

The Challenge to Professionalism Presented by Homeopathy

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The following lecture, presented in a required course on nonprescription products, is given to students who are in the terminal year of a Bachelor of Science program. It is heavily laden with facts whose goal is to achieve cognitive learning. However, it also attempts to influence the students' attitudes, in order to facilitate their growth as caring professionals who can retain a firm scientific and ethical grounding in their practice. The topic is one seldom covered in nonprescription product courses(1). As a basis for the specific discussion of homeopathy, the lecturer makes use of two articles which discuss the subject(2,3).

BEGINNINGS OF HOMEOPATHY

Homeopathy was conceived by a German physician, Samuel Christian Friedrich Hahnemann(4-9). He was appalled by the state of medicine in the late 1700s and early 1800s. The treatment given to George Washington during his terminal illness illustrates what passed for medical care in Hahnemann's day(6). Washington may have had a mild case of bronchitis or acute epiglottitis. His physicians bled him at least four times, removing 32 ounces of blood during one of these episodes. They blistered his trunk and extremities, injected him with crude devices, and administered at least three doses of laxatives and an emetic. This age of Heroic Medicine subscribed to the philosophy that bleeding and blistering, vomiting and purgation removed noxious agents from the body, following which health would be restored. Washington died two days after these treatments.

Hahnemann was unwilling to subject patients to this agenda, which he referred to as "allopathic medicine". Hahnemann chose to remain in the medical field, however, eventually developing a new branch of medicine he referred to as homeopathy. Even now, two centuries later, homeopathy is embraced by those who see it as the answer to medical problems.

A contrast between Hahnemann's homeopathic approach to disease and conventional medicine is revealing. In any medical subspecialty, one can point to literally dozens of great scientific minds (e.g., physicians, biochemists, physiologists) whose work was fundamental in understanding that subspecialty. However, Hahnemann's disciples credited him with an exceedingly fertile mind, able to produce *de novo* an entire system of medicine, purporting to give its practitioners the ability to diagnose and treat all diseases, solely according to the doctrines elaborated by its founder two centuries ago. His followers aver that everything he ever wrote is of historic medical interest, and that he is one of the four greatest physicians in history, exceeded only by Hippocrates, Galen and Paracelsus(10).

THE DOCTRINES OF HOMEOPATHY

Individualization of Therapy. Hahnemann formulated the principle that medications and doses must be highly individualized for each patient following an exhaustive and lengthy examination of each patient by a homeopathic physician(5,11). Because each treatment is highly individu-

alized based on the physical, mental, and emotional status of each patient, patients who would be given identical treatment with conventional medicine are often given different treatments under homeopathy(12). In other words, two patients with the identical disease may not benefit from the same homeopathic treatment(13,14).

A point of confusion is that the contents of OTC homeopathic products are listed in abbreviated Latin (e.g., *Anas barbariae hepatis et cordis extractum 200CK*, *Croton tig.*) making it difficult for consumers and medical practitioners to discern exactly what the patient is taking for the labeled indication on each product, unless one has a purchased a reference which allows interpretation of the Latin terms(15,16).

Provings. Hahnemann believed that medications should be "proved" through administration to healthy individuals(7,10,17). Medications were first taken by Hahnemann and family members, then by his students and other physicians. Provers recorded all symptoms as the conventional (not homeopathic) doses were gradually increased. Careful observation yielded the basis upon which the law of similars was founded. Among the criticisms of provings: the actions of medications when given to healthy individuals may not be reflective of their pharmacology in ill patients (e.g., renal failure); in fact, they do not even provide evidence that the medications are of any use at all in any illness. Also, these pseudo-scientific experiments were not blinded, nor were they placebo-controlled(5,7,8,18).

Law of Similars. This principle is also known as "like cures like," or the Latin *similia similibus curantur*. Briefly, it states that symptoms may be relieved by administering to an individual homeopathic drugs which are known to cause in higher doses those same symptoms in healthy people(9,19-24). In order to explain this principle, Hahnemann invented a new and unique mechanism, which he stated applied to all diseases: by giving a medication which during the provings caused the symptoms which one wishes to alleviate, the homeopath stimulates the body's homeostatic mechanisms to return the human system to balance. Thus, a medication which causes cholera-like diarrhea (white hellebore) is useful for the diarrhea of cholera(20). A medication known to cause sleeplessness or stimulation such as caffeine is a remedy for similar symptoms such as insomnia(11). Other remedies are presented in Table I.

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Table I. Quackery illustrated: Various homeopathic remedies

Medical problem	Homeopathic remedy	Justification for use
Bronchial Carcinoma(73)	Nosode of Carcinoma Bronchium	Rationale not provided
Vomiting (5,74)	Ipecac, Nux vomica	They cause vomiting
Homesickness (75)	Red Pepper	It produces feeling of homesickness
Cystitis, Burned Skin (30,76,77)	Cantharidin (Spanish Fly)	A potent vesicant
Broken Love Affair (25,75)	Table Salt	Allows one to express emotions
Asthma(58)	Cockroach Extract	Causes allergies
Past Exposure to X-Rays (28)	Radium Bromide	Removes effects of radiation
Allergies(28)	Honey Bee Extract, Histamine, Milk, Chocolate, Wheat, Beef, Yeast	They produce or worsen allergies in the patient to whom they are given
Reaction to DPT Immunization(28)	Diphtheritic Membrane	Unlocks cellular mechanism that was disturbed
Idiopathic Thrombocytic Purpura(28)	Spleen Sarcode	Directs body's energy to be focused in the splenic tissues
Insomnia(28)	Crude Coffee	Causes insomnia
Suicidal Depression(28)	Metallic Gold	Rationale not provided
Rhinitis, Sinusitis (79)	Nasal Mucus, Sinusitis Nosode	Rationale not provided
Infant Fever Suppositories (80)	Belladonna	Rationale not provided
Degenerative Arthritis (81)	Poison Ivy, Embryo, Placenta	Rationales not provided
Salmonella Food Poisoning (40)	Arsenic Trioxide	Rationale not provided
Vertigo (82)	Petroleum, Ambergris	They cause vertigo in "provings"

Honey bee is a typical homeopathic nostrum (labeled as *Apis mellifica* on homeopathic packaging). Nephrotic nephritis may cause symptoms such as sharp pain, swelling, and irritation. This constellation of symptoms is similar to those appearing when one is stung by a bee; ergo, homeopathic honey bee would be a logical homeopathic remedy for nephrotic nephritis(11). Using the same reasoning, the author of a paper supporting homeopathy suggested that the itching and burning pain of intercostal herpes zoster would be alleviated by *apis*(20).

A major misapplication of Hahnemann's *similia* concept is known as isopathy. Rather than administer a substance producing similar symptoms, some homeopathic practitioners administer the same substance that is causing the symptoms, e.g., administration of pollen in hay fever(12,25). The use of isopathy has also caused homeopaths to administer arsenic, bismuth and lead to laboratory animals after loading them with those same metals(26). While some studies seemed to show positive results from this practice, others show no difference. Presumably, homeopathically prepared lead would be administered to humans suffering from lead toxicity. A French correspondent reported administering oral granules of their own blood prepared by a leading homeopathic manufacturer to patients suffering from recurrent oral or genital herpes.(27) The correspondent alleged that blood isopathy for a duration of six months attenuated local crises. In another case, homeopathic practitioners administered a homeopathic product prepared from the patient's own urine to an 8-year-old boy suffering from hyperactivity(28).

Another example of isopathy is seen in the practice of preparing and administering homeopathic nosodes. Nosodes may be prepared from pus, diseased tissue such as a cancerous growth, the stool (these are termed bowel nosodes), or the pathogenic organism itself, such as bacilli from sputum(24). As to their possible use, "homeopaths sometimes

use nosodes (homeopathic preparations) of epidemic infections...at the end of an acute attack to complete the recovery."(29) A homeopathic over-the-counter product containing the nosodes *Candida albicans* and *Candida parapsilosis* is sold for vaginal yeast infections in many pharmacies. This product was the subject of an FDA seizure, but the government's complaint was dismissed pending acceptance of the ingredients into the Homeopathic Pharmacopeia of the United States (HPUS)(30).

Hahnemann himself did not accept isopathy(24), addressing the practice as follows(10):

...cure is effected only by opposing a simillimum to a simillimum. To attempt to cure by means of the very same morbific potency (per Idem) contradicts all normal human understanding and hence all experience. Those who first brought Isopathy to notice, probably thought of the benefit which mankind received from cowpox vaccination ... But to use a human morbific matter (a Psorin taken from the itch in man) as a remedy for the same human itch or for evils arising there from is—? Nothing can result from this but trouble and aggravation of the disease.

Those who practice isopathy have clearly departed from homeopathic principles envisioned by the founder of homeopathy. Thus, their reliance on the legal loophole provided to homeopathic products is questionable. At the very least, they must address the scientific framework behind their unproven, non-homeopathic remedies.

Doctrine of Vital Force. Hahnemann asserted that disease is not due to any external agent, but is merely a departure from health(19). This vitalist doctrine states that living organisms are not subject to the laws of biochemistry, physics, or chemistry. Rather, nonmaterial laws govern all living things(31). Spiritual changes in the body are said to be the

only cause of disease(32). According to Hahnemann(10):

The causes of our maladies cannot be material, since the least foreign material substance, however mild it may appear to us, if introduced into our blood-vessels, is promptly ejected by the vital force, as though it were a poison...no disease, in a word, is caused by any material substance, but that every one is only and always a peculiar, virtual, dynamic derangement of the health...

The classical homeopath does not believe that microorganisms cause disease(18,33). Thus, it should be anathema for the homeopathic MD to prescribe antibiotics, since their mechanisms of action are diametrically opposed to the Law of Similars; further, admitting a need for their use would require the homeopath to depart from another of Hahnemann's doctrines. Indeed, in homeopathic colleges, studies of bacteriology were omitted(34).

Doctrine of Minimum Dose (also known as the Law of Infinitesimals). Hahnemann also required that medications be highly diluted prior to administration (10,35). Starting with the original powder or liquid, the homeopathic practitioner may dilute one part with 99 parts of solvent to obtain what is termed a 1C (centesimal) potency(24). Should one part of the 1C potency be added to 99 parts of solvent yet again, the practitioner obtains a 2C potency (1/10,000 dilution). If the dilution is 1/10 (decimal dilution), the designation IX (decimal) is used instead(23). Paradoxically, Hahnemann stated that the potency actually increases as the medications are progressively diluted (and succeeded as described below). This is reflected in his use of the word "potentizing" as a misleading substitute for dilution. Thus, a dilution of 10^{400} would be far more potent than 10^{24} if properly prepared.

Avogadro's number (6.023×10^{23}) describes the quantity of molecules in one mole of substance(9,21,23,24). According to this fundamental law, dilutions beyond 12C (1×10^{25}) cannot contain a single molecule of the original substance, a fact homeopathic supporters freely admit is theoretically true(23). Hahnemann's theory implies that some of the original matter or energy derived from that matter will remain, regardless of the dilutions employed(11). Further refutation of this concept will be furnished as we discuss succussion.

The Process of Succussion (Potentizing, Dynamization). Hahnemann believed that medications in their crude stage are inert(10,36). In order to allow these otherwise inert crude substances to affect the human body, Hahnemann asserted that the hidden, dynamic powers must be released. Thus, it was not sufficient to actually dilute the medications. After each dilution, the homeopath was exhorted to "potentize" or "dynamize" the dilution through rubbing and shaking the dilution to make it "stronger"(10,37). In a Hahnemannian example, the pharmacist would triturate one grain of substance for three hours with 300 grains of milk sugar. One grain of this dilution would be dissolved in 500 drops of alcohol and water. One drop of this is diluted with 100 drops of alcohol and the resulting bottle given 100 strong succussions with the hand against a leather bound book(10).

These dynamized medicines were said to be able to "act in an almost spiritual manner on our life; *i.e.*, on our sensible and irritable fibre(38)." The trituration or pounding

(succussion) allegedly provides a transfer of energy that allows homeopaths to sidestep the paradox of Avogadro's number. Therefore, following homeopathic logic, even though there are no molecules left, the "potentized" solution has actually become strengthened with each successive dilution, as long as it is dynamized at each step.

Conventional medicine charges that homeopathic dilutions are essentially placebos and that succussion and potentizing do nothing to increase potency of the dilutions. Since Hahnemann evidently did not understand that high dilutions removed all traces of medication, it was left to his followers to reconcile the contradictions of his theories with atomic theory and modern physics(21,39). To give them full credit, homeopathic supporters developed a novel explanation for the ability of water to retain the characteristics of the absent medication. Briefly, they suggest that the water provides a template for the molecule of medication(23,40). Perhaps through a liquid crystal process, they speculate that the structure of the medication has been transmitted through the entire solvent. Thus, it has been "potentized". Homeopaths claim that nuclear magnetic resonance studies can distinguish between simple and succussed solutions(23). However, a study quoted in support of these claims appeared in the *Journal of the American Institute of Homeopathy*, which was not available in a major medical library. The journal is not indexed in Index Medicus, which greatly hampers its retrievability.

In another supportive attempt, known as the Benveniste affair, editors of the journal *Nature* published a paper seeming to confirm activity of highly diluted solutions(41). However, the study was attacked on several fronts; its present status in the debate on homeopathy is questionable(42-46). Briefly, the method by which characteristics of the medication are transferred through succussion is unknown; until such time as irrefutable proof of a scientific basis for potentization is forthcoming in accepted scientific journals, succussion will remain unacceptable to conventional medicine(21).

The process of succussion is another of Hahnemann's doctrines that modern homeopaths adhere to closely. In a concession to automation, they use succussing machines, even though the founder of homeopathy neither envisioned nor sanctioned such a departure from his methods(20,47).

Psora. Hahnemann also developed the theory that there are essentially only three chronic diseases, known as miasmas in Hahnemannian jargon(38,48). One was sycosis, or fig-wart disease, which Hahnemann appears to equate with gonorrhea. Another was syphilis. It was the third (psora), however, which Hahnemann asserted was the "most important of all". In his own words:

First of all, the great truth is established that all chronic ailments, all great, and the greatest, long continuing diseases (excepting the few venereal ones) spring from Psora alone and only find their thorough cure in the cure of the Psora...(38)

Of course, modern homeopaths cannot even seriously follow Hahnemann's assertion that some ill-defined infectious disorder such as psora (itch) is the underlying cause of such chronic illnesses as cancer, asthma, gout and mental disturbances(4). However, as late as 1986, a homeopathic physician referred to this theory of psora as "Another important concept formulated by Hahnemann(11)." Mod-

ern homeopaths do assert that suppression of symptoms, even superficial symptoms, is the cause of illnesses such as cancer, asthma, gout, chronic otitis, and mental disturbances.

LACK OF INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN HAHNEMANN'S DOCTRINES

A critical analysis of Hahnemann's doctrines begins with an examination of Koch's four postulates for studying the etiology of any infectious disease (e.g., the same pathogen must be present in every case of the disease; the pathogen must be isolated from the diseased host and grown in pure culture, the pathogen from the culture must also cause the disease, the pathogen must again be isolated from the animal and be shown to be the same as the original pathogen)(49). Their simple beauty and irrefutable logic were characterized by a leading professor of homeopathic surgery as a "fiasco."(18).

However, compared to Koch's postulates, Hahnemann's doctrines are wholly independent and unconnected. Further, they lack any logical progression of thought, and each is either "internally inconsistent or divorced from reality."(4)

LACK OF SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT FOR HAHNEMANN'S DOCTRINES

To gain the acceptance of legitimate medicine, it is imperative that homeopathic supporters provide irrefutable proof for each of Hahnemann's doctrines, laws and principles, using the principles of the legitimate scientific method. Two centuries have passed since its inception; the veritable lack of evidence for the fundamental principles of homeopathy is puzzling at best and devastating at worst.

Homeopaths were long ago challenged to submit any of their medications to double-blind studies(36). Several attempts to carry out this type of trial were met with incredulity and criticized because of crippling methodological problems. A recent review of controlled trials of homeopathy concluded that although some studies seem to show positive results with homeopathy, they are insufficient to allow followers of conventional medicine to draw definite conclusions about its validity(12). Among problems cited with existing research were poor methodology and a possible publication bias, both on the part of conventional medical journals and "alternative" medical journals. One simply has to look in the Index Medicus for a given year under the heading of homeopathy to see how little research has been carried out in this area. Further, with regard to any specific homeopathic medicine, one may compare the paucity of research data in any recent year for a typical medicine used in homeopathy (e.g., *pulsatilla*)(40) to the vast research devoted to any legitimate medication (e.g., *ranitidine*) to confirm that active scientific inquiry of homeopathic medications is virtually nonexistent. If conventional medicine is expected to accept the validity of an alternative medical system whose fundamental doctrines directly contradict the traditional, established laws of physics, much work remains to be done by homeopaths.

It is imperative that homeopathy submit to legitimate scientific research in accepted scientific journals. Supporters sidestep the issue by pointing out the large number of followers homeopathy has garnered worldwide. This argument is spurious since innumerable individuals subscribe

tenaciously to such belief systems as astrology, Atlantis, pyramid power, and plant awareness, but that does not make these beliefs any more valid. If anything, the large number of homeopathy converts in certain countries (e.g., India, France) is a scathing indictment of science education in those countries.

DECLINE OF HOMEOPATHY

Homeopathy was dealt a series of body blows in the 20th century that largely rendered it irrelevant. One of these was the rising popularity of the scientific approach to medicine(50). Further, a major problem for homeopaths was the discovery of organisms that could cause disease, directly contradicting Hahnemann. Due to this and other medical advances, the influence of homeopathy had largely waned by the year 1938. In that year Congress passed the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. Senator Royal Copeland ensured that the new law contained a section recognizing remedies included in the HPUS as drugs(5). Copeland (D-NY), a 1921 graduate of Hahnemann College in Philadelphia, also was one of the leading homeopathic practitioners of the time(51).

RESURGENCE OF HOMEOPATHY

Homeopathic medicine waned in popularity steadily until the advent of the holistic health movement of the 1970s and the "New Age" Movement of the 1980s(5,52,53). New Age medicine is characterized by its broad acceptance of homeopathy and of such fringe medical practices as crystal healing, reflexology, iridology, color healing, and aromatherapy. The rise of homeopathy may also be reflective of a rising "disenchantment with modern science and a return to occultism."(54) One survey of homeopathic patients revealed that the majority were also involved in other alternative medical practices such as primalism, polarity, shiatsu massage, and rolfing (33). Further, 81 percent of these patients stated that dissatisfaction with conventional health care was the reason they turned to homeopathy.

One author suggests that the resurgence of homeopathy is related to the human tendency to turn in times of trouble to doctrines without a rational basis but with a stamp of conviction(19). Indeed, upon reading Hahnemann's books the reader cannot help but be impressed with his overwhelming belief in his own work, as unsupported by fact as it is. Still, it is difficult to understand how one's belief, no matter how strong, can justify homeopathic treatment for mild traumatic brain injury with homeopathy, as proposed in an issue of the lay journal, *Alternative & Complementary Therapies*(55).

Another issue in the resurgence of homeopathy concerns the fundamental doctrine of individualization of therapy. Numerous over-the-counter (OTC) products are being sold under the guise of homeopathy for the untrained layman to purchase without consultation with a homeopathic practitioner(7,12,14). The manufacturers evidently subscribe to a non-Hahnemannian view that combinations of several homeopathic substances formulated as OTCs can be tailored to a disease, rather than to a patient's symptoms(14). This attitude is the focus of disagreement among homeopathic physicians, who would never allow this polypharmacy to be used(12,13).

THE "MODERN" HOMEOPATHIC PRACTITIONER

As originally envisioned, homeopathy was only to be practiced

by fully qualified medical physicians with "advanced" training in homeopathy(56). Some physicians practicing homeopathy combine it with conventional medicine, seemingly demonstrating a lack of full confidence in the homeopathic belief system(57). These practitioners may have chosen one or two isolated sections of homeopathy to utilize, never fully evaluating the scientifically unsupported set of Hahnemann's teachings(19).

Homeopathy's leading advocates are said to stress that homeopathy can only be fully respected when practiced by an MD(20). However, such is not now the case. There are reports of homeopathy being practiced by chiropractors, acupuncturists, veterinarians, nurses, physician's assistants and dentists (15,56,58). Those calling themselves homeopaths may also have training in another fringe medical field such as naturopathy or anthroposophy(9). They may have little or no formal medical training, such as employees of health food stores, and herb stores. In regard to these non-MD, non-medically trained homeopathic practitioners, the FDA has expressed concern that homeopathic medications intended for use in serious conditions, including injections, are available to untrained people(5).

SAFETY OF HOMEOPATHIC PRODUCTS

It is vital to note that the current FDA compliance policy for homeopathic drugs contains the following: "A product's compliance with requirements of the Homeopathic Pharmacopeia of the United States.... does not establish that it has been shown by appropriate means to be safe, effective, and not misbranded for its intended use."(59)

Patients have been endangered directly and indirectly by homeopathy. Indirect hazards cause a delay in proper diagnosis and/or treatment of disease. A fundamental danger in homeopathy is that its practitioners "neglect important symptoms, denying patients effective therapy."(60) As an example, a 16-month-old New Zealand boy's mother took him to a family practitioner who was also a homeopath for treatment of wheat and dairy allergies(61). The practitioner used electrode probing to reveal allergies and "inherited chronic 'miasms' from ancestors who may have had venereal or mental disease," predicting that these miasms would cause the child's death at age 60 unless they were removed by homeopathic treatment. The physician failed to treat the allergies.

In another case, a one-month-old British boy experienced eczema(62). The parents refused conventional treatment, instead administering medications prescribed by a registered homeopath, which included iron and arsenic. When they finally brought him to an emergency room after five months of homeopathic treatment, the eczema had become secondarily infected with several organisms (including beta-hemolytic Strep A). Severe exudation resulted in hyponatremia, hypoalbuminemia, and limb edema. He required three weeks of intensive topical and intravenous treatment before discharge.

The FDA, in a 1982 survey of homeopathic manufacturers, found nonprescription homeopathic medications being sold for serious conditions such as heart and kidney disease and cancer(5). A homeopathic extract of tarantula was sold for multiple sclerosis and an extract of cobra venom for cancer. On the basis of this alarming situation, the FDA formulated the current set of conditions under which non-prescription homeopathic drugs may be marketed. The

compliance policy specifically restricts manufacturers to self-limiting conditions in order to reduce the risk of indirect hazards(59).

In a visit to a herbal store in February 1992, the author obtained nonprescription homeopathic products for liver and gall bladder complaints, bilious conditions, dizzy spells, appetite loss, and depression. A chart located next to these remedies highlighted products intended to purify blood, treat burns, aid breathing, maintain hair, aid glandular activity, eliminate excess water, remove poison-charged fluids, and treat rheumatic ailments(65). The status of these indications as self-limiting conditions is questionable at best. For instance, a patient being treated for congestive heart failure might decline to continue therapy with furosemide when presented with a less expensive homeopathic product which claims to eliminate excess water. Thus, despite FDA policy, current labeling may present indirect hazards to patients.

Supporters argue that homeopathic products are safe due to the dilutions employed. In the opinion of the FDA, however, some practices now being carried out in the name of homeopathy pose serious direct dangers to patients(5). Direct hazards include a case of severe exacerbations of allergic eczema due to a homeopathic medication(63). The patient, allergic to dichromate, was given homeopathic tablets containing dichromate, an example of the dangers of isopathy. In another case, a patient developed acute pancreatitis following a visit to a chiropractor who dispensed homeopathic tablets for neck pain(15). The authors point to one or more of the nineteen ingredients of this preparation as the probable cause.

A dentist discovered interstitial caries in the deciduous molars of an 8-year-old girl. Her parents had given her nightly sublingual homeopathic sucrose-based tablets, with further pills if she awoke. When the parents stopped this therapy, the progression of caries was halted(64). The lactose base of other homeopathic products produced a violent disturbance of several days' duration in a child with lactose intolerance(61).

ENCROACHMENT OF HOMEOPATHY IN PHARMACY

How Homeopathy Survives. Companies selling homeopathic products are not required to prove their efficacy or safety for their advertised condition(s). Of course, all other prescription and nonprescription products must do so(65). This double standard is the major reason that homeopathy is enjoying a comeback.

Why Pharmacists Become Homeopaths. Pharmacy journals contain numerous letters and articles from pharmacists who apparently recommend homeopathic medications to their customers, and other articles which are laudatory in tone and outlook. An editorial in a leading pharmacy journal bemoaned the financial frustration that pharmacists experience in today's third-party climate. It then went on to list methods that pharmacists can use to survive, including homeopathy(66). Evidently, economic issues drive some pharmacists to turn to homeopathy.

Then there are pharmacists who evidently believe sincerely that the products are helpful. This belief may stem from a lack of understanding of the placebo effect and the power of suggestion or overconfidence in the worth of anecdotal evidence and individual reports(67).

How Pharmacists Can Become Homeopaths. Becoming a homeopathic pharmacist is as simple as ordering the products and recommending them. Past students have mentioned that someone (a wholesaler?) has shipped unordered homeopathic products to their pharmacy.

Pharmacists wishing to learn more about homeopathy may take a home study course offered by "The British Institute" (which is located in California)(68). Pharmacists may also learn about homeopathy while attending national conventions. For example, the 1995 APhA Convention in Orlando featured at least one homeopathic exhibitor(69). The organization also accepted grant support from this company.

Consequences of the Pharmacy-Homeopathy Connection.

Pharmacy cannot stand further erosions of its scientific credibility at the very time it is striving to enter the realm of pharmaceutical care. Yet, pharmacists have been accused of having unsafe and/or ineffective FDA-banned nonprescription products on their shelves in the pages of a national magazine(70). The widely publicized GAO report seemed to conclude that pharmacy counseling would be so inadequate as to justify denial of a third class of drugs(71).

Consumer Reports covered Yeast Gard[®], Vagisil Yeast Control[®], and Vaginex Yeast Care[®], in an article entitled, "A 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-to-1 shot"(65). The article exposed these products as "among the most egregious examples of an unfortunate trend—the infiltration of homeopathic remedies onto many drugstore shelves."

A recent article in *Time*, titled, "Is Homeopathy Good Medicine," quotes a spokesman for the National Association of Retail Druggists: "'we have not done a scientific analysis of whether the products are good, bad, or indifferent.' But, he adds, 'we see homeopathy as a valuable market niche'."(72) The same article quotes Stephen Barrett, MD, a board member of the National Council Against Health Fraud, "They (pharmacists) don't even discuss among themselves whether selling an ineffective product is an ethical issue." One can only imagine what will happen if the popular press continues to expose this trend.

CONCLUSION

I have endeavored to present a mental conundrum to you. Homeopathy and legitimate medicine are two radically different branches of medicine. If one subscribes to legitimate medicine, for example, she/he must believe that doubling the strength of a medicine provides greater benefit. Then, to also believe in homeopathy, one must at the same time believe that diluting medicine makes it stronger. How can one accommodate these mutually exclusive, contradictory thoughts? The mental gymnastics required to embrace homeopathy would be unacceptable for most of us. However, when you have entered practice, you will be forced to decide for yourself whether you can reconcile this issue and many others just as unsettling. The health of your patients is critically dependent on your decisions. While it may make good business sense to sell homeopathic products, you must listen to a higher voice, one which speaks to you about the more lasting issues of honor and integrity.

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