

Homeopathy - a Misunderstood science By David J. Getoff, CCN, CTN, FAAIM

Homeopathy may possibly be the single most misused and misunderstood word in the entire field of holistic health. It is commonly (but incorrectly) used to mean holistic, alternative health, nutritionally related, herbology, or to apply to vitamin and mineral supplements. Very often it is used to refer to those who treat illnesses with the use of diet changes and nutritional supplements. None of these uses of the word homeopathy or homeopath or homeopathic is even remotely accurate or appropriate. Homeopathy is a separate and distinct medical science and is not a part of the fields of allopathic medicine, nutrition, naturopathy, herbalism, aroma therapy or any other modality excepts its own. It is certainly possible for practitioners in these other fields to have studied homeopathy and even for some of them to have become practicing homeopaths but there is no other connection.

What is homeopathy? What is a homeopath? How does homeopathy work? Does homeopathy work? What are homeopathic remedies? How are homeopathic remedies made? What is the difference between classical homeopathy and complex or combination homeopathy? What is a homeopathic proving? What is a repertory? What is a Materia Medica?

The preceding questions are the focus of this article and I hope that in the paragraphs that follow, I will be able to provide you with a much better understanding of homeopathy than you currently possess. Please read on so that you will never again use the word homeopathy in place of the word holistic. Please give this article to your clients, patients, and friends so that they too can better understand homeopathy. Hopefully, with this new knowledge, they will reduce their incorrect use of the word, while at the same time increasing their actual usage of homeopathic medicine itself.

Let me begin by saying that teaching you to use homeopathy is NOT the purpose of this article. If you wish to learn homeopathy, you will need a great deal more time and effort than it will take you to read what I have written here. Thinking you can learn homeopathy from a short article would be as silly as reading an article in a medical journal or even a few books, in order to become a physician. Homeopathy is both simple and extremely complex. Most of the best homeopaths will generally admit that if they continue studying for the rest of their lives, they might learn to be as good a homeopath as they would like to become. I myself enrolled in a three year residential training program in classical homeopathy, but alas, at the end of the three years, I felt as though I knew less than when I began. It was not because I did not learn a great deal during those three years, since indeed I did. It was simply that I discovered just how much more there was to know and therefore what a tiny percentage of this new larger whole, I had just succeeded in learning. This might make homeopathy sound so complicated that you do not ever want to start your training. Nothing could be further from the truth. You can quickly learn enough about using homeopathy for first aid, that you will be able to help your family in ways you never imagined and without the use of toxic drugs. If you are a health practitioner, you can quickly learn ways to help many of

your patients with remedies like Arnica, Hypericum, Chamomilla, Ledum, Apis, Staphysagria and many others to greatly improve the results you get in certain conditions with your patients. So read on and begin your education. After all, you have to start somewhere. If later, you would like to learn even more and at your own pace, I recommend the various instructional videos from www.LearnHomeopathyNow.com

The founder/discoverer of homeopathy was Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, a physician and chemist. He was born in Germany in 1755 and died in 1843. In those times, living to the age of 88 shows me that he knew a thing or two about health. Dr. Hahnemann received his medical degree at the age of 24, but soon realized that, similar to the medicine practiced today, doctors often created more problems than they helped, and rarely truly cured anyone of disease. (Note: only our bodies can actually cure a disease)

Hahnemann discovered and expanded on the principle of **like cures like** which is the main doctrine or principle of homeopathy. In simplistic form this means that a substance which will cause a certain set of symptoms (often referred to as the symptom picture) in a healthy person, will help heal these same symptoms in the ill person, hence, the phrase “like cures like”. At first examination this may seem preposterous or at the very least, extremely difficult to accept. When examined more closely however, this principle begins to get extremely interesting. Hahnemann first experimented with Cinchona bark, a long time traditional and effective treatment for malaria, and found that it produced in him, a healthy person, the chills, weakness, and sweats that are common to the actual illness of malaria. Hahnemann found that diluted and potentized concentrations of other substances could also cure the same symptoms in the ill person that they would cause in a healthy person. His major work on homeopathic philosophy and treatment was (and is) called the Organon of Medicine and was continually updated and republished throughout his life. The final 6th edition was actually published 75 years after his death and was based on his final notes and writings toward the end of his career.

What is homeopathy?- Simply put, it is the science of treating any health related problem or condition, be it physical or emotional, by making use of homeopathic remedies based on the like cures like principle. When I say any problem, I am not being over expansive in my description. Homeopathy is being used to treat all manners of disease and un-health. Many homeopaths, for instance, specialize in the treatment of emotional disorders, so homeopathic treatment is not restricted to any particular form of health problem. On the contrary, a homeopath is generally looking for the remedy that is the “similimum”, or the exactly correct homeopathic remedy for each patient. The premise of homeopathic prescribing is that if the exact remedy or similimum is found and used correctly, the individual will slowly heal on all levels and in all ways. This philosophy is extremely difficult for most non-homeopaths to accept. In fact, it is almost impossible for physicians trained in our allopathic drug based medical modalities to accept. The idea that a patient’s various and sometimes numerous emotional and physical ailments can all be addressed by little pellets of a certain homeopathic remedy is mind-boggling. Nonetheless, this is what has occurred with untold millions of patients around the world who have sought out and found a good homeopath. For some, the movement towards better health is rapid, while for others it may take many months or

even years. Our bodies do not heal immediately from problems that have plagued us or have been developing or progressing for many years or decades. Often, during the homeopaths search for the correct remedy, many different remedies may be used over an extended period of time. This could cover many months or many years during which time the patient is most often continuing to improve. No form of medicine is an exact science, but at least with homeopathy, symptoms do not get suppressed, they get addressed and slowly (or sometimes quickly) reduced or eliminated (healed). In addition, unlike many pharmaceutical drugs, homeopathic remedies do not cause any long term or permanent side effects and cannot cost thousands of dollars.

There are so many thousands of remedies and numerous intricacies of each, that finding the correct remedy for major health problems takes a great deal of experience and training. Please do not get discouraged by what I have just said. The use of homeopathy for first aid around the house is a great deal easier to learn. Treating your family or patients for things such as insect bites/stings, nausea, teething, fevers, bruises, headaches, recovery from surgery, improved healing, broken bones and much, much more, may be learned from some of the books I reference at the end of this article. More importantly, the knowledge you will gain from reading these books and utilizing homeopathy in your life can be both rewarding, time saving, money saving, pain saving, and possibly even life saving. Just remember not to consider yourself a homeopath simply because you have read a book on homeopathy and have helped a number of patients or family members with various injuries or health problems.

A proving is what is carried out in order to determine the symptom picture for a particular homeopathic preparation called a remedy. A number of people are given a particular remedy, and then, for a number of days, weeks, or months, they must record every symptom that they experience which is not normal for them. This is complicated and would include things such as what types of dreams they had, any itches or twitches, vision problems, emotional changes, fevers, temperature abnormalities, headaches and a great deal more. They must be in contact with a supervisor, often daily, since it is generally easier and more accurate if a professional is asking them questions, to be sure to extract every little difference and nuance in their life that shows up during the proving.

All of these symptoms from the group of “provers” are recorded and carefully cross-referenced to form the symptom picture for that remedy. Please do not think it is as simple as I have just described, it is not. In fact, almost every part of this article is written in a simplified and condensed form. There will be a number of books and other references listed at the end of this article for those readers interested in gaining more information about the fascinating field of homeopathy.

What are homeopathic remedies? Any substance whether it is of animal, vegetable, insect, energy, or mineral origin can be made into a homeopathic remedy. There must generally be a proving done so that homeopaths understand what to use the remedy for, but the list of possible substances is endless. Bee venom, tarantulas, pus, Echinacea, lead, mercury, arsenic, table salt, dogs milk, etc, ad infinitum. These are but a tiny few of the remedies listed in the homeopaths master reference book called the *Materia Medica*.

How are homeopathic remedies made? This is actually done in a very regimented but simple manner. The correct method begins by making a mother tincture, by mixing the substance being used with a diluent such as water, grain alcohol, or a mixture of the two. For example the herb Arnica is often used as a remedy in homeopathy. If the flowering heads of an arnica plant were ground up and soaked for a number of days in a water and alcohol solution so as to extract the active components from the arnica, this mixture would now be called a mother tincture or herbal concentrate. This concentrate would then be filtered or strained to remove the plant parts. In order to sequentially dilute this herbal tincture into a homeopathic remedy, the following procedure might be followed. One ounce of this Arnica tincture would be added to nine ounces of a solution made up of 50% grain alcohol and 50% distilled water. This diluted solution would then be succussed (rapped firmly against a surface such as a book) 100 times in order to imprint the energetic force of the arnica into the molecular structure of the liquid. This solution is now referred to as being a 1X potency. One, because it is the first dilution from the mother tincture and X to represent the decimal or 10th or one part in nine of the dilution for the Roman numeral X. The same procedure continues in order to get higher potencies. For example one ounce of the 1X solution is then added to nine ounces of the diluent (the 50% alcohol and water mixture). This second dilution is succussed 100 times and is labeled Arnica 2X and so on continually till the 6X, 12X, 30X or greater is reached depending on what homeopathic potency is desired. If, instead, you began by diluting one ounce of mother tincture in 99 ounces of diluent then the first dilution would be a one hundredth or centesimal dilution and would be labeled 1C for first centesimal dilution. C being the roman numeral which represents 100. This in turn would be continued to get higher centesimal or "C" dilutions.

You can see that although the procedure is both straightforward and simple, it gets extremely time consuming. The fact that we can purchase the necessary remedies pre-made, is essential, considering how many remedies are in general use today. After a remedy is made, it may be absorbed into small pellets or sugar pills so as to be sold and used in that form or may be kept and used in its liquid form. Storage and shipping is easier in pills or pellets and leakage or evaporation is no longer a problem. Both liquid and pellet forms of remedies are used throughout the world. Some homeopathic remedies are referred to as the polychrest remedies. These are the ones which are used the most frequently, have been well proven, and whose effects are the most well documented and understood by homeopaths around the world.

Does homeopathy really work? This is a question that has been discussed, argued, researched and written about for a very long time. In my view, to ask if homeopathy really works is no longer a valid question. It is as silly a question as to ask whether Acupuncture or Chiropractic medicine really work. The answer to all three questions would have to be a resounding yes. They have all been used on numerous thousands or more accurately hundreds of thousands (actually millions) of patients around the world. They have all been thoroughly studied and have been instrumental in the healing of large percentages of the populations of various towns, cities, and in some cases entire societies. Like the extremely new field which we today call allopathic or drug based medicine, none of these other fields of medicine is able to cure every disease or alleviate every symptom. The difference is that of these four, only modern allopathic or

drug based medicine is well documented to be killing over 100,000 U.S. citizens every year between dangerous and/or unnecessary surgeries and deadly prescription and non prescription drug side effects and drug interactions. The Hippocratic oath of First do no harm, appears to be being violated by the vast majority of medical doctors in practice today. Homeopaths, Naturopaths, Nutritionists, etc., appear to be the real health professionals who are actually working within the boundaries of the Hippocratic oath.

My own personal opinion, and that of many thousands of other health professionals, is that homeopathy works extremely well when used correctly. In addition, homeopathy does not have the deadly side effects of the numerous drugs currently being prescribed by many physicians and which are taken by the handful by many millions of their patients.

You will never hear a news report that some properly prepared homeopathic remedy, has been taken off the market, because it caused too many deaths from heart attacks, liver or kidney failures, strokes, or any other deadly reaction. The greatest problem appears to be that bad science is abundant in our culture and even in our medical journals. This makes it all too simple for someone to seemingly prove that homeopathy does not work, and simply disregard all the better done studies which have clearly shown the opposite to be true.

How does homeopathy work? This question is a great deal more difficult to answer. Even in modern times, there is a vast amount of information that we do not yet know. In many cases, we teach things as facts in our schools and universities as well as in our medical schools, that are later proven false. It is universally accepted, for example, that we do not understand all of the ways in which aspirin works. There are still many different premises on how and why we age. Our knowledge of endocrinology is far from complete and the current cutting edge research on the role of RNA (not DNA) in healing is fascinating. Gravity is still poorly understood. If you take a few days and read the information in the PDR (Physician's Desk Reference) for a few hundred approved drugs, you may be surprised to see how many list mode of action as **unknown** and yet they are approved and prescribed and used daily. Many things about the human body and its plethora of complex biochemical, electrical and frequency based interactions remain well beyond our grasp. Should people stop living just because we do not yet understand all there is to know? Should we stop using aspirin just because we do not fully understand it? The best rule will always be - first do no harm. If we actually stick to this rule, then we would continually investigate all possible methods of healing even if we cannot fully elaborate on exactly what is taking place. United States Government studies have shown that over 50% of drugs and surgical procedures have never been proven to do what is claimed for them, but they continue to be used every day. Many drugs and surgical procedures, if medicine were to do only honest, ethical, non-political and non-profit based research, would cease immediately.

It is believed by many scientists that all life is energy. Ki, Chi, Qi, Prana, and other words in other languages are used to designate the esoteric term of **life force energy**. If we temporarily accept that we are in fact electrical beings, run and affected by

energies, then homeopathy becomes a bit easier to fathom. The body, human or otherwise (animal, bird, fish, reptile, etc.) has millions of electrical or energetic forces which continually act within it and upon it. These help it to live, or in essence actually are its life. Since energies react with one another, then every food, herb, water, sound, poison, emotion, etc., will in some way effect any living creature or plant in its proximity, since they are all forms of energy.

Homeopathic remedies are made by sequential dilution and succussion as previously explained. The energy of the remedy has been imprinted into the molecular structure of the liquid solution and will then be released and begin to act upon the living animal or human which takes or is given the remedy. This is a vibrational energy, and it may act in a more subtle manner than magnetism, infra red heat, or gamma radiation. In fact, many low dose (6 or 12X and 6 or 12C) remedies, do not generally have any noticeable effect unless there is an appropriate problem in the organism for their energy to act upon. In other words, if you take a low dose homeopathic remedy to treat a problem, and you have chosen an incorrect remedy, there will generally be no corresponding set of symptoms and there will be no detrimental (or beneficial) effect noticed. It is for this reason that homeopathy is so safe to use and to learn. The remedies sold in drug stores and health food stores are generally low potencies and therefore not harmful if you prescribe them for yourself or your family incorrectly. When you choose the correct remedy, however, the results can seem miraculous.

Two of the most important books for the professional, or even the serious amateur homeopath, are the **Materia Medica** and the **Repertory**. There are many different versions of each, written by various authorities in the field, both past and present.

The **Materia Medica** is a book made up of a compilation of the reported symptoms from the provings of thousands of homeopathic remedies. It is arranged by organ system under each remedy and is used by every homeopath in order to help find the correct remedy for a particular symptom picture. There are quite a few materia medicas and various homeopaths prefer one or more over others. Page through one in a homeopathic pharmacy or bookstore to get a better understanding of just how complex and thorough they are and the kind of information they contain. The first time you try to use a materia medica, it will seem overwhelming, but without one, it is impossible to truly practice homeopathy other than basic first aid. Most good homeopathic first aid books or other beginner books on the subject will contain a useable but extremely abbreviated materia medica.

The **Repertory** is the other important book for the practicing homeopath. While the materia medica lists a homeopathic remedy and then gives every single symptom associated with its use, the repertory is quite different. This equally voluminous work, first lists the symptom (you are looking to treat) and then gives you all the possible remedies which may be associated with the treatment of this symptom. As with the materia medica, there are quite a few different repertories for which homeopaths show their various preferences. You will be just as overwhelmed the first time you try to use a repertory, as you are with your first experience using a materia medica. Many good beginner books and first aid books on homeopathy will contain a very useable but extremely abbreviated repertory.

If you decide to expand your knowledge past what you gain from reading a few beginners books on homeopathy, you will most likely decide to purchase at least one repertory and one materia medica. If you truly get into the field, you will end up owning a number of each for their variations, as well as possibly \$500 to \$5000 dollars worth of homeopathic computer programs. As I emphasized before however, neither of these two special books, nor the expensive computer software, is required in order to begin your instruction and make good use of homeopathic first aid for your patients or family members.

The LAST thing I want to do is to discourage anyone reading this article from getting your feet wet. This is a fascinating field and can be used in your office or your home to great benefit. Actually, I encourage you to please get your feet wet soon. Just pick up a couple of the beginners books I recommend at the end of this article. To me, one of the important aspects of using homeopathy, is that it seems to be generally accepted as not being harmful during pregnancy. There are a number of books specifically on this topic and besides, treating a woman during pregnancy with pharmaceutical drugs should rightly terrify any reasonable physician or expectant mother due to all the possible unknown effects of the drugs on the developing fetus and for the rest of the child and adult's life!

This last part of my article will be a discussion of the difference between Classical homeopathy and what is often referred to as complex homeopathy. I will try to be as open minded and accurate as possible, since I am in the business of education as well as in the practice of helping people get well. This topic is often one which promotes heated discussions, since most professional homeopaths feel that complex homeopathy is either bogus, an incorrect use of homeopathy, misuse of homeopathic principles, or not homeopathy at all. I will attempt to stay somewhat clear of this argument as I explain the differences. I will however give some of my observations as well as the observations made and expressed to me by some of my mentors and teachers which are long time classical homeopaths, many of whom are MD's.

In general, the professional practice of homeopathy is that of "classical" homeopathy. This is to say that if you see a professional homeopath, he or she will most likely be practicing what is referred to as classical homeopathy. You will generally have a one to three hour intake or first consultation, during which you will give the homeopath a tremendous amount of information about yourself. With this information, the homeopath will develop a symptom picture and either at that time, or a day or two later, the homeopath will determine what remedy he or she believes is correct for you. Most often, you will be instructed to take a dose of this remedy in a particular potency, either one time only, or once a day for two to three days, and then wait to see how it affects both you and the symptoms for which you sought their help (as well as many additional symptoms which came up during the initial consultation but which may not have been part of your reasons for seeking help). The amount of time which may pass during this waiting and reporting period can be as short as a few days, but is more often a number of weeks and could easily be many months. Homeopathic remedies can continue working and balancing the body energies for a very long time before they cease to be effective (unless they get antidoted). During this time, the homeopath will generally not want to switch you to another remedy or re-dose the one you were given, so long as they believe it is still pushing you in the direction of cure.

When working with a classical homeopath, you will probably be instructed not to consume any foods or participate in any activity which it is felt might antidote the effects of the remedies they are prescribing for you. There is some disagreement as to what can, may, or may not antidote (stop or interfere with) the curative effects of homeopathic remedies. A few of the items on this list include coffee, menthol, strong mint flavored foods, radiation or chemotherapy, acupuncture treatments, steroids, and certain other drugs.

Complex homeopathy is the use of remedies that contain more than just one single homeopathic substance or potency. Often they may contain a combination (and are also called combination remedies) of as many as 3-15 or more different single remedies together in one bottle. There may even be a number of different potencies of each of these remedies. (Note a product containing a number of different potencies of **the same** homeopathic substances is called a homaccord). Complex or combination homeopathic remedies have been formulated for many different uses. Health food stores and pharmacies generally carry remedies labeled for colds, headaches, nausea, constipation, teething, etcetera. If you looked up any of these symptoms in a repertory you would find numerous different remedies listed as possible treatments for the problem. Since a persons headache, for example, might be different in many ways from the headache that another person has (different type, area of head, quality of pain, time headache is felt, things which make it better or worse, etc.) a different remedy might be correct for each headache. The combination remedies try to include many of the possible substances for a wide variety of possible headaches. The premise is that the correct substance will help effect a cure or alleviation of symptoms. The incorrect substances, when used in low potencies, are thought to simply not do anything since there is no similar vibratory problem for them to act upon. In many cases these combination remedies may work very well while in others, they will not work at all. The classical homeopath might say that the correct remedy simply was not there or that the other remedies got in the way or altered the effects.

Another common use for complex (combination) remedies is for drainage and detoxification. I have been to numerous seminars regarding the use of homeopathic drainage formulas and they have all been complex or combination remedies. An example might be the use of potentized (homeopathically diluted and energized) dilution of pesticides or possibly cleaning chemicals which are then used to slowly help prompt the cells of the body to release these same toxins which have built up from prior environmental exposure.

It has been my own experience that this is one of the best ways to help slowly reduce the toxic load for those who are environmentally sensitive. Being able to aid the body in prompting the slow and controlled release and elimination of these toxins gets me the best results when working with this particular condition in my practice.

A number of medical doctors who are practicing homeopaths have all made similar observations regarding complex drainage remedies. I have personally attended many professional seminars where professional homeopaths lectured in regard to the following information. Their observations were that when seemingly properly prescribed homeopathic remedies did not appear to be working, it was often due to some form of toxic energetic blockage in the patient. After using complex homeopathic drainage

products first, a number of their remedies would then have the desired effects and healing would begin. Each of these physicians related to us (the seminar participants) that as classical homeopaths, they had been warned against the use of combination remedies. They all admitted that when they finally opened their minds and became willing to at least try the complex drainage remedies, their beneficial treatment results increased exponentially with many patients and they are glad they had been willing to go against their original training.

Always remember, the mark of a great practitioner is the willingness to admit they do not know everything and that in fact they may even be wrong regarding one of their main principles or beliefs. After making this admission, they must then be willing to stretch their beliefs and try new ideas or products. While keeping the first do no harm requirement in the forefront, many new products and procedures can be investigated. I myself strive to keep my open mind seated firmly beside my scientific and skeptical mind. I must also be careful not to allow my ego or assumed knowledge to prevent me from experimenting with new products that I do not believe will work, or I can no longer find those few that actually do. It should be noted that many who condemn allopathic physicians for being closed minded, are just as closed minded in regards to their own methods on non-allopathic treatment. I often see this in homeopaths who condemn combination remedies although they have never studied them much less tried them.

Having taken a three year residential training program in classical homeopathy, I have a much greater respect for its abilities than I had previously. Although I continue to practice mostly Traditional Naturopathy and all its variations, I sometimes refer patients to a classical homeopath if I feel it may be helpful. Possibly, one day, I will begin to use more classical homeopathy in my own practice. Currently I use it mostly during pregnancy and for first aid.

Please learn about, and begin to practice, homeopathic first aid for your patients and your family. It is a fascinating science that may change your life.

Reading List with brief descriptions

Impossible Cure By Amy Lansky

An excellent book explaining homeopathy. What is known about it from a layman's point of view from a woman who witnessed it curing her son of autism and needed to know more about it.

The Homeopathic Revolution by Dana Ullman, MPH

Another excellent book describing what homeopathy is and what we do and do not know about it from a homeopaths point of view.

Family Guide to Homeopathy by Lockie Easy to understand. One of my favorites for general family information.

Homeopathic Medicine at Home by Maesimund Panos M.D. & Jane Heimlich

This is an excellent beginners book. It is well indexed so that you can immediately find the symptoms and the descriptions of possible remedies. A very good first book especially for someone who is not interested in learning about homeopathy, but would like to try using it with their family.

Homeopathic Remedies by Asa Hershof, ND

This is another favorite of mine as a beginners book. Very easy to use and to locate remedies with good descriptions of the variations and excellent charts.

The Peoples Repertory by Luc De Schepper M.D., PhD., Lac

This is one of my favorite beginners books, but only if you want to learn a bit more about homeopathy. There is no index and the table of contents is brief and inadequate. With that said, it is a great book. Luc is a well respected though sometimes controversial homeopath. He is also a teacher and seems to have laid out the book with that in mind. In order to get the great benefits that this book has to offer, you need to put in a little time. You should take a pen and a colored highlighting marker and read through the book. Highlight anything you want to be able see quickly, and make your own index at the beginning of the book with the important page numbers and the information to be found on those pages. This may sound like a nuisance, but it will teach you a great deal and this book will then become a treasured reference.

Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicine by Stephen Cummings & Dana Ullman. Another good beginners book with a great deal to offer

Homeopathy for the modern pregnant woman and her infant by Sandra Perko
(expensive professional book)

The best I have found on the subject.

Homeopathic Medicine for Children and Infants by Ullman An excellent parents guide to using homeopathy

Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth, and your Babys First year by Miranda Castro
Because this is one of the few excellent books on this particular area of homeopathy I felt I needed to list it for those readers for whom it is currently appropriate.