



Consulting for the Natural Products Industry
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All About Homeopathy

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A German physician named Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) developed the science of homeopathy and coined its name: *homoios*, the Greek word for similar, and *pathos*, which means suffering. It became wildly popular during the 1800s and was the medical choice of European royalty, American entrepreneurs, literary giants, and religious leaders alike. This overwhelming acceptance was due primarily to the success achieved using homeopathy in treating the dreaded epidemic diseases of the time. Historical studies tell us that between two and eight times as many patients with life-threatening infectious diseases survived with homeopathic treatment as those who were treated with conventional therapies. In light of this success, it is not a surprise that the very first national medical association in the United States was the *American Institute of Homeopathy*, created in 1844.

This popularity did not last. By the turn of the century homeopathy was in a tailspin. Part of the problem was the strong opposition from the newly formed American Medical Association—their Code of Ethics prohibits its use, including consultation with homeopaths. But more significantly, homeopathy lost its popularity because of the great advancements being made with modern medicine in treatments for pain and in the development of antimicrobial drugs.

However, with the growing concern about our current culture's drug dependence and the price we pay for it, more and more people are turning back to homeopathy. Its greatest popularity remains in England (the royal family has been under homeopathic care continually since the 1830s) and France (33% of the French use homeopathy), but in the United States there are thousands of health care professionals using homeopathy. Consumers are learning to self-prescribe for common and acute problems and are availing themselves of homeopathic guides for the necessary information. It's hard to predict the future, but the pendulum is definitely swinging back to homeopathic medical care—it appears to be standing up well to the test of time.

The Premise

Homeopathy is founded on the premise that a dynamic life force (the "vital force") within every individual is maintaining health through the balance of energy expended and replenished. When this balance is upset the body responds with symptoms of pain. These, as we well know, can range from sharp to dull, acute to general, all over aching to pointed throbbing. Other likely symptoms are nausea, bruising, tiredness or insomnia, irritability and mood swings. Even feelings seemingly not associated with the problem, such as hopelessness, depression, peculiar anxiety, and the desire to be alone or with others, are manifestations of disease. There are so many possible manifestations of any simple energy imbalance that the importance of individualized treatment, as described

for homeopathy is underscored. Unfortunately, this is uncommon in the practice of the usual forms of conventional western medicine.

Modern Medicine

Conventional medical doctrine and protocol is a modern miracle. Nonetheless, it has its limitations: drugs are the usual result of a trip to the doctor. They are prescribed for their action on a particular type of pain and/or a particular part of the body. Often several drugs are needed for one set of symptoms or one disease. And, when these drugs cause an adverse reaction or side-effect, more drugs may be prescribed to alleviate these new symptoms. Once the symptoms are under control the problem is considered solved. Therein lays a basic difference between conventional and homeopathic medicine: Modernity treats the symptoms of disease. Homeopathic doctors look at symptoms as the body's effort to heal, or re-establish balance within. For example: fever, both localized and general, often accompanies bacterial and viral infection. Studies show that a fever creates an environment where the body can produce interferon which fights off infection. One can then surmise that fever is a natural, adaptive defense of the body. To reduce a fever means to also reduce the body's ability to throw off the disease. (This is NOT to say that very high fevers or long lasting fevers should not be drug controlled as these dramatic symptoms could in and of themselves cause permanent damage.) Other examples of these defense mechanisms are coughing to clear the breathing passages, diarrhea and vomiting to flush out pathogens and irritants, and mucus to help expel allergens. If conventional drug therapies seek to control and suppress symptoms they also, albeit inadvertently, control and suppress the body's own defense mechanisms. Homeopathy seeks to stimulate these natural defenses of the body, to restore balance and cure the illness on all fronts: physical, mental, and emotional.

How it works

Homeopathy is based on what is called the "Law of Similars". It asserts that a substance which can cause a particular set of symptoms in a healthy person can also cure a patient with the same symptoms. The substance, when given in small, diluted doses, will stimulate the body's natural defenses to fight off that disease. It is a logical approach to healing: aid rather than suppress the inimitable power of the body.

Western medicine uses this theory in several notable instances. Immunizations are actually an injection of a synthetic preparation of the disease being immunized against. Anyone who gets a flu shot can attest to the minor flu-like symptoms they experience after immunization. Allergy treatments are another example wherein doctors administer small doses of allergens to create an antibody response. Though these treatments utilize the "law of similars" they are not considered homeopathic as they do not use the individualized treatment philosophy.

Treating the Source

Homeopathic therapy treats the WHOLE person and to do so must look for the root of the problem. If the problem is a headache it is important to know the exact details of the pain so that the homeopathic remedy is exactly suited. Does the headache begin in the back of the head or lower, in the neck? Does it wrap around or over the top? Does it feel like a band wrapped around the head, or is it more like a hood, or a too tight cap? Does light change the pain? What about body position: standing? sitting? lying down

on the right, left, or on the back? Does a cool or warm washcloth over the forehead help? Does it get worse when moving about? How is your appetite? Does indigestion or dizziness accompany the pain? What about backache? And general attitude? This can get quite complex and computers are becoming a powerful aid in cataloging and sorting symptoms to assist homeopathic physicians in choosing a remedy. But the questions are crucial to homeopathic diagnosis. The answers are the clues to the source of the pain and through both the obvious and seemingly obscure questions the doctor can pinpoint his/her prescription.

Drug Provings

How does a doctor know a particular remedy will work? They use the information from centuries of drug provings compiled into material medicas (encyclopedias of drug effects) and repertories (books that list symptoms and the substances that have been found to cause and/or cure them). Drug provings are the results of homeopathic drug trials where researchers administer continual, tiny doses of a substance to a healthy group of people until a reaction is noted. The participants must keep detailed notes on any symptoms that occur. Additionally, the researcher uncovers more indications with in-depth questioning. Once it is determined what symptoms the particular substance causes it is also known what problems will then be cured when the substance is administered homeopathically. The remedy will stimulate the body's own defenses to fight off the disease that is causing all the pain and discomfort. Like curing like.

Those Little White Pills

Homeopathic remedies usually come as little white pills. They are the outcome of two specific procedures called serial dilution and potentization which is described by a number and letter on each bottle of pills. When a formula is labeled X or D the dilution ratio is one part substance to nine parts water or ethyl alcohol. If it is labeled with a C the ratio is one to ninety-nine. The water and medicinal substance is mixed by machine with vigorous shaking. This is called potentization. The dilution and shaking process is repeated until the desired strength is achieved. Thus, a 30c formula is made by repeating 30 times the 1:99 dilution and shaking procedure. The more diluted the medicine, i.e.: the higher the number appearing on the bottle, the stronger it will be, the longer it will act on the body, and the fewer doses will be needed. The higher dilutions are only available from a homeopathic doctor.

Substance Energy

The controversy over homeopathics in the conventional medical community came about because of this seemingly impossible phenomenon: the higher the dilution, the higher the potency. Skeptics assert that when a substance is diluted to the degree of homeopathics there is not a molecule of the original substance left. Homeopaths agree that beyond 24x or 12c there are indeed no original molecules left. They also know that something does remain. This is called the essence of the substance, its energy. When a homeopathic medicine is chosen for its symptom similarity to the problem, the patient will be hypersensitive to that substance. The energy or essence of the substance is enough to stimulate the hypersensitive body and evoke a deep and strong reaction. This causes, in a successful patient and medicine match, a deep and strong cure. Conventional medicine does not address this concept of essence or substance energy and so it tries to refute the provings of the homeopathic trials.

Self Care

Homeopathy, in the lower potencies, is a readily available method of treating minor and acute health problems. It is inexpensive, safe—no harmful side effects—and best of all, homeopathy is often effective. Armed with a reference book such as Cummings and Ullman's Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines, or Horvilleur's The Family Guide to Homeopathy, homeopathy becomes an accessible way to resolve self-limiting disease.

Do not attempt to self prescribe for serious or chronic conditions that may require professional help. Homeopathic doctors prescribe strong, diluted medicines for these situations. The dilutions range from 3c to 30x to 100c and so on. The potency and frequency of dosage is all part of the perfect match of the symptom to substance and will be written into the doctor's prescription. To find a homeopathic doctor contact the National Center for Homeopathy, 801 N. Fairfax, #301, Alexandria, VA 22314, 703-548-7790.

The Chinese believe that the best doctors use no medicines and, instead, heal by giving guidance on healthful living. Strictly speaking, homeopathy is a system of giving medicines, and even natural medicines can only temporarily improve symptoms caused by continued exposure to personal or societal health stress (influences homeopaths call "obstacles to cure"). That said, if you are willing to put your powers of observation and judgment to use...you'll receive the most satisfying rewards by using homeopathic medicines at home; a greater understanding of you and your family's health and the knowledge that you're not only feeling better but becoming truly healthier as well. Stephen Cummings, M.D.:Dana Ullman, M.P.H: Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines, 1991.