis in teenagers.

While working punishingly long hours in unswerving dedication to his thousands of patients, he can still see through this gloom some light at the end of the tunnel. He is utterly convinced about the intelligence, love and humanity that shines in everyone and it is this conviction which shows itself so clearly in his writing and in his work. He is by no means a “back to nature” fanatic nor does he regard herbalism as a universal panacea. I suspect in an ideal world he would prefer to encourage the mingling of the knowledge and talents of the synthesist and the naturalist so that we could all benefit from the larger view without missing out on minute truths. I know he would like to see preventive health-care as embedded in herbal medicine employed to its best advantage so that it could enjoy at least an equal footing with modern interventionist medicine.

This excellent and comprehensive book covers everything concerned with head pain and points out how vital correct diagnosis is. It discusses everything from common

migraines through to epilepsy and, as with all his work, Jan offers practical and sensible advice. But there is a thread of God-given intuition that runs through everything he does and it is this that makes this book so illuminating. Read it, enjoy it and, above all, benefit from it.

Kitty Campion, MA, MH, PhD, Rlr.