

WHAT IS HOMEOPATHY, HOW DOES IT WORK?

Homeopathy is a system of medical therapeutics based upon a fundamental law of nature known as *The Law of Similars*, a law that is unchangeable and constant, such as the law of gravity. This law enunciates that those symptoms that a substance can cause when administered to a healthy person, are the very symptoms, which that substance can cure when administered to a sick person. This law was coined by Hahnemann and accurately expressed in Latin "*Similia Similibus Curentur*" which translation means 'let like be cured by like'. The correct application of the law enables the physician with the ability to bring about a cure in curable conditions and to bring relief to those cases that are beyond cure. Hence, homeopathy is a system of therapeutics, which is not suppressive or palliative, nor it is a replacement therapy. Homeopathy acts by restoring the patient's constitution to a state of on-going vigour, health and balance, experienced both mentally and physically. It achieves this by utilising, stimulating and enhancing the body's own curative, defensive and recuperative powers. The remedy that fulfils this criterion is the one that best matches or mirrors the patient's mental, emotional and physical condition, best known as the homeopathic '*simillimum*' – the remedy most 'like'.

The word itself Homeopathy derives from two Greek words, *homoios*, meaning like or similar and *pathos*, meaning disease or suffering, joined together in one word – homeopathy – thus indicating 'like suffering' which applies and summarises the fundamental law on which homeopathy is based.

In modern times, disregard for the healing law of similar leaves orthodox medicine therapeutically helpless in face of widespread viral epidemics such as the December 2012 outbreaks of *monovirus* infection with severe vomiting. This severe viral gastroenteritis is characterized by marked nausea, projectile vomiting, watery diarrhoea and strong abdominal cramps, with associated prostration, weakness, muscle pains, headaches and low-grade fever. This condition is highly contagious, infects thousands and has led to schools and hospital wards to be closed. All modern medicine can offer for such cases is symptomatic palliation and in severe cases, rehydration.

The symptom picture of this particular gastroenteritis, is identical to that caused by crude arsenic poisoning, pointing to *Arsenicum album* (*Ars alb*) as the homeopathic remedy of choice for this incapacitating condition. This specific remedy is a well-known remedy for gastroenteritis in homeopathic households and a remedy never missing from any homeopathic self-aid medicine kit.

When correctly chosen homeopathic remedies act promptly, both clinically and prophylactically, bringing about a gentle, speedy and permanent cure as well as halting contagiousness (prophylactically).

HISTORY OF HOMEOPATHY

Long before **Hippocrates**, (460 – 350 BC), the idea of the importance of similarity between remedy and disease was inherent in the medical folklore of many cultures throughout the world. Hippocrates stated, "*The symptoms of the disease are the expression of Nature's healing powers*".

The philosopher **Aristotle** (384 – 322 BC) and Galen allude the curative principle of similar too. **Galen** (130 – 200 A.D.) an immensely egotistical, irascible man, was the physician to four successive emperors and was appointed physician to the Roman gladiators, in which role he honed his surgical skills and expanded his vast knowledge of anatomy. He held various medical sects of his time in deepest contempt and unsparingly employed his pen in scathing, derogatory attacks against the methodists, dogmatists and empirics then flourishing in Rome. He was the forerunner of two similarly abrasive, iconoclastic figures, Paracelsus and Samuel Hahnemann. Despite the enmity of the medical fraternity, it was Galen's teachings that survived the barren dark Ages following the fall of Rome, and, together with those of Hippocrates became the orthodox creed of the Middle Ages, strictly laid down by universities.

Paracelsus (1493 – 1541) born in Switzerland stands in the transition between the medieval and the modern; a man, who intensely embodied the heritage of the past, the innovation of the present and the enlightenment of the future. He proclaimed the absolute authority of method and experience and recognised the divine authority of a supreme being. He held various medical posts throughout his life, including the hazardous position of military surgeon in Italy. He was particularly interested in diseases that afflict the mind and his approach revolutionary, he argued that epilepsy and mania were caused by disturbances of the "vapours in the *Spiritus Vitae*". Here he anticipates Hahnemann's postulate that it is the **Vital Force, Spirit-like force alone** that brings about disease; with only the terminology differing. He maintained that spiritual diseases need a spiritual cure, that what is intangible and unseen in disease, should be treated by that which is intangible and unseen in medicine. His **medical insight** penetrated **the very depths of the human nature** and he perceived a truth, which to this day remains unknown to most practitioners of medicine, **the essential cause of disease stems from the soul**, therefore **it is the soul that requires healing**. He emphasised that soul healing and physical healing must take place in parallel and that *Spiritual counselling should always accompany the prescribing of medicines*.

Two hundred and fifty years later the **German doctor named Samuel Hahnemann** (1775-1843) pronounced that disease being dynamic requires treatment in dynamic form. He developed a scientific method of medicine, as an alternative to the then pre-scientific conventional medicine of the day such as bloodletting, purging, emetics and other practices. He was disillusioned with the often-harsh treatments that were being used at the time and was looking for a more natural and gentle way to treat illnesses.

Nevertheless, worth noting, although it was Hahnemann who found a system of medicine capable of **addressing disease at the causative or soul level** through the **use of highly dynamised, sub-molecular remedies**, long before, Paracelsus had perceived that **to act curatively remedies had to be in an unquantifiable and imponderable form**.

Hahnemann was a Renaissance medical genius, gifted in many fields: fluent in 7 languages, pharmacy, psychiatry, public health, sanitation as well as medicine. As far as we know, he is the **only person in history to have envisioned an entire system of medicine and fully developed it into a powerful tool, within the span of a single lifetime**. He was a true visionary whose understanding of the **energetic basis of health and healing** anticipated by a century the **paradigm of**

matter as energy in modern physics. Allopathic medicine has barely begun to incorporate an understanding of the mind-body connection, which Hahnemann delineated two centuries ago.

Considered a rebel in his approach to medicine, he caused much controversy in promoting homeopathy, which was never accepted by the wider medical community.

He exhorts us to seek in nature for the remedies that can cure disease and not to imagine that we can compound these in the laboratory.

The concept is that natural substances that cause symptoms in healthy people, such as raw onions causing sore, tearful eyes, can be used in extreme dilution to treat illnesses, which have the same symptoms. In this example, extract of raw onion could be used as an ingredient (extremely diluted) in a remedy to treat colds, flu, or other illnesses that produce the same symptoms. Hence, a homeopathic remedy creates a similar (not the same) "**artificial disease**" picture, which helps the body to organize its defenses. As the body's vital energy pushes back like a rebound effect against the "shadow disease" created by the remedy, it also pushes the actual disease from the inside to the outside. A homeopathic remedy is thus an almost infinitesimally small dose of a medication, which – if given in a substantially stronger dose to a healthy individual – would provoke similar symptoms to those presented by the patient.

HOMEOPATHY AND HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES

In modern times, when we are faced with viral epidemics such as the one of December 2012 outbreak of *monovirus*infection with severe vomiting, marked nausea, projectile vomiting, watery diarrhea and strong abdominal cramps, with associated prostration, weakness, muscle pains, headaches and low-grade fever, characterizing this condition as severe viral gastroenteritis. This disease is highly contagious, infects thousands and has led to schools and hospital wards to be closed.

The symptom picture of this particular gastroenteritis, is identical to that caused by crude arsenic poisoning, pointing to *Arsenicum album* (Ars alb) as the homeopathic remedy of choice for this incapacitating condition. This specific remedy is a well-known remedy for gastroenteritis in homeopathic households and a remedy that should never be missing from any homeopathic self-aid medicine kit.

When correctly chosen homeopathic remedies act promptly, both clinically and prophylactically, bringing about a gentle, speedy and permanent state of well being as well as potentially halting contagiousness (when used prophylactically). Hence the ultimate goal of homeopathic treatment goes beyond relieving symptoms and even beyond preventing recurrence, but will help the patient to live to his fullest capacity, whether mentally, emotionally, spiritually, socially, and physically. It is truly rewarding to witness patients using their newfound health and energy in fulfilling their destined role in life. Hahnemann expressed this

concept beautifully, defining **health as the state in which “our indwelling, rational spirit can freely avail itself on this living, healthy instrument (the body) for the higher purpose of our existence.”**

Therefore, Homeopathy requires more than just knowledge. **Homeopathy is based on affection for our patients, respect for the human condition, and compassion towards the foibles and weaknesses of humanity.**

HOMEOPATHY VERSUS CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE

A pivotal distinction from conventional medicine is that homeopathy addresses the individual as a whole and not only the diagnosed disease. It stimulates the body's own healing system (immune system) through remedies that carry energy imprints of natural substances and unlike conventional medicine (chemical drugs), it does not entail side effects, drug addiction, drug resistance or drug interaction.

At the present, many of the conventional drugs are failing. Bacteria have become more resistant, new viruses are still on the increase, diseases are occurring in spite of vaccinations, and the long-term side-effects of conventional drugs are being realized.

Conventional medicine is in a financial crisis, with hospitals going bankrupt and with millions of people lacking adequate health insurance; homeopathy can offer health care that is effective, free of side effects and extremely economical.

Thus, interest in homeopathy has seen an increase in recent years. It is estimated that well over a million of patients worldwide are currently benefiting from homeopathic treatment. Moreover, there has to be a good reason for eleven U.S. Presidents, seven popes, other leading physicians and scientists who used and/or advocated for homeopathy, including Sir William Osler (the "father of modern medicine"), Emil Adolph von Behring (the "father of immunology"), August Bier, MD (the "father of spinal anesthesia"), Harold Griffith, MD (founding president of the World Federation of Societies of Anesthesiologists), Charles Frederick Menninger, MD (founder of the Menninger Clinic), and C. Everett Koop, MD (former Surgeon General of the United States), are amongst many who made use or openly supported homeopathy.

Having said that, I want to make clear that **I am not opposed to conventional medicine**. When used appropriately, it has so much to offer. Each has their seat and benefit to offer, according to the given condition. I think it is ideal to use the best of both worlds. **Complementary medicine can be used alongside conventional medicine.**

IS HOMEOPATHY SAFE?

Safe, gentle and free from side effects. Homeopathy is the safest mode of treatment and children deserve safe medicines. Nowadays a growing number of parents are

concerned about the side effects of conventional drugs. In this scenario, homeopathy is a wonderful treatment option.

Homeopathy heals a greater percentage of cases than any other method of treatment. Homeopathy is the latest and refined method of treating patients economically and non-violently

Mahatma Gandhi

Increases immunity and body's resistance, naturally. According to homeopathic principle, when a person suffers from any disease state his vital force (immunity) gets unbalanced. Homeopathic medicines act directly on vital the force making it stronger. Children have a delicate immune system; therefore, it is an excellent option to address childhood illnesses.

Complement other therapies in a noticeable way Homeopathic remedies are manufactured in a special way, containing no chemical substances; therefore, they can be used along with conventional drugs without the risk of chemical/drug interactions. An example is asthma where most of the times it is necessary the use inhalers and other indicated conventional drugs. While the conventional medication/chemical drugs will act on the physical level addressing physical symptoms, the homeopathic medicines are imponderable, dynamic in form, resolving the disease process at a causative level, while encouraging and stimulating the inherent capacity of the body to heal itself. Hence, they will be acting on the patient's subtle energetic level. As the patient improves, conventional medicines can be tapered down gradually.

Homeopathy for Babies

There are at least three good reasons. The first is that they are completely safe and non-toxic thus can be administered harmlessly to breast-feeding mums as well as babies, from the first day of life onward. The second reason is that the remedies work by stimulating the body's own healing mechanisms, and the third reason is that by understanding health and understanding people from a homeopathic perspective really helps to understand not only illnesses but also about the general health and development of our children.

Homeopathy for Children

Parenting is a precious gift. But a parent's life is always overloaded with multiple responsibilities. And "children's health" is one of the most concerning aspects of parenthood. Although homeopathy works well in variety of diseases, it has special affinity for childhood problems. Below are some unique benefits of homeopathy in treatment of common childhood problems.

1. **Promotes a natural healthy state.** Homeopathy is a type of medicine in which the self-healing power of the body is stimulated. This self-healing power is often greater in children than older people. In a child, everything

is young and bustling with energy, including the power of recovery, which is why homeopathy is particularly suited for children. Especially for recurrent conditions, chronic illnesses and behaviour problems homeopathy can play an important role. When necessary, conventional medications can be given at the same time as homeopathic remedies. In these cases the homeopath may confer with the primary care doctor (the family doctor) or the specialist. Well chosen remedies can help stabilise children physically as well as mentally, thereby increasing the chances for growth and development. If children feel comfortable, their demeanour usually also improves.

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4. **Children just love it.** Children often resist taking conventional medicines. They might refuse, get irritated, and in case of feverish conditions may vomit them straight away. All homeopathic medicines are administered in the form of a tiny sweet pellets easily dissolved on the tongue or diluted in water. Children accept them well, and most of the times love them too!
5. **Can be easily used at home for treatment of minor illnesses.** The method of dispensing medicine is also very simple. So after learning some basic principles every mom can use it at home for treatment of common childhood problems. But for serious health concerns, medical supervision is compulsory. Homeopathic medicine for children and infants is a great book written by Dana Ullman. In this book, he explains what is homeopathy, how it works, how it can be used correctly to treat common childhood ailments, etc. He included a complete guide to the use of homeopathy and valuable information on the important remedies that all parents have in their home medicine kits.

Homeopathy for Animals (Excluding UK)

All higher forms of animal's life are capable of producing symptoms of a disease and are thus receptive to homeopathic treatment. Clearly, there are many animal lovers all over the world who like to think for themselves and, when it comes to illness, prefer a form of treatment that involves no synthetic chemicals, has no side effects and does no harm. They are in favor of a method which ensures the health of their young even before they are born, by eugenic therapy given during pregnancy; and which in sickness, has the effect of auto-vaccination, or immunization, so that the animal becomes fitter and more resistant to every disease it overcomes. Homeopathy is an active form of medicine. It reinforces the body's own healing powers and does not suppress them in a way antibiotics and cortisone do. If correctly applied, it sets off natural healing regulatory processes in the organism that can overcome disease. Its action is therefore rapid, safe and sure. Animals are loving, loyal and dutiful children of Nature, so it came as no surprise, whilst living in Greece and getting involved with many rescue operations, how remarkable these creatures responded to homeopathic treatment. Skeptics often use the argument that homeopathic treatment works because of placebo effect "it is all in the mind of the patient", interestingly it is hard to apply the same argument, when research shows that 80% of animals get better or recover totally, after homeopathic treatment.

HOMEOPATHY AND RESEARCH AN OVERVIEW

In many countries, homeopathy and other complementary modalities have been integrated successfully into a larger armamentarium for the modern physician. According to a study published in 1995 in the Journal of the American Board of Family Practice, 69% of family practice physicians expressed interest in learning more about homeopathy. Forty percent of general practitioners in the Netherlands practice homeopathy. With over 100 homeopathic medical schools, homeopathy is practiced in India along with conventional Western medicine in government clinics. In Britain, 42% of general practitioners refer patients to homeopaths. Two recent meta-analyses of homeopathy both indicate that there is enough evidence to show that homeopathy has added effects over placebo. Against this evidence is a backdrop of considerable scientific skepticism.

Homeopathic remedies are diluted substances, some are so diluted that statistically there are no molecules present to explain their proposed biological effects (ultra-high dilutions or UHDs). Without knowledge of the evidence, most scientists reject UHD effects because of their intrinsic implausibility in the light of our current scientific understanding. Given that the existence of UHD effects would revolutionize science and medicine, and given the considerable empirical evidence of them, the philosophies of science tell us that possible UHD effects warrant serious investigation by conventional scientists and serious attention by scientific journals.

One of the main reasons for the relative disinterest or opposition to homeopathy is that even well-designed clinical studies on homeopathy leave the reader without any protocol-driven tools to take into daily practice. Individualization of treatment, or, as it is called today, differential therapeutics, is the main requirement of successful homeopathic prescribing. Only well-trained homeopathic practitioners are able to carry out such a task. In many articles that reported positive outcomes for homeopathy, numerous homeopathic remedies had been prescribed for the same diagnostic category.

Critics suggest that the pooling of data from trials using different therapeutic agents to assess the overall success of homeopathic prescribing is incorrect. Research protocols that employ combination remedies, in which a medication contains several homeopathic remedies, fall into the same category.

Many of the positive and negative studies published are flawed with numerous methodological problems. One of the most common problems is a lack of objective validated outcome measures. Another common problem is a small sample size. In most positive and negative meta-analyses published to date, research data are pulled together artificially based on either a diagnostic category or a particular remedy. Frequently the concentration of the remedy used and the conditions to which it has been applied are different. Ernst and Pittler published a letter with a critique of the methodology used in one of the meta-analyses of clinical trials of homeopathy. The design and follow-up in migraine studies has been criticized extensively by one of the world's leading homeopaths, Vithoulkas (personal communication, 1997). Few well-designed studies have been reproduced by independent research teams.

Meanwhile, while the debate around homeopathy still continues in conventional medical circles, the general public has been using the services of homeopathic practitioners and homeopathic remedies increasingly. Increasing public and professional interest calls for attempts to study homeopathy in a more systematic way and to provide quality academic overview for medical practitioners.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALEXANDRA CARNEIRO DE MELO, PhD

MSc, PhD (London), DIHom (Pract), FBIH, RSHom

PRACTICING CLASSICAL HOMEOPATH AND DOCTOR OF MICROBIOLOGY

"I practice classical homeopathy and provide counselling in holistic treatments and nutrition. With a passion for health and science, I initiated my academic path in the fields of food & nutrition culminating with a PhD in applied microbiology from Kings College London.

I raised two children and supported my family but my love for science never diminished. I soon embarked on a journey pursuing the optimal approach to health and well-being, which led me to becoming a fully trained homeopath. I have found this holistic approach to be most complete, bringing real and lasting health benefits as it focus on the cause of disease, rather than just the superficial removal

or suppression of symptoms. As a scientist and a practitioner of the healing art of homeopathy, I have focused on a system of therapy that has been a blessing to my family, patients and me.

As a homeopath, my ultimate goal is to help you live to your fullest capacity, where the entire spiritual, mental, emotional, social and physical being is restored to the natural state it was created in. From the times of Hippocrates(considered father to modern medicine) the human being was recognised as a trinity of body, mind and spirit, with the last being perhaps the most important part.”

“Man consists in what he thinks and what he loves, and there is nothing else in man (Dr James T. Kent)”.

Education

Personal Accreditations

- *BSc – Bachelor of Science in Food Engineering*
- *MSc – Master of Science in Food Microbiology*
- *PhD – Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Microbiology*
- *DIHom(Pract) – Diploma in Homeopathic Medicine, Practitioner Level British Institute of homeopathy*
- *FBIH – Fellow of British Institute of Homeopathy*
- *RSHom – Member of The Society of Homeopaths*
- *BSc – Food Engineering, 1989 – Porto University, Portugal (High Class Honors)*
- *MSc – Food Microbiology, 1991 – University of Reading in the UK*
- *PhD – Applied Microbiology, 1997 – King’s College, London*
- *DIHom(Pract) – Diploma in Homeopathic Medicine, Practitioner Level British Institute of Homeopathy*
- *FBIH – Fellow at the British Institute of Homeopathy*
- *RSHom – Member of The Society of Homeopaths*
- *1997 -1998 GSK Pharmaceuticals. Sponsored research at Kings College, London*

Postdoctoral Research

Impact of oxidative stresses on unicellular marine algae. Financed by the Government of Portugal as part of a programme to determine the impact of different types of pollution on marine algae along the coastline.

- *1998 to 2000 Imperial College, London*

Postdoctoral position

Impact of different oxidative stresses on an unicellular marine algae. The advantage was that these particular algae, although marine, could live and reproduce in a synthetic environment mimicking seawater. The project was financed by the Portuguese government, which interest was to determine the impact of different types of pollution on marine algae along the Portuguese coast.

From 2005 to 2009 Studied with the British Institute of Homeopathy, International to become a fully trained homeopath.

- 2005 – 2009 British Institute of Homeopathy (BIH)
- 2007: DIHom: Degree following the General Course of Studies in Homeopathic Medicine
- 2007: Samuel Hahnemann Award in recognition of exceptionally high performance, presented by William Tankard – Hahnemann, Patron of the British Institute of Homeopathy
- 2008 DIHom (Pract) : Homeopathy in Practice, Advanced Case Taking and Repertorisation
- 2009 Clinical Internship
- 2009 FBIH – Declared life-long Fellow having met high standards of excellence and demonstrating commitment to the healing art of homeopathic medicine required by BIH's council.

My publications

**PATENT BY MAFF (MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD)
BACTERIAL DECONTAMINATION OF FOODS (NO: 9526174.9) 1996**

A new procedure to treat food products was designed using a bacteriocin called nisin. Nisin is a natural substance with antibiotic like properties, produced by *Lactococcus lactis* ssp. *lactis* and approved for food use. Nisin is generally effective against most Gram-positive bacteria, but not so against most Gram-negative cells. However, it proved effective in the cases of *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella* and *Pseudomonas* species, economically significant food poisoning organisms of foods such as meat, fish and poultry. The new natural developed procedure increased the access of nisin to the cytoplasmic membrane of bacteria, especially Gram-negative, thus promoting cell death.

Publications – International Journals

Carneiro de Melo, A. M. S., Cook, G. M., Miles, R. J., Poole, R. K. (1996) Nisin Stimulates Oxygen Consumption by *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Escherichia coli*. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*. Vol 62. No5., pp. 1831-1834.

Callaway, T. R., Carneiro de Melo, A. M. S., Russel, J. B. (1997). The Effect of Nisin and Monensin on Ruminal Fermentations in vitro. *Curr. Microbiol*. Vol 35. No 2, pp. 90-95.

Carneiro de Melo, A. M. S., Cassar, C. A., Miles, R. J. (1998). Trisodium Phosphate Increases Sensitivity of Gram-Negative Bacteria to Lysozyme and Nisin. *Journal of Food Protection*. Vol 7. pp. 839-843.

Carneiro de Melo, A.M.S., (2013). Homeopathy a Science and an Art. *Hypathy.com*. Feb, 2013. *Hypathy.com* is the world's leading homeopathy portal. Online since 2001 | Community Powered Thousands of articles | 800+ Authors

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Passionate about Nature and Science.

Hobbies: Horse riding, Yoga, Reading, Walking with my dogs.