

The Pro-Vita! Plan For Optimal Nutrition

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Excerpt: APPENDIX A

WHAT IS HOMEOPATHY?

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Reprinted with permission from Panos & Heimlich, *HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE AT HOME*. Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1980.

Homeopathy is a system of medicine whose principles are even older than Hippocrates. It seeks to cure in accordance with natural laws of healing and uses medicines made from natural substances: animal, vegetable, and mineral.

Homeopathy was "discovered" in the early 1800s by a German physician, Samuel Christian Friedrich Hahnemann. Shortly after setting up practice, he became disillusioned with medicine, and with good reason. Eighteenth- and nineteenth century physicians believed that sickness was caused by humors, or fluids, that had to be expelled from the body by every possible means. To achieve this end, patients were cauterized, blistered, purged, and bled.

Hahnemann protested against these brutal and senseless methods, and his colleagues quickly denounced him for heresy. He was also opposed to the way doctors prescribed medicines. In those days it was customary to mix great numbers of drugs in one prescription. In his book *Who Is Your Doctor and Why?* Dr. Alonzo J. Shadman mentions having seen, in the *Pharmacopoeia* of 1875, a prescription that contained fifty ingredients. Earlier, Hahnemann's outspoken criticism of this "degrading commerce in prescription" naturally enraged the chemists, who were as powerful as our drug companies today, and they were to hound him all of his life.

Hahnemann gave up the practice of medicine and turned to medical translating as a livelihood. But he persisted in his lifelong goal-to discover "if God had not indeed given some law, whereby the diseases of mankind would be cured." *His* sense of frustration increased when one of his children became critically ill and he could do nothing for her.

It was while translating *Lectures on the Materia Medica* by William Cullen, a Scottish professor of medicine, that Hahnemann stumbled on the key to curing sick people. In this work, the author claimed that cinchona bark, or quinine, cured intermittent fever (malaria) because of its astringent and bitter qualities. This explanation did not sound plausible to Hahnemann, who knew of other substances equally bitter, so he did a daring thing; he tested the medicine on himself.

I took by way of experiment, twice a day, four drachms of good China (quinine). My feet, finger ends, etc. at first became cold; I grew languid and drowsy; then my heart began to palpitate, and my pulse grew hard and small; intolerable anxiety, trembling, prostration throughout all my limbs; then pulsation in the head, redness of my cheeks, thirst, and, in short, all these symptoms which are ordinarily characteristic of intermittent fever, made their appearance, one after the other, yet without the peculiar chilly, shivering rigor. Briefly, even those symptoms which are of regular occurrence and especially characteristic-as the stupidity of mind, the kind of rigidity in all the limbs, but above all the numb, disagreeable sensation, which seems to have

its seat in the periosteum, over every bone in the body-all these make their appearance. This paroxysm lasted two or three hours each time, and recurred if I repeated this dose, not otherwise; I discontinued it, and was in good health.

This was the first "proving," a testing of medicine on a healthy person. The symptoms Hahnemann developed corresponded exactly to the symptoms of malaria. Thus Hahnemann reasoned that malaria was cured by quinine, not because of its bitter taste but owing to the fact that the drug produces the symptoms of malaria in a healthy person.

After experimenting on himself, Hahnemann enlisted the help of friends and followers and embarked on an extensive program of drug testing. When he died at age eighty-eight in 1843, he had conducted or supervised provings on ninety-nine substances. More than 600 other medicines were added to the homeopathic pharmacopoeia by the end of the century.

PRINCIPLES OF HOMEOPATHY The Law of Similars

The term homeopathy (sometimes spelled homeopathy) comes from the Greek homoios ("similar") and pathos ("suffering" or "sickness"). The fundamental law upon which homeopathy is based is the law of similars, or "Like is cured by like"-in Latin, *similaa similibus curentur*. The law of similars states that a remedy can cure a disease if it produces in a healthy person symptoms similar to those of the disease.

Hahnemann did not claim to have discovered the concept. In the tenth century B.C., Hindu sages described the law, as had Hippocrates, who wrote in 400 B.C., "Through the like, disease is produced and through the application of the like, it is cured." Paracelsus, a sixteenth-century German physician, reiterated the law. Hahnemann, as an erudite thinker, was undoubtedly familiar with these writings, but he was the first to test the principle and establish it as the cornerstone of a system of medicine.

The law works thus in practice: A person develops a fever, with flushed face, dilated pupils, rapid heartbeat, and a feeling of restlessness. The homeopathic physician studies all these symptoms, then searches for a remedy that, under scientifically controlled conditions, has produced all these symptoms in a healthy person. Within a short time after taking the remedy, the fever drops to normal and the person feels well. The law of similars enables the physician to select the one medicine (the *simillimum*) that is needed by matching the symptoms of the individual to the symptoms the remedy induces.

The Law of Proving

The second law of homeopathy, the law of proving, refers to the method of testing a substance to determine its medicinal effect. To prove a remedy, each of a group of healthy people is given a dose of the substance daily, and each carefully records the symptoms experienced. Conforming to the standard double-blind method used in pharmacological experiments, approximately half of the test groups are used as controls and given an unmedicated tablet or pill (placebo).

When the proving is completed, all the symptoms that the provers consistently experience, such as dizziness, loss of memory, and restlessness, are listed as a characteristic remedy picture in the

Materia Medica, a prescriber's reference. To treat a patient, the physician looks up the remedy

picture in the *Materia Medica*, and, when the symptoms fit, applies the law of similars.

In standard medical practice, drugs are first tested on animals because so many drugs have been found to cause dangerous reactions, even cancer. Homeopaths do not use animals as subjects for testing medicines, since they do not react to chemicals as human beings do. Furthermore, we consider subjective symptoms to be important. And we have no concern about testing homeopathic medicines on healthy human beings because homeopathically prepared remedies are not toxic. The first proving was carried out in 1790, and use of the procedure has continued to the present day. There has never been a report of a lasting adverse drug reaction as the result of a proving.

The Law of Potentization (the Minimum Dose)

The third law of homeopathy, *the law of potentization*, refers to the preparation of a homeopathic remedy. Each is prepared by a controlled process of successive dilutions alternating with succussion (shaking), which may be continued to the point where the resulting medicine contains no molecules of the original substance. These small doses are called *potencies*; lesser dilutions are known as low potencies and greater dilutions as high potencies. As strange as it may seem, the higher the dilution, when prepared in this manner, the greater the potency of the medicine.

In 1800, when the process of potentization was devised, the idea that medicine containing an infinitesimal amount of matter could be curative was inconceivable. In this nuclear age, the power of minute quantities is all too well established. The dose of vitamin B12 used to treat certain anemias contains a millionth of a gram of cobalt. Trace elements, present in barely measurable amounts in the body, are essential for its development and functioning. The human body manufactures only fifty to a hundred millionths of a gram of thyroid hormone each day, yet a small excess or deficiency in this already "infinitesimal" amount can seriously affect the health of the individual.

The power of the infinitesimal dose is not clearly understood, but neither is the action of aspirin and many other drugs. The process of potentization makes it possible to use substances such as certain metals, charcoal, and sand, which are inert in their natural state, as medicines. A potentized remedy does not contain sufficient matter to act directly on the tissues, which means that homeopathic medicine is nontoxic and cannot cause side effects. In over 150 years of use, no homeopathic remedy has ever been recalled.

The Single Remedy

Contrary to the current medical practice of frequently prescribing two or more medicines at one time, most homeopaths usually give only one remedy at a time. We are not sure what the effect of two remedies would be, or the interaction between them, but we are sure of the effect of a single remedy. The single remedy has been proved, or tested, on healthy subjects.

The wisdom of the single remedy is pointed up by the ever increasing problem of drug interactions from multiple prescriptions. In an article in *American Druggist* for September 1978, the author writes: "It has been estimated that during a typical hospital stay the patient gets an average of ten drugs-and the number sometimes goes as high as thirty or more. Among the ambulatory, non-hospitalized public, it is common for an individual to be taking as many as six different drugs, prescription and nonprescription, at the same time.

The Physician's Desk Reference (PDR) is sprinkled with warnings of potentially dangerous side effects from administration of certain drugs along with others. Taking a random look at my copy of PDR, I find a tranquilizer (tranlycypromine sulphate) which carries the warning that use in combination with certain other drugs may result in "hypertension headache and related symptoms ...hypertensioe crisis or severe convulsive seizures." Such sedative-hypnotics are the most prescribed medications in the world.

Safe, But Why Effective?

Numerous theories have been offered as to why homeopathic remedies work. A 1954 newspaper report describing the research of the late Dr. William E. Boyd of Glasgow contained this explanation: "The power of the solution does not depend solely of the degree of dilution but on a special progressive method in its preparation; the energy latent in the drug is apparently liberated and increased by a forceful shaking of the liquid at each stage of the process.

Dr. F.K. Bellokossy of Denver compares the process of potentizing a homeopathic drug-shaking a dilution or grinding powdered dry materials-to magnetizing a glass rod by rubbing it. "We thus produce electric fields around every particle of the powdered drug; and the more we triturate [grind], the stronger electric fields we produce, and the more potentized becomes the triturated material."

At present, there is no widely accepted theory to explain why homeopathic medicine works, but with physicists taking an active interest in homeopathy, such an explanation seems imminent. One of these physicists is Dr. William A Tillier, professor in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Stanford University. In a letter to one of the authors, he writes:

As humankind evolves, the individual becomes a more integrated and finely tuned system and more sensitive with respect to changes in subtle energies. Our future medicine will proceed towards the development of techniques and treatments that use successively finer and finer energies In my modeling, homeopathic remedies treat at the etheric level of substance. ["Etheric" means not directly observable via our physical senses or instruments.] Since this method of treatment is already in use, it is easy to practice, I expect it to flourish in the near future while allopathic (standard) medicine declines.

A COMPARISON OF HOMEOPATHY AND STANDARD MEDICINE (ALLOPATHY)

Meaning of Symptoms

The homeopath believes that the body is always striving to keep itself healthy, or in balance, just as a keel boat attempts to right itself in the water. The force that acts in this protective manner is called the vital force. When the body is threatened by harmful external forces, the vital force, or defense mechanism, produces symptoms such as pain, fever, mucus, cough. These symptoms, although unpleasant for the patient, have a purpose: to restore harmony or balance. Pain is a warning that something is wrong. Fever inactivates many viruses that attack the body. Mucus is produced in the respiratory tract to surround and carry off irritating material. A cough expels the mucus that would otherwise hinder breathing.

A homeopathic physician regards symptoms as a healthy reaction of the body's defense mechanism to harmful forces: such symptoms need to be supported rather than interfered with.

Standard medicine takes a different view; it regards symptoms as manifestations of the disease, to be opposed or suppressed. Aspirin or other anti-fever drugs are given to lower fever, antihistamine to dry up nasal secretions, cough syrup to suppress a cough.

Meaning of Disease

Because symptoms that reflect the body's condition are constantly changing, homeopaths regard disease, or disharmony of the body, as a dynamic condition. We treat the patient according to the symptoms, not according to the "disease." This is contrary to the standard view of disease as an entity unto itself. The allopathic doctor elicits the patient's symptoms and attempts to group them under a known diagnosis. He or she then prescribes the treatment established for that disease.

The Body, Not the Germs

We're always surrounded by germs, inside our body, in our food, in the air we breathe. In the battle raging between the body and invading forces, the homeopath is not primarily concerned with identifying the enemy—the type of bacteria. Our aim is to strengthen the body so it can resist these harmful organisms. In standard medicine, on the other hand, the goal is to identify the invader and select a powerful drug to destroy the specific germ.

Holistic Approach Versus Specialization

We believe that all parts of the body are interdependent, and therefore we treat the patient as a whole person, rather than concentrating on one organ or one part of the body. We do not attempt to separate mental from physical illness; all are symptoms of the individual. Homeopathy is truly holistic, and has been since its inception 180 years ago.

For centuries, standard medicine has taken a different approach; it treats a patient's mind and body as separate entities. A speaker at a holistic health conference recently quipped that in modern medicine the general practitioner treats the body, sends the head to a shrink and the soul to a clergyman.

HOMEOPATHY SUPPRESSED

If homeopathy is such an advanced system of medicine, why is it not more widely practiced? Many people today do not realize that Homeopathy was widely practiced in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1890, there were 14,000 homeopaths as compared to 100,000 conventional physicians. In some areas—New England, the Middle Atlantic States, and the Midwest—one out of four or five physicians was a homeopath. There were twenty-two homeopathic medical schools and over a hundred homeopathic hospitals. The elite of every social community—the social, intellectual, political, and business leaders—patronized the homeopaths.

Homeopathy was first introduced in America as a result of its success in treating the victims of the cholera epidemic of 1832 in Europe. Our country was ripe for a new and humane system of medicine. The regular physician had two standard methods of treatment. One was to administer huge, or "heroic," doses of mercurous chloride, known as "calomel," to purge patients. This frequently caused the patient continuous salivation accompanied by swelling of the tongue. Patients also frequently lost all their teeth and, in extreme cases of mercurial poisoning, were unable to open

their mouths. The other treatment that the physician used for every disease was bloodletting. The eminent Dr. Benjamin Rush (for whom a hospital in Philadelphia was named, as well as the Rush Medical College in Chicago) advised: "Bleeding should be continued ... until four fifths of the blood contained in the body are drawn away." Children, including newborns, were also bled routinely.

So it is understandable why the homeopaths immediately attracted patients. In place of these barbaric methods, they had dozens of different remedies, none of which caused any disagreeable side effects. As proof that the homeopath's sweet-tasting white granules, often called "little sugar pills," were effective, a large number of homeopathic remedies were adopted by the allopaths and some are still being used today. One of the best known is nitroglycerine, used in certain heart ailments.

The medical establishment was hostile to homeopathy from the time it was introduced into the United States. In the 1830s and 40s when the public was dissatisfied with the harsh practices of regular medicine, homeopathy was not the only "alternative therapy;" botanical medicine and Thomsonian naturopathy were also popular. But homeopathy posed the greatest threat to orthodox medicine because its practitioners were licensed medical doctors. It was galling to the establishment that these homeopathic physicians, well trained in orthodox medicine, were critical of the system and had "defected" to homeopathy.

The establishment promptly took strong measures to suppress this upstart discipline. The American Medical Association (AMA) was formed in 1846 as a direct response to the founding of the American Institute of Homeopathy two years earlier. Homeopaths were denied admittance to standard medical societies. A member of such a society who consulted with a homeopath was punished by ostracism and expulsion. (In 1878, a physician was expelled from a medical society in Connecticut for consulting with a homeopath-his wife!) The hostility increased as "the best people" flocked to the homeopaths, and the regular physicians felt the pinch in their pocketbooks.

What killed, or almost killed, homeopathy? One reason for its decline was the changing life-style in America. The homeopathic physician was the quintessence of the family doctor who knew patients and their families intimately and could afford to devote a good deal of time to them, since most would remain patients for life. The shift to a mobile urban society as well as the rise of specialization changed that pattern. Homeopathic prescribing, which demands both time and intellectual effort, became increasingly out of step with the tempo of the times.

The rise of the drug industry after the Civil War further changed the practice of medicine. The allopath could now buy a proprietary, or compound, drug that saved time and effort, while the homeopath opposed to any mixing of medicines, continued prescribing medicines in the same "old-fashioned" way. As medical historian Harris L. Coulter points out, "The pharmaceutical industry ... in the 1890s and earlier 1900s allied with the American Medical Association in its [the medical association's] final campaign against homeopathy."

A further severe blow to homeopathy was the Flexner Report in 1910, an evaluation of medical schools by the AMA. In view of the AMA's traditional opposition to "sectarian medicine," it is not surprising that the examiners gave a low rating to homeopathic medical schools, among others, thus denying them a share in the millions of dollars, principally the Rockefeller grants, that were being given to allopathic institutions. One by one, the homeopathic medical schools closed and the homeopathic hospitals were converted to standard institutions. Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital and

Medical College became New York Medical College; Hahnemann Hospital in San Francisco was recently renamed the Marshall Hale Hospital. With the advent of the "wonder drugs" in the early 1940s homeopathy appeared to be obsolete.

HOMEOPATHY: THE ALTERNATIVE OF THE FUTURE

This dismal prospect is rapidly changing. In an article written in 1970, Harris L Coulter points out that we are witnessing a popular revolt against orthodox medical practices "comparable to the revolt of the 1830s and 1840s which ensconced homeopathy on the American medical scene."

This revolt has gathered steam with the emergence of holistic health, a movement that surfaced in California in the early 1970s. Its practitioners, trained in a variety of disciplines, hold the common belief that medicine has become divorced from natural healing. According to Edward Bauman, coeditor of *The Holistic Health Handbook*, "Holistic Health is a sympathetic response to the distrust and frustration engendered by specialized allopathic medicine." Holistic therapists criticize widespread use of dangerous drugs, the dehumanizing effects of specialization, the failure to cure chronic degenerative disease. The *conventional* physician prescribes drugs to alleviate the symptoms of arthritis, diabetes, emphysema, but this treatment fails to attack the root of the problem.

Holistic-minded professionals were amazed to stumble upon homeopathy. Here was a "natural" system of medicine that used no toxic drugs, treated the whole person, and, in many *instances*, cured "hopeless" chronic *conditions*. Furthermore, the efficacy of homeopathy had been demonstrated by the clinical experience of physicians for over 150 years.

So, with health a national preoccupation, homeopathy is emerging as a vigorous alternative to standard medicine. An *increasing* number of physicians and nurses are enrolling in the summer course offered by the National Center for Homeopathy. People are investigating homeopathy and incorporating it into their lives. Lay people all over the country are forming homeopathic study groups.

Homeopathy is alive and well in other parts of the world. In Britain, members of the Royal Family have been cared for by homeopathic physicians since the reign of Queen Victoria. There are around 200 homeopathic physicians in Britain; the principal hospitals offering such treatment are in London and Glasgow. France has nearly 800 homeopathic physicians, and the movement is also active in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

India is a stronghold of homeopathy, with 124 homeopathic medical schools. Central and Latin America are also important centers. In Mexico there are three homeopathic medical colleges, two of which are state supported. There is a similar school of medicine in Brazil, and the medical school in Santiago, Chile includes a professor of homeopathy. Around 450 Argentine physicians are homeopaths.

Homeopathy is on the rise all over the world, owing to the dissatisfaction of both physician and patient with the medical treatment at their disposal. Both are looking for a safe and effective approach to healing and finding the answer in homeopathy.

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