

Salar Farahmand, LAc., O.M.D., Ph.D., N.D., D.HOM  
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# Homeopathy

Homeopathic medicines are tiny doses of naturally occurring substances used to stimulate the body's innate healing powers. Because the doses are so small, these remedies are completely non-toxic, non-addictive and there are no side effects. Yet their effectiveness has been proven repeatedly in double-blind clinical trials. With its therapeutic properties, low expense and two hundred year history, homeopathy has the potential to become the medicine of the future. Homeopathy is gaining recognition throughout much of the world, comprising a significant part of the national health program in many European countries. For example, in England there are entire hospitals *within* the national health program devoted to the homeopathic care of patients.

Based on the Greek words *homoios*, meaning "similar", and *pathos*, meaning "disease", Homeopathy works through the Law of Similars, or likes curing likes. This means that if a substance produces certain symptoms in a healthy person, then a homeopathically prepared dilution of that substance will help treat similar symptoms in a sick person. Homeopathic medicines are chosen holistically, taking into account the patient's physical, mental and emotional symptoms and characteristics.

The process of immunization is similar to homeopathy: a vaccination is a minute dose of a substance that can cause physical symptoms, given to increase the body's resistance to similar, but more serious symptoms. The difference is that the vaccine usually of actual killed microorganisms, and creates a controlled immune response, whereas homeopathic remedies are usually taken from natural substances which stimulate more than just the immune system to facilitate healing.

A medical doctor named Samuel Hahnemann is recognized as the father of modern Homeopathy. He stumbled onto the concept when he was identifying and cataloguing new medicinal herbs. He often experimented on himself, and carefully noted his symptoms and their duration with each new medication. When he took a large dose of cinchona bark, which was used to treat malaria, he was amazed to experience symptoms of malaria. They lasted only a few hours, and recurred consistently every time he took another dose. *If large doses of a substance create certain toxic symptoms in a healthy person, then homeopathic doses of the same substance can be used to cure the same disease, or one with similar toxic symptoms.* Further experimentation revealed that this principle was true for hundreds of substances. Hahnemann spent the rest of his life testing and documenting the effects of micro-doses of medicinal herbs.

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These microdoses are prepared by taking an extract of the original herb, mineral, or animal substance and putting it through a series of dilutions. Between each dilution, the preparation is *succussed*, or vigorously agitated with impact -- a process which is believed to capture in the diluent fluid (usually water) the living essence or biological information of the herb. Unlike allopathic drug, with every step of dilution and succussion, the *potency* or strength of the substance is increased. How homeopathy works is not completely understood, but it is clearly the succussion process which is responsible for transferring or incorporating therapeutic properties to the diluent, as preparations which are diluted but not succussed are ineffective.

Homeopathic remedies offer a wide variety of benefits:

- ▶ **Effectively treat the symptom of disease.**
- ▶ **Release toxins from storage sites in tissues.**
- ▶ **Facilitate drainage of toxins and their elimination from the body.**
- ▶ **Desensitize the body to prevent and treat allergic reactions.**
- ▶ **Increase one's ability to withstand stresses without undue harm.**
- ▶ **Antidote to substances which poison the system.**
- ▶ **Aid in the assimilation and absorption of nutrients in the body.**
- ▶ **Neutralize the action of free-radicals and help to repair and regenerate the damaged cells and tissues.**
- ▶ **Revitalize and support the immune system.**

Ingredients for these remedies are obtained from plants, naturally-occurring chemicals and minerals, animal substances, and other biological sources. More than half of the 3000 commonly used homeopathic remedies are derived from plant sources, such as roots, stems, leaves, bark, flowers, buds, fruits, berries, seeds, and whole plants. Other sources of homeopathic ingredients can be mineral (such as calcium), chemical (sulphur, etc.) or animal extract (snake venom).

Upon taking a homeopathic remedy, one may initially experience a mild, brief worsening of symptoms, called a *healing crisis*. This is taken as a sign that the remedy has allowed the disease to express itself and it is indeed correct for that illness. The healing crisis is usually followed by a disappearance of symptoms. Hahnemann felt

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that the remedy artificially reproduced the illness in the body, to stimulate the body's natural defenses to destroy the disease, and his observations of hundreds of patients supported this theory.

There are two primary school of thoughts in Homeopathy. In Classical Homeopathy, a single ingredient is given at a single potency, by the original method of Hahnemann. Complex Homeopathy, on the other and, embraces Hahnemann's later discoveries, incorporating the use of more than one ingredient, often in homaccords, or multiple potencies of the same ingredient, to adapt to the individual's changing needs through the course of therapy. Both approaches have been shown to be extremely effective in the hands of trained and experienced homeopaths.

Homeopathics are generally regarded by the FDA as safe, due to their extreme dilution. They are listed in the U.S. Homeopathic Pharmacopia and are controlled by the Homeopathic Pharmacopia Convention of the United States, which is responsible for establishing standards for th industry, in collaboration with the FDA.

These preparations are generally regarded as over-the-counter products, with claims usually limited to self treatment of diseases. The FDA does not use the same standards for approval of homeopathics as it does for chemical drugs. This is mainly due to the safety record of the homeopathic approach. However, the FDA's main concern is that patients do not replace conventionally researched and approved therapies with herbs and homeopathics in cases of serious or life threatening diseases.

There has been tremendous resurgence of interest in Homeopathy in recent years, as new research is confirming the effectiveness of homeopathic treatments. Thousands of health care professionals practice homeopathy in the U.S. Numerous training programs are now available to educate consumers and produce certified homeopathic practitioners.