

Why Skeptics Love to Hate Homeopathy

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Perhaps the most derided of alternative medicines is my own favorite -- *homeopathy*. Over the past few years, detractors have focused their efforts in the United Kingdom and have succeeded in crippling homeopathic hospitals and clinics funded by the National Health Service, as well as the practices of many homeopaths. A few well-placed editorials in prominent newspapers have done the trick, despite the fact that Prince Charles and the rest of the royal family are ardent supporters of homeopathy.

It now seems that some of these folks are taking their show on the road. Two key UK players, Michael Baum and Edzard Ernst have published a commentary in the November 2009 issue of the American Journal of Medicine [2] in which they state, “a belief in homeopathy exceeds the tolerance of an open mind. We should start from the premise that homeopathy cannot work and that positive evidence reflects publication bias or design flaws until proved otherwise.”

Not surprisingly, their commentary also reflects a complete ignorance of homeopathy and the range of studies that support its effectiveness. For example, their article incorrectly uses the term “potentation” instead of “potentization” for the method used to create homeopathic remedies (more on this later). The authors also insist on citing a single negative meta-analysis study that has already been shown to be methodologically flawed [3], while ignoring many positive studies in respected publications, including two other meta-analyses that showed positive results [4-9].

So why *do* the skeptics love to hate homeopathy? Perhaps because it is one of the most threatening alternative modalities -- financially, philosophically, and therapeutically. Actually, homeopathy has been a threat to allopathy ever since the 1800s, when German physician Samuel Hahnemann developed the homeopathic system.

Founder of Homeopathy

Hahnemann, a respected doctor and chemist who helped to pioneer the importance of hygiene as well as homeopathy, was forced to move frequently during his life because the local German apothecaries objected to the fact that he created his own medicines rather than use theirs. A fierce battle was also waged against homeopathy in the United States during the 1800s, where homeopathy had achieved a strong presence by 1840.

In fact, in 1847, the American Medical Association (AMA) was formed specifically to fight the battle against homeopathy.

Most homeopaths of the 1800s were former allopaths who had abandoned their brethren because they found Hahnemann's system to be more successful in battling cholera, typhus, yellow fever, diphtheria, influenza, and other epidemics of the 1800s. In retaliation, the preamble to the AMA's charter forbade its members to associate with homeopaths or to use their medicines, and many doctors were expelled for failing to comply.

But does homeopathy really pose such a threat to conventional medicine today? To see how the little David of homeopathy *could* take down the Goliath of big pharma, we need to take a closer look at what homeopathy is all about.

Like Cures Like

Homeopathic practice is based on a single law of therapeutics called the *Law of Similars*. This law states that *a substance that can cause the symptoms of a disease can also cure it*. In fact, that's exactly what word "homeopathy" means: similar ("homeo") suffering ("pathy"). For example, one reason that the remedy *Coffea Cruda* (made from coffee) can be curative for insomnia is that coffee can *cause* sleeplessness. Interestingly, allopaths sometimes utilize the Law of Similars, but are unaware of it when they do and are perplexed by the phenomenon.

Ask any conventional doctor why Ritalin (a substance that would normally *cause* hyperactivity) can treat hyperactivity in children, and they'll scratch their heads in confusion. Ask a homeopath, and it's a no-brainer: the Law of Similars.

The reason why homeopaths run into trouble with the skeptics, though, revolves around how homeopathic remedies are prepared. Obviously, many of the substances that can cause the symptoms of disease are toxic. This inherent toxicity poses a challenge if you want to administer these substances safely. In an effort to deal with this problem, Hahnemann tried various methods of diluting his medicines so that they would become less harmful to his patients. This proved unsuccessful until he also incorporated vigorous shaking or *succussion* into the process. The result was a method that he called *potentization*, in which a substance is serially diluted and succussed over and over.

Much to Hahnemann's own surprise, these ultradilutions -- so dilute that they cannot possibly contain a single molecule of the original substance -- were still potent therapeutically. In fact, they were even more potent than low levels of dilution.

Of course, this was and still is too much for the skeptics to bear. It turns much of accepted science on its head!

What the skeptics keep ignoring, however, are an increasing number of scientific studies that indicate that some kind of signature of the original substance *is* embedded in a potentized ultradilution. In a 2007 paper by Professor Rustom Roy, the founding director of the Materials Research Laboratory at Penn State and one of the world's leading experts on the structure of water, it was demonstrated that lab instruments *could* pick up energetic signatures in ultradilutions that were not only specific to individual homeopathic remedies, but to specific potencies of these remedies [10].

Indeed, science has backed up the phenomenon of potentization for over 20 years. In 1988, Nobel Prize nominee and medical researcher Jacques Benveniste turned the course of his life upside down when he discovered that ultradilutions could retain substance-specific properties. In particular, he found that a certain antibody could be serially diluted and succussed beyond the point where a single molecule could remain, but still cause the same effects [11].

Naturally, the skeptics quickly attacked Benveniste. But he continued his work and further demonstrated that the electromagnetic signature of an ultradilution could be recorded electronically, transmitted via Email, replayed into water, and still achieve the same substance-specific effects in the laboratory [12]. Eventually, Benveniste's results were replicated [13]. Most recently, a 2009 paper by Nobel Prize winner Luc Montagnier underscored the power of ultradilutions too [14].

Drug Companies Are Running Scared

Now think about it. ***This is what big pharma is scared of.***

*What if an expensive drug could be potentized to create billions of effective doses at essentially no cost? It would destroy big pharma entirely. Medicines that cost essentially nothing? Nontoxic ultradiluted medicines that cause fewer side effects? How could the coffers of big pharma be sustained? Forget about the Law of Similars. It's *potentization* - - the process of creating effective ultradilutions -- that big pharma is scared of! No wonder Baum and Ernst got the word "potentization" wrong. This one word is the small stone that could take Goliath down.*

Of course, homeopaths add fuel to the fire. The fundamental philosophy of homeopathy implies that the primary tools of allopathy are harmful. In particular, homeopaths believe that suppressing symptoms with *anti*-pathic drugs -- drugs that oppose the symptoms of a disease rather than mimic them -- cannot cure and can even do harm. If a symptom is suppressed -- for example, if a seasonal allergy is suppressed by an antihistamine -- it is only temporarily palliated.

A patient still has allergic tendencies and his or her symptoms will eventually return. That's why suppressive drugs must be taken again and again. And of course, big pharma loves that! It's good for business.

Deceptive Cures

Unfortunately, if a substance succeeds in completely suppressing a symptom, there may be an illusion of "cure," but the real result is more sinister. Another key tenet of homeopathy is that the true result of suppression is a deepening of the underlying disease state -- because the energy of the disease is now forced to manifest in a more serious way. That's why repeated application of cortisone cream to eczema can lead to asthma.

That's why the suppression of arthritis pain can lead to heart disease. That's why teenagers who take acne drugs sometimes develop suicidal depression. Doctors call this phenomenon a "side effect" or a "natural disease progression." But that's because they don't understand the effects of suppression or the signs of true cure.

Over the past two hundred years, homeopaths have discovered that *homeopathic* medicines -- drugs that mimic a person's symptoms rather than oppose them -- can lead to genuine cure of chronic disease, not mere palliation or suppression. Rather than creating a deeper disease, a homeopathic medicine that is similar to a patient's disease can not only cure it, but reveal previously suppressed layers of disease that can be treated too.

That's why good homeopathic treatment can often *cure* asthma -- and also reveal and treat previously suppressed eczema. That's why it has the potential to *cure* arthritis and chronic bladder infections, not simply palliate them with endless medications. Indeed, homeopathy can effectively treat acute diseases like influenza and bacterial infections too. With its ability to successfully treat both chronic and acute disease with low-cost medicines, homeopathy really *could* be a threat to big pharma, given half a chance.

Ideal for Poor Countries or Rich Ones with Declining Economies

Poor countries with less access to expensive drugs have already discovered this. That's why homeopathy is the second most widespread form of medicine in the world. In India, homeopathy is a full-fledged medical system with its own medical schools and hospitals. Homeopaths in India successfully treat the full range of diseases, including AIDS, cancer, and malaria.

In Cuba, a poor country with a health care system that often does better than our own, homeopathy is being used more and more. In 2008, 2.5 million Cubans were given a homeopathic remedy to prevent Leptospirosis, an infectious disease also known as

swamp fever. This disease has plagued the country for several years in the aftermath of flooding, but the year in which homeopathy was used, in contrast to previous years, there were no fatalities and very few cases of the disease [15].

But here's the rub. Homeopathy is harder to practice than allopathy. There are no cookie-cutter cures, especially for chronic disease. (*Luckily, however, effective treatment of epidemic diseases like the flu is easier; see Resources.*) Each patient's health pattern is unique, so each patient must be treated as an individual.

A homeopath must find a single remedy (among thousands of possible homeopathic remedies) whose associated symptoms match those of the patient -- not just their main complaint, but their entire symptom picture that includes emotional, mental, behavioral, as well as the physical symptoms of the entire body. It's a daunting task. A practitioner who practices *classical homeopathy* (the kind of homeopathy I advocate) typically needs at least two hours for an initial case interview and may spend just as long deciding upon a remedy.

And sometimes it takes a homeopath several tries to find just the right remedy -- the one that homeopaths call the *simillimum*. This process also requires patients to engage in their own treatment, because symptoms are gathered not by machines or by using tests, but through direct communication between patient and homeopath.

Of course, this is not something big pharma, conventional doctors, or insurance companies would be happy about. No expensive medicines or tests or equipment needed? No five-minute appointments reimbursed at \$300 a shot? A medical system that requires long appointments, time for case analysis, and patients who must participate in the healing process? Not very lucrative.

How I Broke Out of the Mold and Reliance on Failed Medical Therapies

Of course, I used to be a lover of conventional medicine like most people. Back in the early 1990s, my husband Steve Rubin and I were both computer researchers in Silicon Valley and followed our doctors' instructions obediently, loading our kids up with every recommended vaccine on schedule. Our allopathic trance began to break in 1994 when our 3-year-old son Max began to show signs of autism.

I first read about homeopathy in the January 1995 issue of *Mothering Magazine*, which contained an article about the successful homeopathic treatment of ADD and other children's behavioral problems [16]. Steve and I decided to give it a try and found a practitioner in our area. Within a week we began to see small and subtle improvement in Max -- improvement that became a slow and steady trend. After two years of treatment, he was testing normally and was released from eligibility for special education benefits.

His speech and language therapist told the county representative that she had never seen an autistic child recover like Max had, and she fully credited homeopathy for his recovery. By the time he was eight, nearly all signs of Max's autism were gone. Today he is 18, a freshman at a leading university, completely autism free, and without restrictions of any kind.

Needless to say, this experience was both mind-boggling and life-transforming. I began to study homeopathy myself and ultimately wrote what became the best-selling patient education book in the USA -- *Impossible Cure: The Promise of Homeopathy* [17] -- a comprehensive introduction to homeopathic history, philosophy, science, and experience, sprinkled with dozens first-person cure stories for a variety of ailments, along with a chapter about Max's cure.

In the end, I left my work in computer science and devoted myself to letting others know about the healing powers of homeopathy. I got involved in the successful campaign for health freedom legislation in California too [18]. Steve also got involved and developed the National Vaccine Information Center's online interface to the VAERS database [19] (the CDC's public record of vaccine injuries). I guess Max's healing led us both to become alternative medicine activists, and we haven't looked back.

Conclusion

So why not take a look at homeopathy for yourself? Make it your New Year's resolution to find a good classical practitioner and to learn more about this amazing medical modality. The skeptics manage to create a lot of smoke in an effort to hide homeopathy from public view. But where there's smoke, there's fire. Find out about how this powerful healing system -- a system that packs a lot of firepower into an infinitesimal punch -- can help you and your family.

Resources

(1) *Impossible Cure: The Promise of Homeopathy* – www.impossiblecure.com.

This website includes: book ordering information; autism help page; free archive of Amy's show on AutismOne Radio – *There's Hope with Homeopathy; Cure Stories Database*; helpful links.

(2) *National Center for Homeopathy* – www.nationalcenterforhomeopathy.org.

Leading open-membership organization for homeopathy in the USA that organizes the yearly national conference. Membership buys a quarterly magazine, *Homeopathy Today*, monthly eNewsletter, online chats with leading experts, extensive online

resources and social network. Website includes many free resources, including practitioner and resource referrals lists and flu treatment information.

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