

# Homeopathy Research news



**The Research Newsletter of the European Council for Classical Homeopathy  
and the European Network of Homeopathy Researchers • November 2005**

ECCH is represented in 27 countries in Europe including all countries in Western Europe and an increasing number of countries in eastern parts of Europe. It has active member associations in 23 countries.

ENHR consists of 41 members in 11 countries. Membership is open to researchers, research advisors and representatives of the homeopathy profession as well as patient representatives with an interest in the area of homeopathy research. The purpose of the ENHR is:

- To contribute to improving homeopathy research for the benefit of patients
- To contribute to carrying out international EU funded research projects within the area of homeopathy research
- For its members to inform each other about homeopathy research that is in the planning stages or being carried out, as well as published research articles

## **Alternative therapies may save money**

A recently published report commissioned by The Prince of Wales suggests that some complementary therapies could result in savings in healthcare costs. "Despite the fragmentary nature of the evidence, there seems good reason to believe that a number of complementary and alternative medicine treatments offer the possibility of significant savings in direct health costs," says the report.

The report focuses on five main therapies: acupuncture, homeopathy, chiropractic, osteopathy and herbal medicine. The report states that "There is a large literature on the costs and benefits of homeopathy, and many studies over the past 40 years – randomised controlled trials in humans and animals as well as cost-effectiveness studies – appear to suggest that homeopathy is better than placebo."



The economist who chaired the investigation for the report, Christopher Smallwood, said, "We are not talking about sweeping savings. What we are saying is that as far as individual therapies are concerned, some of them are likely to be cheaper than conventional medicine." What is more significant is that the report concludes that it is the potential savings for the wider economy that make introducing CAM disciplines into national health service provision particularly interesting. Millions of days off work are lost annually due to conditions such as back pain, infectious illnesses and depression, and CAM disciplines appear to be particularly effective in getting people suffering from such conditions back to work more quickly.

The report calls on the UK Government to instruct the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence to assess the cost effectiveness of such treatments, which according to the report, particularly deprived communities might benefit from.

*Reference: BMJ 2005;331:795 (8 October), doi:10.1136/bmj.331.7520.795-a*

*The Smallwood Report: The Role of Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the NHS. <http://www.freshminds.co.uk/aboutus/chr.htm>*

## Homeopathy found effective for menopausal problems

In a survey of 124 women suffering from menopausal complaints more than 80 percent reported improvement in their symptoms after homeopathic treatment<sup>1</sup>. The greatest response was seen in those reporting headaches, vasomotor symptoms, emotional/psychological symptoms and tiredness/fatigue as their primary symptoms.

Treatment was provided at Sheffield's National Health Service community menopause clinic, which has offered homeopathy since 1998. The service is provided for women with distressing menopausal symptoms who are not taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT) because it produced intolerable side-effects, they do not want to take it or they found it ineffective.

Other observational studies of homeopathic treatment of menopausal symptoms have also reported high levels of benefit in menopausal symptoms as well as improved mood and quality of life<sup>2,3</sup>.

### References:

1. Relton C, Weatherley-Jones E. Homeopathy service in a National Health Service community menopause clinic: audit of clinical outcomes. *Journal of the British Menopause Society* Vol. 11 No. 2 June 2005, p. 72-73.
2. Clover A, Ratsey D. Homeopathic treatment of hot flushes: a pilot study. *Homeopathy* 2002;91:75-9
3. Thompson EA, Reilly D. The homeopathic approach to the treatment of symptoms of oestrogen withdrawal in breast cancer patients. A prospective observational study. *Homeopathy* 2003;92:131-4

## Homeopathy effective in ADHD

In a newly published study "as it is practised" individualised homeopathic treatment was used to treat children diagnosed with ADHD. The study was randomised, double blind, placebo controlled and crossover. The authors concluded that 'The trial suggests scientific evidence of the effectiveness of homeopathy in the treatment of ADHD, particularly in the areas of behavioural and cognitive functions.'

A total of 62 children between the age of 6 and 16, who were diagnosed with ADHD, went through the trial. The children were split into two groups and received either verum for six weeks followed by placebo for six weeks, or vice-versa. Patients were tested using the Clinical Global Impression Scale (CGI), as well as parents reporting on their children's condition at the beginning of the trial and after each crossover period. Researchers found a significant long-term improvement after homeopathic treatment.

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Reference: Frei H et al. Homeopathic treatment of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: a randomised, double blind, placebo controlled crossover trial. *Eur J Pediatr*. 2005 Jul 27.

## Reproduced effect of substances diluted beyond Avogadro's number

In a recently published study researchers reproduced the effects of Arsenicum album 45x on the growth of arsenic poisoned wheat. In 1997 an Italian group of researchers tested the growth in wheat which had been previously been poisoned with material doses of arsenic. Results showed a significant difference between verum and placebo groups (+24%,  $p < 0.001$ ).

In the recently replicated trial researchers tested the effect of Arsenicum album 45x, water 45x or unpotentized water. Results showed that after seven days Arsenicum album 45x significantly inhibited wheat shoot growth (-3%) compared to treatment with unpotentized water and water 45x ( $p = 0.011$  and  $p = 0.037$ ).

The authors conclude that the result of the replication trial is a reversal of the original study, since Arsenicum album 45x inhibited wheat shoot growth instead of enhancing it. Nevertheless, high homeopathic potencies may induce statistically significant effects in biological systems. The magnitude and direction of these effects seem to depend on yet unknown parameters.

Reference: Binder M, Saumgartner S, Thurneysen A. The Effects of a 45x Potency of Arsenicum album on Wheat Seedling Growth – a Reproduction Trial. *Forsch Komplementärmed Klass Naturheilkd* 2005;12:284-291.

## Increasing number of Norwegian children treated with homeopathy

A recently published survey showed that the percentage of Norwegian children treated with homeopathy has increased significantly over the past ten years<sup>1</sup>. The percentage for patients under the age of 16 increased from 26 in 1994 to 36 ten years later. Seven out of ten children see homeopaths for respiratory complaints, ear or skin problems. The survey, which was carried out in a homeopathic centre in Stavanger on the Western coast of Norway, included 700 patients in 1994/95 and 700 in 2003/04.

Adults also see homeopaths for respiratory complaints, which covers more than 20 percent of all patients. This is followed by skin and psychological complaints with 15 and 11 percent respectively. Respiratory complaints are especially recurring infections. Another large group suffers from allergies.

## Many patients are healthcare practitioners

As for Norwegian general practitioners the majority of patients treated by homeopaths are female<sup>2</sup>. More than half of all patients have undergone higher education, which is far beyond the average population. Almost eight percent are statutorily recognised healthcare practitioners and more than 15 percent work within the area of healthcare and social affairs.

## Most recommended through word by mouth – doctors are still sceptical

The survey shows that 66 percent come to see a homeopath after other patients recommended them to do so, and another 20 percent have been to see a homeopath previously (minimum two years ago). There has only been a slight increase in the number patients who have been referred by a medical doctor (increase from 1.3 percent in 1994 to 4 percent in 2004). A reason for this may be that medical doctors are still sceptical to homeopathy. Homeopaths have repeatedly asked for improved co-operation, to ensure medical treatment and especially for the one quarter of patients who do not see a doctor prior to consulting a homeopath.

An earlier survey showed that 80 percent of all general practitioners thought they should have some knowledge about the most common CAM therapies<sup>3</sup>. And more than half of all GPs stated that they were willing to refer patients with one or several specific diseases to a homeopath<sup>4</sup>. This should be a good starting point for improved dialogue between homeopaths and the medical establishment. Nurses are in general more positive to CAM therapies, and 50 percent stated in another survey that homeopathy should be a part of the public healthcare service<sup>5</sup>.

### References:

1. Viksveen P, Steinsbekk A. Changes in patients visiting a homeopathic clinic in Norway from 1994 to 2004. *Homeopathy* (2005) 94, 222–228.
2. Rokstad K, Straand J, Sandvik H. pasientkontakter i allmennpraksis. *Tidsskr Nor Lægeforen* 1997; 117: 659–664.
3. Aasland OG, Borchgrevink C F, Fugelli P. Norwegian physicians and alternative medicine. Knowledge, attitudes and experiences. *Tidsskr Nor Lægeforen* 1997; 117(17): 2464–2468.
4. Pedersen EJ, Norheim AJ, Fønnebø V. Attitudes of Norwegian physicians to homeopathy. Questionnaire among 2019 physicians. *Tidsskr Nor Lægeforen* 1996; 116(18): 2186–2189.
5. Sykepleiere sier ja til alternativ behandling. *Tidsskriftet Sykepleien* nr.17 – 1998.



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## Are homeopathic remedies harmless?

Although homeopathy is known to be safe in treatment of both children, adults, pregnant women and animals, little data has been published on side effects of homeopathic remedies. Italian researchers found nine (2.68 %) adverse reactions in out of 335 follow-up visits over a one year period. In one case the reaction was due to lactose intolerance. The study was prospective and registered consecutive follow-up visits in a homeopathic clinic at Campo di Marte Hospital, Lucca (Italy). The authors have concluded that adverse events to homeopathic drugs exist and are distinguishable from homeopathic aggravations, but are rare and not severe.

Reference: Endrizzi C, Rossi E, Crudeli L, Garibaldi D. Harm in homeopathy: Aggravations, adverse drug events or medication errors? *Homeopathy*. 2005 Oct;94(4):233-40.

## **Editorial: Low quality Lancet article only shows researchers' bias**

In August The Lancet published an extremely low quality research article analysing homeopathy trials that the Lancet's editor then blindly used to attack homeopathy and declare 'the end of homeopathy'

In response to the content of the actual research article itself ECCH wishes to make the following points:

- 1. Poor Methodology:** Scientists across the world have condemned the article for its poor methodology.
- 2. Six previous meta-analysis of homeopathy trials have showed positive results**
- 3. Inappropriate methodology:** The report professes to be based on 110 homeopathy studies, but only 8 studies were selected to draw the conclusion that homeopathy doesn't work. The report also looked at research that is widely considered to be inappropriate for testing homeopathy. Most studies were not of high homeopathic quality.
- 4. Studies with positive results were ignored:** The authors admitted that they ruled out many trials that showed that homeopathy works.
- 5. Researchers and editor biased:** The researchers and the Lancet editor are known opponents of homeopathy.
- 6. Unrevealed facts:** Other studies that were included in the larger Swiss study (of which the Lancet article was just one) showed that homeopathy does have positive effect. These were suppressed for political reasons to do with the Swiss Government wanting to justify stopping health insurance payments for CAM

ECCH has produced this short response, describing why the article published in the Lancet this Autumn does NOT prove anything but the researchers' and Lancet editor's bias. The full list of points can be obtained by contacting ECCH at [homeopat@email.com](mailto:homeopat@email.com) A full scientific critique of the research article and ECCH's response to it can be found on the ECCH web-site at: <http://www.homeopathy-ecch.org/content/section/1/2/>

## **Contact addresses**

### **European Council for Classical Homeopathy**

School House, Market Place, Kenninghall, Norfolk NR16 2AH, United Kingdom  
Telephone & Fax: (44) 1953 888 163 Email: [ecch@homeopathy-ecch.org](mailto:ecch@homeopathy-ecch.org)  
Web-site: [www.homeopathy-ecch.org](http://www.homeopathy-ecch.org)

### **European Network of Homeopathy Researchers**

Kate Chatfield [kchatfield@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:kchatfield@uclan.ac.uk)  
Petter Viksveen [homeopat@email.com](mailto:homeopat@email.com)