

Placenta Humanum and Lac Maternum...

The initial gifts from the mother

By Patricia Hatherly



Placenta Humanum and *Lac Maternum* are two homeopathic medicines which derive from the uterus and the breast. Since it is these two endocrine organs which govern the creation and nurture of the developing neonate, we could reasonably expect the medicines to have many similarities; and they do. **Keywords** which differentiate them include: birth trauma; bad news; grief; dreams, aliens; dreams, future, of; dreams, colours, red/black/white; protein; stimulants; fasting; desire for fresh air; breasts swollen and tender; hot perspiration.

When I first read the proving of *Placenta Humanum* conducted by Linda Gwillim and Kathy Biggs¹, I was immediately struck by how it was similar in many ways to my proving of *Lac Maternum*². However, when we consider that the placenta and the breast are powerful endocrine organs that orchestrate the initial stages of growth and maturation in the infant, this is not so surprising.

The placenta is a maroon, (this colour was significant in the proving) flat, disc-shaped, complex organ that governs many functions which result in the appropriate growth of the foetus. This is achieved via transfer in the placental villi of nutrients (including maternal antibodies) and oxygen from maternal circulation as well as excretion of waste products (which includes carbon dioxide) from the foetus.

Additionally, the placenta has an important endocrine function in that it produces various hormones which are vital for maintaining the pregnancy. These include beta human chorionic gonadotrophin (β -hCG) which is the main initial hormone governing growth in the first trimester. It is β -hCG that ensures the

secretion of progesterone and oestrogen in the early weeks; and it is excretion of this hormone in the urine that enables a pregnancy to be detected at that time. Progesterone governs the thickening of the uterine wall and enables the blastocyst to embed; while oestrogen ensures that no more eggs are produced. By the beginning of the second trimester the placenta, itself, produces the progesterone and levels of β -hCG subside. Other hormones produced by the placenta include relaxin and placental lactogen. Relaxin enables the mother's internal organs and joints to make way for the growing baby and placental lactogen increases the amounts of glucose and lipids in the mother's blood. A small rise in maternal blood sugar is normal in pregnancy.³

The colostrum component in *Lac Maternum* is what distinguishes it from *Lac Humanum*;

colostrum being a unique substance that is formed from a mix of the fatty degeneration of cells in the centre of the alveoli and newly secreted milk. It is beta-carotene which gives it the distinctive yellow colour and it is rich in all fat-soluble vitamins including vitamin K. Colostrum is basically a protein food; in fact it is about 90% protein and contains a large number of macrophages (which produce complement; particularly C3 and C4; both of which have an immunological function), T and B-lymphocytes, neutrophils and epithelial cells. It is also rich in immunoglobulins, especially sIgA and lactoferrin, both understood to impart a high level of protection for the infant's mucosal surfaces as it adjusts to living in a non-sterile environment.

High levels of oxytocin are also found in the milk component of the colostrum and this hormone persists throughout lactation. It

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governs the let-down reflex and its presence in the milk optimises energy transfer to the mammary gland. In particular it stimulates the activity of vagal nerves and the release of hormones promoting digestion and anabolic metabolism.⁴

Additionally, oxytocin, which is described as the "hormone of love", is thought to assist with maternal-infant bonding. This is an important factor with recent research demonstrating that women who breastfeed for longer than six months are less likely to abuse their infants.⁵

And so it is that the placenta and the breast both govern the growth of the infant; with the breast completing the work begun by the placenta in utero. We would, therefore, expect some similarities as well as some differences in the symptom pictures elicited in their provings.

Ailments From

The choice of either *Placenta Humanum* or lac maternum as a homœopathic prescription may lie in the aetiology of the patient's presenting symptoms.

Ailments From: Bad news: *plac*

This rubric from the proving appears under that heading in the Complete Repertory.⁶ Additionally it can be further expressed in: A/F: Alone; being alone; A/F: Anticipation; A/F: Anxiety; A/F: Business; mental and emotional consequences of; A/F: Cares and Worries; A/F: Disappointment (unhappy love); A/F: Discords; A/F: Embarrassment; A/F: Excitement; mental and emotional consequences of; A/F: Failure; A/F: Grief; A/F: Horrible things; sad stories; A/F: Indignation; A/F: Mortification

There are no **Ailments From** rubrics in the published proving of *Lac Maternum*. However, as a result of clinical experience, I have since nominated that Birth trauma is the primary aetiology for the *Lac Maternum* state. This especially includes the use of drugs to facilitate labour. In a normal vaginal birth where no drugs are used, the baby, who is high on adrenalin at the moment of Birth is able to use his innate reflexes of grasping; rooting and crawling to discover and attach to the maternal breast. Then, over the next three days until the milk comes in, the infant has access to significant amounts of untainted colostrum which, among other things, serves to initiate all metabolic processes thereby ensuring that the neonate embraces Life.

Research has shown that birth trauma and medicalised birth may result in increased suicide risk in the late teen years.⁷ The individual in the *Lac Maternum* state has a death wish and is disgusted both with Self and Life. The rubrics: *Scrutiny from others, aggravates and Scrutiny, self, of, aggravates* are recorded in *The Complete* in the Ailments From section and are the only two *Lac Maternum* rubrics to be found there.

While these do, somewhat, suggest this state of disconnectedness, it is better reflected in various **Mind** rubrics:

Antagonism with self; Alienation, feelings of Company aversion, to; desire for solitude, Despair, Life, of; Detached, Ego, from; Disconnected feelings of being Estranged, friends, from Forsaken; isolation, sensation of Horror, feelings of Indifference, everything, to; Indifference, eating, to Indolence; aversion to work Loathing oneself
Revulsion; feelings of Sadness, melancholy; Spaced out; Spoken to averse, alone wants to be left Weary of Life; Withdrawn

This sense of disconnectedness is further emphasised in some of the *Lac Maternum* **Delusion** rubrics:

[Body, physical, disconnected, spiritual, from; Body parts disconnected; Detached, body, from]. Interestingly, **Delusion** rubrics in placenta revolve around sensations of being squashed, in the dark and under water! It is not surprising therefore, that [Desire for light] is to be found in the **Mind** section.

The Mind

[Apathy and Indifference] are other ways to express disinterest and these rubrics are recorded in the **Mind** section of the *Placenta Humanum* proving. However it is a disinterest born of focusing on Self; being content; a feeling of [slight benevolence], so this clearly distinguishes it from *Lac Maternum* who tends to be disenchanted with Life.... [Indifferent to everything]. The *placenta* patient is particularly kindly disposed towards children; tends to look for company and is predominantly sociable, looking for and appreciating beautiful things in his environment. He has a feeling of being calm and relaxed; [Spaced out; Drifting off into thoughts, pleasant]. He feels [Rich in love; Cherished; Blessed and nurtured by family and friends].

On the other hand, the *Placenta Humanum* proving is full of anger and irritability rubrics.

Similar rubrics are found in *Lac Humanum* rather than *Lac Maternum*. This is possibly due to the prevailing sense of disconnectedness in the *Lac Maternum* patient such that [Irritability] is the closest that person comes to expressing dissatisfaction. Furthermore, because of this tendency to withdraw, the *Lac Maternum* patient deals with sadness differently from the placenta patient who will actively express his emotions through weeping, while the lac maternum patient shuts down.

Many rubrics pertaining to fear and anxiety prevail in *placenta* and there may also be some anxiety of conscience. The *Lac Maternum* patient, on the other hand, is so withdrawn and unmotivated about Life that anxiety; especially anticipation anxiety regarding performance is not part of his cognitive experience. When in the spotlight, however, the *Lac Maternum* patient will simply play the fool [Antics, plays; Manic behaviour].

Rubrics regarding confusion of mind and difficulty with concentration are common in the *Lac remedies* and this is especially so with *Lac Maternum*. Loss of direction; confusion regarding surroundings and disorientation rubrics are in both provings. Vertigo rubrics are also significant in both provings.

This is not surprising since the baby in the womb and at the breast has a very limited understanding regarding what "home" means. It is extensive time at the maternal breast which contains the full spectrum of vitamins and minerals necessary to live a healthy life, which helps to ground the infant into his body. It enables him to "Walk the Walk" in a focused, directed way.

The rubric [Forsaken] is to be found in both provings and is a significant rubric in *Lac Humanum* also. To my mind this is a reflection of how much of Mankind has a mindset that engages the negative aspects of Psora. The main lesson of *Lac Humanum* (which complements *Lac Maternum*) is to be alone but not lonely and when this perspective is achieved the dictates of §9 become possible and the struggle associated with being human, is then full of potential. That the rubric [Positiveness] emerged in both provings is significant in this regard.

Both provings are rich in **Dream** rubrics. The placenta proving elicited 94 rubrics, and that of *Lac Maternum*, 83 rubrics. They have 20 **Dream** rubrics in common and these include the not-so-unexpected ones of: [Family; Sisters; Women; Friends; Child and baby]. Rubrics commonly associated with one's straightforward path in Life are

represented in both provings by: [Journey; Driving a car; Shopping; Clothes and House/s]. On the other hand, the not-so-straightforward path is reflected in rubrics such as: [Violence; Pursued; Frightful; Forsaken and Death].

Dream rubrics which describe a primitive state are to be found in both provings. New beginnings comes to mind and this is acknowledged in Linda Gwillim's interesting dream on Rebirth as expressed in Aboriginal lore. However, the most interesting and almost unique **Dream** rubric to evolve from both provings is that of [Vampire]. For those among us who have an interest in the Doctrine of Signatures aspect of provings, the vampire is associated with partly living and with blood. The foetus in the womb relies on maternal red blood cells for oxygen as well as for nutrition and protection, while the newborn takes advantage of the preponderance of maternal white blood cells in colostrum for protection in his new and vulnerable state. Oxygen he can access freely outside the womb and there's but little need for nutrition in the first few days after birth as the normal physiological processes of digestion have yet to settle into a normal rhythm...[Fasting >].

The Body

The differences in the **Head** rubrics in both provings are intriguing; and, in some measure, reflect the tensions felt in the head by the neonate in the last weeks of pregnancy (when conditions in the uterus become very cramped), as well as those experienced during the birthing process. Sensations of [Heaviness; Tightness; Pressure like a swimming cap on the head; Pressure pushing down; Pain from the bridge of the nose pushing upwards] are to be found in *placenta* and all paint a strong picture of life in the uterus in the last weeks. This state of constriction is also borne out in the *placenta* rubrics in **Back** and **Extremities**.

On the other hand, significant **Head** rubrics in *lac maternum* include: [Sensation of constriction, band or loop; Pain, pounding, forehead; Pain, base of skull < bending head forward and > bending head backwards] as well as [Pressure, brain around; Pressing, vertex, air bubble as if from, straightening up body >].

These are all suggestive of the various sensations that would prevail during a normal vaginal birth. One of the provers, very interestingly, dislocated a shoulder during the proving and the few rubrics that emerged in **Extremities** are further suggestive of the birthing process.

Rubrics associated with general states of irritation are to be found in both provings in the **Eyes; Ears; Nose** and **Mouth** sections. This is to be expected if we care to continue to assumption that these remedies contain signatures associated with gestation and birth. Blurred vision and eyes which are sensitive to light are part of the baby's immediate experience and rubrics describing this are in both provings.

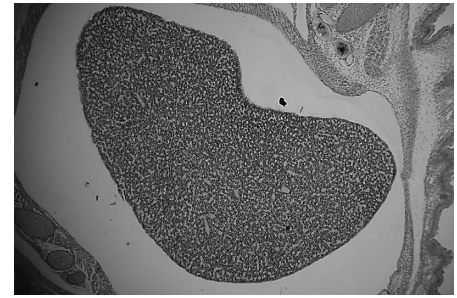
Especially interesting is the fact that both provings have the rubric [Sensitive, smells, to]. The nose is the most developed organ in the newborn. He smells his way to the breast and research has demonstrated that it is olfactory triggers that assist newborns in their search for the maternal breast and that these may be learnt ante-natally.^{8,9,10}

The nibbling appetite of the *placenta* patient reflects the situation in utero where nutrients are "on tap" as it were. Snacking often is part of his experience in the womb and the patient will have this symptom. The placenta is about growing the baby quickly. It has more of an affinity with *Sycosis*...in the dark; under water and developing quickly! In this regard, it is especially intriguing to note that the smell of onions and garlic permeate the stool of the *placenta* patient.

The *Lac Maternum* patient, on the other hand, has little appetite [Fasting >] and this reflects the situation immediately following birth when, full of adrenalin, the baby hunts for the breast and has a big feed and then falls into an exhausted sleep for many hours. This is a usual occurrence.

Both provings contain a desire for sweet (Fruit; Chocolate) and this is perhaps consistent with the fact that the taste buds for sweetness, which lie at the front of the tongue, are primed to lap up the milk which is high in lactose. While rooting for the nipple the baby's tongue comes down and out as he uses this as an extra aid for finding the milk. It is a natural instinct for the baby to do this.

The desire for protein is, however, a key element to deciding on choosing *Lac Maternum*. And it is this, along with a distinctive desire for stimulants, (Caffeine: Coke; Chocolate; Coffee) that will lead to the choice of this remedy. This addictive penchant (and this may include social drugs as well as caffeine) is perhaps due to the contribution that the drugs used in a medicalised birth gave to the colostrum used in the proving. As discussed earlier, the *Lac Maternum* patient has a death wish; is cut off from life and so it is a state with a syphilitic emphasis.



To save the first bowel movement until after birth is the preferred option so it was not surprising that constipation emerged as a rubric in so many *Placenta Humanum* provers. Bloating and abdominal discomfort are part of the newborn's reality; so, that rubrics associated with this arose in both provings, is to be expected. This state of discomfort leads to intestinal hurriedness with the newborn tending to pass stool after every feed. This is represented in the *Lac Maternum* proving in such rubrics as [Diarrhoea; and Urge, sudden, eating after].

Many provers in both provings experienced high libido during the proving. This is, perhaps, not so surprising since both the placenta and the breast are associated with producing a healthy baby. The range of ovulation symptoms in placenta, support this premise. Although not particularly relevant to this discussion but, nonetheless intriguing, is the fact that high libido also emerged as a rubric in the *Lac Humanum* proving.¹¹

One of the provers in the Halahan and Houghton proving experienced an anovular cycle and another recorded a dream of discussing contraception with her mother. These are consistent with the fact that lactational amenorrhoea is the most widely used form of contraception on the planet. It is generally accepted that a fully breastfeeding woman (ie is one not using bottles or dummies) has a 98% chance of having an anovulatory cycle at the initial return of her menses during lactation.¹² Since the *Lacs* are sarcodes it is a "theoretical" (note the emphasis!) possibility that *lac humanum* used in low potency may prevent ovulation.

No **Mammae** symptoms arose in the *Lac Maternum* proving but the range that did so in the *Placenta Humanum* proving are suggestive of the important role that progesterone plays in developing breast tissue in the pregnant woman. It is the high progesterone levels during pregnancy that keep prolactin in check and lactogenesis cannot proceed until the placenta is removed and the progesterone levels suddenly drop.

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Poor milk supply in the early weeks of a lactation may be indicative of retained placental fragments.

Sleepiness with the need for constant naps is usually part of the baby's pattern and this is borne out in the **Sleep** rubrics in both provings. And, adopting a right-side lying position or foetal position holds no surprises for the *placenta* patient. The *Lac Maternum* patient, however, is restless in bed and may lie in odd positions as if he has lost his bearings regarding where the head and the foot of the bed lie. Sleeping in a diagonal position emerged as a PQRS rubric in the proving.

The *placenta* patient tends to be chilly while *Lac Maternum* is hot. Hot perspiration is, however, associated with the *placenta* patient and that includes night sweats. Dryness of the skin with scaling is to be found in both provings as is the tendency for the skin to bleed freely with cuts being slow to heal. I find this an intriguing rubric which, perhaps, reflects a unique aspect of neonatal metabolism. Babies in utero and during the early days after birth have yet to establish gut flora which is important for many reasons, not least of which is the manufacture of vitamin K which is important for clotting. In the early days following birth, high bilirubin levels can be problematic for the baby who is sleepy and not taking large amounts of colostrum which is highly laxative and promotes the growth of bifidus in the neonatal gut.

The alternating, and seemingly contrary, **Generalities** of [Lassitude] vs [Increased energy] are to be found in both provings perhaps reflecting the tendency for babies to have but two switches; one for being awake and feeding and one for sleep with very little interest being taken in anything else in the early days. However the most intriguing rubric in this section is in *placenta* with its desire for fresh air and a declaration of feeling much better for being outside!

So, the uterus and the breast, with their unique contribution to the process of maturing a neonate, have certainly given us two interesting homœopathic medicines which share many similarities as one would expect. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that powerful hormonal and metabolic processes are at play during the early developmental stages of a baby's life. However, while a differential diagnosis may need to be made in choosing the appropriate Simillimum, it will be the unique differences between *placenta* and *Lac Maternum* as summarised in the following table, which will be the determining factor.

	Placenta Humanum	Lac Maternum
Ailments From	Bad news	Birth trauma
Mind	Apathy; Indifference; Benevolence Desires company Spaced out, drifting off into thoughts pleasant Seeing beauty	Alienation, feelings of Despair, Life, of; Detached, Ego, from; Disconnected feelings of being Forsaken; isolation, sensation of Indifference, everything, to Loathing oneself Revulsion; feelings of Sadness, melancholy Spaced out Spoken to averse, alone wants to be left Weary of Life; Withdrawn
Delusions	Area between top of head and nostrils being gently squashed Trapped in a house Everything closed in all around me; world has suddenly got smaller Darkness, Sensation of being underwater; being left to drown	Body, physical, disconnected, spiritual, from Body parts disconnected Detached, body, from
Head	Heaviness Tightness Pressure like a swimming cap on the head Pressure pushing down Pain from the bridge of the nose pushing upwards	Sensation of constriction, band or loop Pain, pounding, forehead Pain, base of skull bending head forward, amel bending head backwards, agg Pressure, brain around Pressing, vertex, air bubble as if from straightening up body, amel
Mouth	Lips tingling; red; swollen; ulcerated with yellow crusts and scabs	Lips dry
Food	Nibbling appetite Desires sweets and chocolate	Fasting, amel Desires flesh foods; protein stimulants (caffeine)
Rectum	Constipation	Sudden, watery diarrhoea after eating
Stool	Odour of onions, garlic	Odour burnt, smoky fermented herbs vomit
Sleep	Foetal position; right side Dreams: beauty fire red/black/white pregnant; baby; breastfeeding	Diagonal position Dreams: aliens; other dimensions refugee/s self-mutilation school; lessons not learnt giving birth; baby; breastfeeding
Perspiration	Chilly Hot sweats	Hot
Skin	Dry; scaly Nails and hair grow quickly Wounds slow to heal	Red; dry; scaly; itchy Cuts bleed freely and/or spontaneously

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