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Homeopathy - The science of holistic healing: An overview

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INTRODUCTION

Homeopathy (also spelled homeopathy or homoeopathy), from the Greek words homoios (similar) and pathos (suffering), is a system of alternative medicine, notable for its controversial practice of prescribing water-based solutions that do not contain chemically active ingredients. The theory of homeopathy was developed by the Saxon physician Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) and first published in 1796 (1). Homeopathy is an alternative system of medicine that was founded in the early 19th century by a German physician, Dr. Hahnemann. It had its greatest popularity in the late 19th century here in the United States, when 15% of the doctors in this country were homeopaths.

Classical homeopathy rests on three principles:

1. The law of similars,
2. The single medicine,
3. And the minimum dose.

The law of similars states that a disease is cured by a medicine which creates symptoms similar to those the patient is experiencing in a healthy person.

The principle of the minimum dose has two parts: First the homeopathic physician only prescribes a small number of doses of the homeopathic medicine and waits to see what effect the medicine has. Second, the medicine is given in an infinitesimal dose.

DEFINITIONS

- The practice of the use of active ingredients in minute dosages along with naturally occurring substances in order to provide a healthier balance of internal chemistry. These minute dosages would be viewed in traditional medicine as ineffective (2).
- Natural form of medicine that uses immeasurably small doses of medicines to stimulate the body's own defense and healing process. Homeopathy

focuses on bringing the entire body back into homeostasis, or balance (3).

- A system of medicine founded in the late 18th century in which remedies consist of diluted substances from plants, minerals and animals. It is based on a theory that "like cures like". Remedies specifically match different symptom pattern profiles of illness to stimulate the body's natural healing process (4).
- A western system of medicine that is based on the principle that 'like cures like' – that is, the same substance that in large doses produces the symptoms of an illness cures it when administered in very small doses. Homeopathic physicians believe that the more dilute the remedy, the greater its potency. Therefore, homeopaths treat illness by using small doses of specially prepared plant extracts and minerals to stimulate the defence mechanisms and healing processes of the body(5).

HISTORY OF HOMEOPATHY

Two hundred years ago Dr. Samuel Hahnemann discovered that a substance, which causes the symptoms of an illness, when given in a small dose to a sick person, acts as a trigger to intensify the healing processes that the body's immune system has already begun.

Homeopathy comes from the Greek words, homoios, meaning like or similar and, pathos, meaning suffering. The word homeopathy was first used in 1796 by Dr. Hahnemann. He was expounding the hypothesis that supposes that to cure a disease by opposite means the common practice of his time (blood-letting, application of leeches, emetics, and purgatives) was inferior to healing according to the use of similar means: "Let likes be treated with likes," he proposed.

Hahnemann followed up his theory with painstaking experiments to find remedies. He was engaged in a series of 'provings,' as he called it tests, that verified

the action of a drug upon the healthy body. He recorded the unusual sensations and symptoms produced as well as any health change experienced while taking the drug. Hahnemann's method has not changed since then, although since the second half of the twentieth century additional placebo control studies are customary.

In order to test a homeopathic remedy groups of healthy volunteers, the 'provers,' were given different dilutions (potencies) of a substance over a set period of time. Hahnemann tried many remedies on himself. During the proving period, all changes of signs and developments of the symptoms were recorded on a daily basis. These progress notes of each proving indicate any signs and symptoms that developed during the process such as any changes in temperature, intellectual acuity, alertness, body irritation, thermalgesia, or any other alterations. This information was organized in order of importance. Hahnemann was a gifted chemist, a medical doctor and a pioneer who spoke out against the standard medical practices of his time (6).

DEVELOPMENT OF HOMEOPATHY

These words were written in the preface of Hahnemann's seminal work, *Organon of Rational Healing* which was first published in German in 1810, amended subsequently in six more editions, known under the new title as *Organon of the Healing Art*. Although Hahnemann's remedies were successful in treating some of the most virulent diseases of his time, cholera, malaria, typhus and scarlet fever, and he was honored during his career, he and his ever-growing group of adherents were also frequently harassed. Hahnemann was ahead of his time in many areas. His advocacy of basic sterilization techniques during the time of the cholera epidemic in 1831 indicates his knowledge of bacteria and the means by which they spread, thus preceding Pasteur and Lister by thirty years. Sixty-seven years before Koch, Hahnemann described the infinitely small, invisible organisms murderously hostile to human life as the vector that caused the cholera epidemic.

Homeopathic training consists of studying the subtle distinction between remedies and the diagnostic procedures distinguish one patient from another. A typical initial session lasts between 1- 1 ½ hours. The principle of homeopathy is somewhat similar to that of immunization which Dr. Edward Jenner had used, also in 1776, to inoculate against small pox. Whereas Jenner used cow pox for his vaccination, Hahnemann

decided that using such virulent substances was too dangerous. He sought out herbal, mineral and animal substances from which he made a "mother tincture," a concentrated form of the substance in alcohol. He then diluted these tinctures in a systematic way to produce smaller and smaller solutions (potencies). This was followed by "succussions," vigorous shaking.

The highly diluted solutions went beyond molecular levels. When the medicines are diluted beyond twelve or twenty-four potency, no molecules remain of the original base substance. These highly diluted potencies have been found to act more effectively (7).

RESEARCH AND FACT ON HOMEOPATHIC REMEDY

There are currently over 3,000 remedies documented to be effective and safe for the treatment of a wide variety of human and animal illnesses. Homeopathic medicines are derived from animals (e.g.: sepia), minerals (e.g. sulphur), pathogenic substances (e.g. hydrophobinum), and healthy tissues (e.g.: thyroid), plants (more than sixty per cent of remedies, e.g.: belladonna), and others (e.g. X-ray).

Reputable research laboratories all over the world are engaged in research on homeopathic medicines such as *Bryonia alba* and its effect on rheumatism, *Apis mellifica* for edema and inflammatory conditions, *Oscillocochinum* for flu symptoms, and *Arnica* for bruises and muscle soreness. There are more than 100 double-blind clinical studies which document the effectiveness of homeopathic medicines. Some of the most exciting basic research (all carried out in vitro or on human beings, not animals) is now demonstrating the biological activity of infinitesimal doses (8).

Classification of Homeopathy

Homeopathics are classified in the following manner:

- Over-the-counter (OTC). This category does not require a prescription from a medical doctor. It is sold directly to the public and it is safe to use. Does not require professional training to be obtained.
- Professional Use. This category includes such practitioners as chiropractors, acupuncturists, nutritionalists, licensed naturopaths, massage therapists, or other professionals who do not have a license to dispense pharmaceuticals. These remedies are marked "For Professional Use".
- Rx. The remedies in this category can only be prescribed by a licensed medical professional, within the state, for utilization (9).

Homeopathy FAQs

What are the different types of homeopathy?

- **Constitutional:** One dose is given, usually of a high potency. Then one waits up to six months to see if there is a shift in symptoms. This form of treatment is advantageous for deep-seated, chronic, inherited predispositions, such as allergies, familial asthma, cancer, depression, old vaccination damage, or chemical exposures.
- **Classical:** Single remedies used. The practitioner takes a detailed history from the patient. From the answers to those questions, as well as through observation, the practitioner attempts to match the pattern of the patient's symptoms to the pattern of a single remedy as outlined in one or more *Materia Medica*s. This remedy can be chosen manually or by computer. The potency is usually determined by a number of factors including severity and history of the symptoms. This form of treatment is most similar to the one developed by Hahnemann. It is also the most common form of practice.
- **Combination:** Remedies contain 2-4 ingredients. The diagnostic approach may be the same as the classical approach. Other diagnostic styles may include kinesiology (muscle testing) or electrodermal biofeedback. This style is heavily used in France, Canada and the U.S.
- **Complex:** uses remedies with up to 25 ingredients. The diagnostic approach may be similar to the combination approach. Multiple ingredients are used to encourage what is known as homeopathic or lymphatic drainage. This is best for complex, difficult cases where multiple problems occur simultaneously. Drainage helps drain toxicity from organs or systems that are on overload due to chronic, genetic, or environmental factors. This type of approach is used extensively in Germany with electronic diagnostic equipment. Diagnosis may also be determined using kinesiology.

How Does It Work?

Although there is a great deal of empirical evidence that homeopathy does work, nobody yet knows how. Those who are sceptical point out that homeopathic remedies are often so dilute that not even a molecule of the original substance remains and so conclude that any beneficial response is probably due to the placebo effect. This explanation seems unlikely as experiments

have shown homeopathic medicines to be equally effective in the treatment of animals.

The answer to this mystery is likely to be found by those studying so-called "new Physics" and electromagnetism. The production of homeopathic medicines involves two processes; namely dilution and succussion (shaking and bashing!). It is thought likely that these combined processes leave an imprint of the original substance's energy pattern in the dilutant. This energy imprint, given in homeopathic medicine, somehow stimulates the body's own healing energy to start working.

How does homeopathy differ from conventional medicine?

Homeopathy is a holistic medicine. This means that it focusses on the whole person and believes that spiritual, mental, emotional and physical factors are all completely inter-connected and should not be regarded in isolation. It is based on the idea that symptoms are not the cause of disease, they merely show that "dis-ease" exists. Symptoms are the body's way of warning us that all is not well and attempting to restore balance.

Homeopathy is a truly holistic medicine because it uses symptoms as helpful indicators which can be used as guides to treating the individual and their "dis-ease". Instead of merely removing the symptoms, it removes the central disturbance in the individual's energetic balance. Once this has been done the symptoms disappear anyway, because the warnings they were trying to give have become unnecessary (10).

Treatment of Homeopathy

ACUTE AND CHRONIC DISEASE

An important homeopathic principle comes into play in treating acute and chronic problems and in making decisions about which over-the-counter combination is best suited for a person's illness. It is a fact that each person has a unique energy or "vital force"--energy which maintains life in the individual. Homeopathic treatment does not subscribe to a mechanistic model of disease but rather supposes that the unwell person is a unified field of mind and body whose homeostatic balance has been disturbed. The true cause of disease, it is assumed, lies in the patient himself. This is why three people with the same illness, such as pneumonia, may receive three different remedies, depending on their personality, physical and mental characteristics, habits and environment.

Hahnemann carefully classified diseases as either acute or chronic. Acute disease occurs when the symptoms are intense and short-lived. They have a definite beginning and ending. The result can lead either to a recovery or to death.

Homeopathy distinguishes four groups of acute diseases: local, clearly defined, accidental and essential. The last can be of epidemic origin such as influenza, chicken pox, scarlet fever etc or they can be acute general functional syndromes resulting from fear, anger, emotional choices. Then again, they may lie on the border of a chronic disease, such as an attack of asthma. Chronic disease is of a more permanent nature. It is deep-rooted, with no specific starting point, course, or end, for example when a patient says, "I have had these symptoms forever." The chronic disease may be a life-long process or may be recurrent in nature.

After many years of observation, Hahnemann defined three clinical reactions which were not autonomous diseases but rather pathognomonic syndromes characterized by functional or lesional manifestations in the patient or his family.. He named such states as "fundamental chronic diseases" and attributed each to a "chronic miasma," either acute or chronic and invisible to the naked eye. The principal miasmas are: psoric, sycotic, and syphilitic. They are correlated to personality traits, emotional reactions, and symptoms. Homeopathic remedies correspond to these very precise etiologies. Vithoulkasi The Science of Homeopathy is a helpful introduction to miasmatic theory.

Homeopathic remedies may be classified according to five different headings:

1. The Singular Remedy
2. Specific Remedies
3. Polycrest Remedies
4. Constitutional Remedies
5. Combination Remedies

The remedies are available as tiny tablets that are taken under the tongue, as liquid tinctures, granules or ointments. Although the methods for manufacturing of remedies have changed since Hahnemann's day, his principles are still utilized today. Reputable companies have produced over-the-counter homeopathic single and composite remedies, such as Nux Vomica, Rhus. Tox., Arsenia, and Calcarea Carbonica. These remedies have been found effective in treating a wide variety of common ailments. These are known as 'polycrest

remedies," from the Greek word *ipolychrest*, which means "many uses." Currently there are sixty-five such remedies. Homeopathic medicines are non-toxic, have no known adverse effects, are safe for adults and children and can be combined with traditional pharmaceutical medicines (11).

COMMONLY USED REMEDIES FOR ASTHMATIC BRONCHITIS

Thuja Occidentalis:

This is a drug prepared from a plant *Thuja occidentalis* commonly known as Arbor Vitae. This is deep acting remedy with a wide sphere of action. It is a constitutional remedy, of great use in many disease processes. It has profound action on respiratory organs, skin, genito-urinary organs, joints, nervous system, glands, kidneys, blood, etc. It is one of the frequently indicated remedies for asthmatic bronchitis as well as adult asthma. It's a good drug for inveterate skin troubles and chronic stubborn skin conditions like lichen planus, psoriasis, eczema, warts, pyoderma, etc. Tendency to have unhealthy skin in general. It is a good drug not only for physical complaints but also for affection of the mind. For example it can be very useful in psychotic states, anxiety disorders, depression, etc. In general good for chronic diseases, which have been neglected for a long time and have therefore grown deeper into the system. These patients are better in dry weather and worse from humid climate and damp conditions.

Antimonium Tartaricum:

This drug is prepared from the tartarate of antimony and potash and this medicine finds its therapeutic application largely towards the treatment of respiratory diseases, mainly in asthmatic bronchitis. After undergoing the process of potentization the latent curative powers of this drug substance are brought to the surface. Antim. Tart has profound action on the respiratory system, gastrointestinal organs, nerves, skin, mind, urinary system, etc. It is one of the commonly indicated remedies for asthmatic bronchitis. Other conditions for which this drug is commonly used are bronchitis, pneumonia, emphysema, gastritis, vomiting, skin infections, etc. A few of the common indications of this drug are:

Rattling of the mucus in the chest with little expectoration. There is much congestion in the chest but the expectoration cannot be raised. Cough that usually ends up in vomiting. Along with this there is much drowsiness, debility and sweating. Difficulty in breathing is marked. It is also a good drug for gastric

affections that usually end up in intense nausea and vomiting. It positively affects skin infections too.

COMMONLY USED REMEDIES FOR HAIR LOSS

Natrum Muriaticum:

Natrum Muriaticum is an interesting example of homeopathic medicine prepared from a common food substance, the common salt, sodium chloride. As a rule, the common salt undergoes a special procedure called potentization, whereby its inner healing power is activated to make it available for healing.

Constitutionally, this medicine has a broad spectrum of action, and is useful for a wide range of disease processes affecting the skin, gastrointestinal organs, nose, lungs, kidney, metabolism, muscles, head, hormonal system, etc. It is one of the commonly used remedies for hairloss, fissures, urticaria, migraine, eczema, lichen planus, vitiligo, asthma, etc. Natrum muriaticum is frequently prescribed in cases of hairloss especially in anaemic females.

Silica:

It is one of the splendid acts of homoeopathy that substances labeled as inert can also be used efficiently to treat a large variety of disorders. Silica is the example of one such substance, which is chemically inert in its natural form, but after undergoing the process of potentization it gets transformed into a wonderful, deep acting remedy. Silica is in true sense called as polycrest remedy as it has a broad spectrum of action, useful for a wide range of disease processes. In fact this remedy has helped Homoeopaths world over to treat so-called surgical conditions gently without requiring knife.

Silica positively influences bones and joints, mucous membranes, skin, cellular tissue, nerves, glands, lungs, digestive system, etc. Silica is one of the frequently used medicines for complaints of hairfall, vitiligo, eczema, lichen planus, herpes, urticaria, asthmatic bronchitis, pneumonia, tuberculosis, styes and chalazion, trigeminal neuralgia, complaints of nails, tonsillitis, etc. It is frequently prescribed for the complaints of hairloss.

Patients requiring silica usually have tendency of easy suppuration of skin injuries. Silica positively influences nutrition as well and hence its one of the prominent remedies used for rickets in children.

ARTHRITIS

There are many types of arthritis. The most common are osteo-arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Osteo-arthritis is generally a chronic, degenerative condition.

Rheumatoid arthritis is an immunity disorder which also affects parts of the body other than the joints

Common symptoms

- Pain
- Stiffness
- Swelling
- Undue tension.
- In later stages, immobility due to deformities.

Homeopathy treats the patient as one integral unit of mind and body. Homeopathic medicines for anxiety are selected on the basis of presenting symptoms, the site of manifestation and the personality of the patient. After taking homeopathic medicines, the patient can himself judge the response. He develops a general feeling of well-being and looks at life with a positive attitude. The associated symptoms like loss of appetite, insomnia, headaches also are greatly relieved.

Conventional treatment includes NSAIDS (non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs) and corticosteroids. Though these give temporary relief, the body's needs for these go on increasing. Prolonged use of these medicines can cause side-effects like nausea, hypersensitivity, drowsiness, anxiety, noises in the ear and reduced hearing. Use of corticosteroids over a period of time can lead to burning pain, numbness, unusual weight gain, high blood pressure, blurred vision, menstrual irregularities, excessive thirst and itching skin.

Homeopathy identifies the cause of arthritis. If it is an infection, It is treated without antibiotics and medication which has no side-effects. As in most cases of rheumatoid arthritis, if lowers immunity is the cause, homeopathic treatment will raise the level of immunity leading to lasting results. It will also check further deterioration of joints. After taking homeopathic medicines, the joint pains reduces in intensity, frequency and duration. The stiffness and swelling will reduce and the degree of functioning and mobility of the joints will improve. Thus the patient can be freed from the dependency on allopathic drugs and gradually even stop them. A patient suffered from a deformity due to Arthritis. She was cured within one year (12).

Formulations used in homeopathy

Most homeopathic formulations come in a liquid base or in a tablet designed to dissolve quickly under the tongue. Whichever form is used, the recommended dose should be held under the tongue for about a

minute before swallowing. The blood veins under the tongue absorb the active ingredients directly into the bloodstream allowing the preparation to go to work immediately.

Because the vibrations of certain foods can counteract the effects of homeopathic formulations, it is recommended that you do not eat or drink anything other than water for at least 15 minutes before or after taking a homeopathic remedy. It is also recommended that you do not store homeopathic formulations in close proximity with strongly aromatic herbs or foods, such as mints, essential oils or coffee. Liquid homeopathic formulations often contain an alcohol base, because alcohol is the best carrier for most substances and is an excellent preserver. The amount of alcohol is not enough to be of any concern

for most people. For those who need to avoid alcohol completely, the liquid preparation can be added to a cup of warm water, and then drank after waiting for a minute or two. The warm water will evaporate most of the alcohol. For those taking the drug Antabuse, alcohol preparations should be avoided entirely (13).

Homeopathic Topical Formulations (14):

Homeopathic topical formulations include homeopathic gels, homeopathic ointments, homeopathic creams and lotions which are generally topical applications of the mother tincture in a pharmaceutical grade base. Choose a gel for quick absorption and a refreshing, cooling sensation without an oily residue. Select an ointment to protect wounds in cases of minor cuts and scrapes or for massaging sore muscles.

Homeopathic Topical Formulations

Product	Indicated for
Acne Gel	Skin Inflammation due to acne, pimples
Aesculus Cream	External Hemorrhoids, Varicose Veins
Apis Cream	Minor insect Bites
Arnica Cream	Trauma, Bruises, Soar Muscle
Arnica Gel	Trauma, Bruises, Soar Muscles
Arnica Oil	Massage of Soar Muscles
Arnica Ointment	Bruises, Trauma, Soar Muscles
Avenoc Ointment	Hemorrhoids, external
Arnica Spray Lotion	Bruises, Trauma, Soar Muscles
Bug Bite Ointment	Insect Stings and Bug Bites
Bumps 'n Bruises Ointment	Bruises, swelling, trauma, over exertion in Children
Calendula Cream	Minor Cuts and wounds, skin repair, dry skin
Calendula Gel	Cuts, Scrapes, Burns, skin repair
Calendula Oil	Repair of rough, dry skin due to sunburn, wind burn or chafing
Calendula Ointment	Cuts, Scrapes, Burns, skin repair
Calendula Lotion	Skin Irritation, soothes dry skin
Calendula Spray Lotion	Skin Irritation, Dry Skin, Scrapes, Sunburn, chafing
Diaper Ointment	Diaper rash or similar skin irritations in babies

Graphites Cream	Scars, Cracked Skin; esp. Fingers and Nipples
Hamamelis Cream	Minor Burns and Bruises with Broken Skin
Hamamelis Ointment	Minor external Hemorrhoids
Hemmorex Ointment	Minor external Hemorrhoids
Hemorrhoids Cream	Hemorrhoids
Hydrastis Cream	Hives, Eczema
Hyperical Cream	Cuts & Scrapes
Hypericum Cream	Nerve Pain, Bed soars, Weak or Injured Extremities
Prid Drawing Salve	Used to draw out boils, splinters, and other infections close to the skin surface
Ratanhia Cream	Chapped or cracked Nipples
Sting Gel	Insect Bites & Stings
Tea Tree Cream	Antiseptic properties
Thuja Cream	Warts
Thuja Ointment	Warts
Urtica Urens Cream	Minor Burns with Small Blistering and bunions

• **Diarrhoea Relief**

Indications for Use:	For relief of symptoms of diarrhea including loose stool, cramps, gas bloating and general discomforts, mucous-like stools, diarrhea from certain foods or emotional excitement.
Ingredients:	Each in multiple potencies of 10x, 30x, 100x. Croton Tiglium Colocynthis Cuprum Arsenicosum Aloe Socotrina Gelsemium Sempervirens Cinchona Officinalis Ipecacuanha Nux Vomica Veratrum Album Podophyllum Peltatum Phosphoricum Acidum Chamomilla
Complementary Formulas:	Indigestion Relief ICV Formula Colic Formula All Detox & Drainage Formulas ParaLixer Allergy/Food & Chemical Symptom Reliever 911 Stress & Anxiety Formula AnxioPlex™ NervoPlex Weight & Appetite Control Formula.

• **Children's Cough Formula**

Ingredients:	Each in multiple potencies of 10x, 30x, 100x. Alumina Natrum Muriaticum Nux Vomica Sepia Causticum Collinsonia Canadensis Plumbum Metallicum Lac Defloratum Hydrastis Canadensis Bellis Perennis
Complementary Formulas	Indigestion Relief ICV Formula Colic Formula All Detox & Drainage Formulas GallPlex Acid Freee AddictaPlex AnxioPlex Weight & Appetite Control Formula

• **NEUROMUSCULOSKELETAL FORMULAS**

Arthritis Symptom Reliever

Indications for Use:	For relief of minor joint pain, stiffness, swelling or throbbing pain associated with arthritis.
Ingredients:	Each in multiple potencies of 10x, 30x, 100x. Bryonia Rhus Toxicodendron Causticum Calcarea Carbonica Calcarea Fluorica Phytolacca Decandra Rhododendron Chrysanthum Cimicifuga Racemosa Pulsatilla Salicylicum Acidum Actaea Spicata
Complementary Formulas:	Muscle & Joint Injury Formula Acid Freee™ Back & Neck Pain Reliever Calcium Metabolizer Sporting Edge™ Yeast Freee™ Allergy/Food & Chemical Symptom Reliever Wounds Recovery LymePlex Water Retention Reducer 911 Stress & Anxiety Formula Acute Viro Reliever Chronic Viro Reliever All Detox & Drainage Formulas

• **Back & Neck Pain Reliever**

Indications for Use:	For relief of symptoms of minor numbness, stiffness, muscle tension, aches and pains associated with chronic back or spinal conditions.
Ingredients:	Each in multiple potencies of 10x, 30x, 100x. Rhus Toxicodendron Gnaphalium Polycephalum Oxalicum Acidum Zincum Metallicum Cobaltum Metallicum Phosphorus Cimicifuga Racemosa Sepia Calcarea Fluorica Aesculus Hippocastanum
Complementary Formulas:	Arthritis Symptom Reliever Muscle & Joint Injury Formula ICV Formula Acid Freee™ Allergy/Food & Chemical Symptom Reliever Calcium Metabolizer NervoPlex All Detox & Drainage Formulas 911 Stress & Anxiety Formula Kidney & Bladder Irritation Formula Bio Reset™ "Jet Lag/Shift Change" Weight & Appetite Control Formula.

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