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PERCEPTIONS OF HOMOEOPATHY

INTRODUCTION

Following a recent call to ban homoeopathic medicine within the National Health Service (NHS), the purpose of this paper is to understand what people think about homoeopathy, and how meaning is drawn both from first-hand experience of its use and personal belief or cosmology. This research looks at people's beliefs, narratives and experiences about health and healthcare, exploring attitudes towards homoeopathy within the wider context of its cultural, medical and political standing. It also asks questions about attitudes towards pharmaceutical companies and medications within current the healthcare system in the United Kingdom (UK).

Homoeopathy, a system of alternative medicine developed by Dr Samuel Hahnemann in 1796, is based on the doctrine that 'like cures like'. He believed homoeopathy to be an instrument to be used for health and for a higher purpose of existence, and rooted it in a cosmology where all things seek a form of balance.¹ Hahnemann stated: '... the spirit-like vital force (dynamis) animating the material human organism reigns in supreme sovereignty.... maintaining the sensations and activities of all the parts of the living organism in a harmony that obliges wonderment'.²

It is unclear how much Hahnemann was influenced by Paracelsus, although both agreed on the doctrine of correspondence, the law of similars, and the importance of harmony within the human organism.³ Paracelsus wrote, 'Nature... is an organism in which all natural things harmonise and sympathise with each other'.⁴ Franz Hartmann, in his work on the life of Paracelsus, commented: 'His object was to re-establish in the diseased organism the necessary equilibrium...'⁵ Peter Morrell noted:

¹ Samuel Hahnemann, *Organon Of Medicine* (Germany: 1810) p. 9.

² Samuel Hahnemann, *Organon of Medicine*, trans. by Jost Kunzli, Alain Naude, and Peter Pendleton (Boston, MA: J.P. Tarcher, Inc., 1982) para-9.

³ Linn J. Boyd, *A study of the simile in medicine* (Philadelphia, PA: Boericke and Tafel, 1936) p. 16.

⁴ Paracelsus, *Philosophia Et Medicinae Utriusque Compendium* (Basel: 1568).

⁵ Franz Hartmann, *The life of Philippus Theophrastus Bombast of Hohenheim, known by the name of Paracelsus and The Substance of his Teachings*, 2nd edn (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1896) p. 59.

‘Hahnemann perhaps discovered similar ideas to Paracelsus but from a different route, through his own experimentation and research and thus wished to stress the originality of his own work’.⁶

Homoeopathy has long divided opinion within the medical and pharmaceutical communities.⁷ Richard Gerber, in his book *Vibrational Medicine*, considers opposition to homoeopathy to be centred around allopathic reductionist philosophy that sees both medicine and our bodies in a mechanistic model.⁸ Clare Dyer, writing in the *British Medical Journal*, suggests this view led to homoeopathy being banned within the NHS and doctors mounting legal challenges to its practice.⁹ A 2015 NHS report considers it to be ineffective and costly, stating: ‘... the principles on which homoeopathy is based are “scientifically implausible”... there is no good quality evidence that homoeopathy is effective treatment for any health condition’, and adds that ‘This is also the view of the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally Davies’.¹⁰

The inability to prove homoeopathy’s effectiveness within current scientific and medical paradigms has led some to think that homoeopathy might work, but as a mechanism of placebo with no medical therapeutic reference, and that you need to believe in it in order for it to work, according to Steven Novella.¹¹ For *Guardian* journalist Rachel Roberts, any explanation of ‘how it works’ is less important than the experience of it working.¹²

⁶ Peter Morrell, ‘Preface’, in John Henry Clarke, *Hahnemann and Paracelsus* (Homoeopathic Publishing Company, 1923). Available at: <<http://homeoint.org/morrell/clarke/prefacemorrell.htm>> [Accessed 24 June 2019].

⁷ Aijing Shang et al, ‘Are the Clinical Effects of Homoeopathy Placebo Effects? Comparative Study of Placebo-Controlled Trials of Homoeopathy and Allopathy’, *The Lancet* 366 (2005), 726–732, <[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(05\)67177-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(05)67177-2)> [Accessed 9 May 2019]; Jayamala Gupte and Isaac Bober, ‘Magic water, or not?: Homeopathy continues to divide pharmacy’, *AJP: The Australian Journal of Pharmacy*, 96(1139) (2015), pp. 6, 8.

⁸ Richard Gerber, *Vibrational Medicine* (London: Piatkus Ltd, 2000) pp. 37–38, 61–69.

⁹ Clare Dyer, ‘Homeopathy: Challenge to Prescription Ban Is Rejected by High Court’, *BMJ* 361:k2513 (2018), <<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.k2513>> [Accessed 9 May 2019].

¹⁰ National Health Service, *Homeopathy*, 2018 < <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Homeopathy/>> [Accessed 23 June 2019].

¹¹ Steven Novella, ‘A Debate: Homoeopathy – Quackery or A Key to The Future of Medicine’, *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 14 (2008), pp. 9–15.

¹² Rachel Roberts, ‘I Don’t Know How but Homeopathy Really Does Work’, *The Guardian*, 15 July 2010, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jul/15/homeopathy-works-scientific-evidence> [Accessed 23 June 2019].

For this reason, this research focuses on the experiences of those who use homoeopathic remedies, with the aim of developing a clearer understanding of their beliefs and narratives within wider cultural, political and medical contexts.

METHODOLOGY AND NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Judith Bell, John Cresswell and Panos Clark value a mixed method research approach in order to gain a broad reflection of people's beliefs and attitudes. This research was thus conducted via questionnaires and interviews.¹³ According to Hennick, Hutter and Bailey, qualitative research enables researchers to understand behaviour and beliefs within the context of their own experiences; additionally it is an appropriate tool for small group participation.¹⁴

The use of a questionnaire and in-depth interviews allowed both an overview and a deeper enquiry into the responses. The questionnaire, using 22 multiple-choice questions and 3 narrative questions, was designed to understand individual perceptions of homoeopathy and the relationship between choice of healthcare and factors that influence that choice. The target groups were two small groups of friends: one group meets monthly as a book club in London, a second group meets monthly in Whitstable to go walking. Four of the 17 respondents agreed to participate in an in-depth interview; semi-structured interviews took place over Skype, each lasting 30 to 40 minutes.

This research relies heavily on the individual stories gathered from methodical analysis of the interviews. Using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach afforded a different methodological perspective and meaning making of the data. Jonathan A. Smith and Mike Osborn note that the aim of IPA '... is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, ...'¹⁵ IPA also views '... respondents... as the experiential expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their own story'.¹⁶

¹³ John Cresswell and Panos Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Method Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2007) p. 177; Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project: A guide for first time researchers in education, health and social science* (Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Open University Press, 2010) pp. 212–14, 233.

¹⁴ Monique Hennick, Inge Hunter and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods* (London: Sage, 2019) p. 109.

¹⁵ Jonathan A. Smith and Mike Osborn, 'Interpretative phenomenological analysis', in *Doing social psychology research*, ed. by Glynis M. Breakwell (Malden, MA and Oxford: The British Psychological Society and Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), pp. 229–254 (p. 59).

¹⁶ Smith and Osborn, 'Interpretative phenomenological analysis', p. 59.

This approach allowed me to be aware of how the researcher participates in constructing narrative and meaning, as it ‘...emphasizes that the research exercise is a dynamic process with an active role for the researcher in that process’.¹⁷ Edward Taylor and Patricia Cranton cite Mishler, who said: ‘... in doing this type of research the researchers are also co-constructing narrative and meaning. “In this sense, the story is always co-authored”’.¹⁸ Furthermore, this understanding of co-authoring places the researcher in a highly sensitive position in regard to the material being researched and analysed, as ‘... ones philosophical and theoretical perspective, both tacit and overt, drives one’s approach to research’.¹⁹

I also took a reflexive approach, as reflexivity is a participatory experience.²⁰ Kim Etherington noted: ‘... to be fully reflexive we need to be aware of our personal responses and be able to make choices about how to use them’.²¹ As a practising homoeopath, I consider that homoeopathy lacks scientific clarity and cannot be subjected to double-blind trials; it therefore requires a different orientation – one of imagination. In my view it works because of a different understanding of the human body, one that includes a spiritual / emotional or energetic aspect as well as a material aspect. In my practice, I have found that patients come back because of positive outcomes of treatment, but also due to a sense of safety and trust in both the remedies and practitioners and an appreciation at being treated holistically, i.e., symptoms are considered within the context of the whole person. By listening carefully, the practitioner allows the ‘symptom story’ to emerge, enabling patient and practitioner to see how these symptoms may relate to life stressors and circumstances. This differs from allopathic medicine, which tends to focus on treating symptoms in isolation. In my experience, this process of being listened to and heard is important in the therapeutic action of a consultation.

¹⁷ Smith and Osborn, ‘Interpretative phenomenological analysis’, p. 55.

¹⁸ Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton, eds, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012) pp. 64, 117.

¹⁹ Barbara Kawulich, ‘The Role of Theory in Research’, in *Teaching Research Methods in The Social Sciences*, ed. by Mark Garner, Claire Wagner, and Barbara Kawulich (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), pp. 37–47 (p. 39).

²⁰ Judith Okley, ‘Participatory experience and embodied knowledge’, in *Anthropology and Autobiography*, ed. by Judith Okley and Helen Callaway (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 1992), pp. 13–40. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203450536>> [Accessed 9 May 2019].

²¹ Kim Etherington, *Becoming A Reflexive Researcher: Using Ourselves in Research* (London: Kingsley, 2004) p. 19.

Thus I had to consider my context, intention and insider/emic position in relation to this research, for, as Denscombe suggested, we can never be entirely neutral and passive.²² I am also aware that the position of researcher carries with it ethical responsibilities towards my participants, the university, and my profession. As a member of both target groups, I am an ‘insider’. I invited participants who I do not know within a clinical setting, to lessen the risk of my authority influencing the data obtained, and thus was an ‘outsider’ to their experiences of homoeopathic practice. All members of both groups were positive toward homoeopathy; here again, I was an insider.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In line with the focus of this research project, this literature reviews focusses on factors that may explain the ways in which people experience homoeopathy. The ‘placebo effect’ is often suggested as a reason for why homoeopathy ‘works’. Other factors include the doctor/patient relationship; a holistic approach; and patient trust/distrust in doctors, the health system and pharmaceutical medications. As all of these factors are markers of the placebo effect, they are discussed in that context.

Placebo

Placebo is often translated from the Latin as ‘I shall please’; in Medieval English it meant ‘flatterer’ or ‘sycophant’. Daniel Moerman, in his book on the placebo effect, said that 19th century medical dictionaries defined it as “... any medicine adopted more to please than benefit the patient”; he also provided a contemporary definition: ‘... the changes produced by things objectively without specific activity for the condition being treated’.²³

Historically, placebos have been seen negatively, a cultural attitude handed down from the 14th century, when it was associated with ‘hired mourners at funerals’.²⁴ Arthur and Elaine Shapiro discuss how healers of all traditions were aware of the placebo effect, citing amongst others Paracelsus, who

²² Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998) p. 73.

²³ Daniel E. Moerman, *Meaning, Medicine, and the “Placebo Effect”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 11, 14

²⁴ Anton J. M. de Craen et al., ‘Placebos and placebo effects in medicine: historical overview’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 92(10) (1999), pp. 1–515.

in the 15th century used what he described as ‘sympathetic powders’ and applied them to bandages to heal wounds. These powders were later deemed to be largely composed of inert materials.²⁵

Emerging academic research, driven in large part by research by Professor Ted Kaptchuk at Harvard Medical School, has found that: ‘The placebo produces many of the therapeutic effects of potent pharmacologic agents...’.²⁶ Kaptchuk and Miller state that although ‘Placebo effects are ... thought to be unscientific and caused by bias and prejudice...’, they should be understood as ‘contextual healing’, which they define as:²⁷

That aspect of healing that is produced, activated or enhanced by the context of the clinical encounter, as distinct from the specific efficacy of treatment interventions... Factors that may play a role... include the environment of the clinical setting, cognitive and affective communication of clinicians, and the ritual of administering treatment.²⁸

David A. Jopling also points to emerging research within behavioural, medical and neuroscience research that suggests that ‘The placebo response is a function of the human organism’s powerful innate capacity to heal itself, to restore itself to equilibrium, and to repair damage’.²⁹

Patient/Physician Communication

The importance of good communication in the therapeutic relationship is stressed by many researchers, who also link it to the placebo effect as well as improved health outcomes. Charlotte Blease, writing for the *Journal of Medical Ethics*, commented: ‘... physician’s style of communication’ in enabling patient empowerment and expectations of recovery, both of which help create positive outcomes. She stated that physicians: ‘... need to take into consideration the phenomenological aspects of illness and adopt a more integrated medical approach: one that does not ignore human psychology as an embodied state’.³⁰

²⁵ Arthur K. Shapiro and Elaine Shapiro, *The Powerful Placebo: From Ancient Priest to Modern Physician* (Baltimore, MD, and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 124, 228–237.

²⁶ Harold G. Wolff et al., ‘Conferences on Therapy: The Use of Placebos in Therapy’, in *The placebo: A reader*, ed. by Franklin G. Miller, Luana Colloca, and Ted J. Kaptchuk (Baltimore, MD: JHU Press, 2013), pp. 10–18, (p. 18).

²⁷ Ted J. Kaptchuk and Franklin G. Miller, ‘Placebo effects in medicine’, *New England Journal of Medicine* 373(1) (2015), pp. 8–9 (p. 9).

²⁸ Franklin G. Miller and Ted J. Kaptchuk, ‘The power of context: reconceptualizing the placebo effect’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 101(5) (2008), pp. 222–225 (p. 224).

²⁹ David A. Jopling, *Talking Cures and Placebo Effects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 21.

³⁰ Charlotte Blease, ‘The principle of parity: the ‘placebo effect’ and physician communication’, *Journal of Medical Ethics* 38(4) (2012), pp. 199–203 (p. 203).

Arthur and Elaine Shapiro consider that two of the key determinants of the response to placebo treatment are the doctor/patient relationship and the patient's perception of the doctor as empathic, likeable and competent; their third key determinant being both patient and healer's belief in the efficacy of treatment.³¹ Jessica Hamzelou, writing for *New Scientist*, suggests a related factor: that the hormones that make us bond with our doctor appear to boost the placebo effect.³²

Trust

Trust is a complex subject rooted in personal and interpersonal behaviours and appears to be an implicit aspect of the placebo effect. Prevost et al. claim that patient trust in their practitioner may be '... a significant contributor to the placebo effect, and... that subtle, but important, distinctions in the varieties of trust may also be significant to placebo outcomes'.³³ David Peters noted that '...human factors do have a powerful influence on health, health care and all treatments...'; he pointed out that '...around 60% of control groups tend to improve forces us to ask what the personal and interpersonal factors that so profoundly affect outcomes might be...'.³⁴ Trust is also implicated in patient choice, as observed by Calnan and Rowe, 'A patient's trust in their individual GP will be all the more important, not just for the potential therapeutic benefits, but because they may rely on them to interpret performance data in making referral decisions'.³⁵

Another issue linked to trust/distrust is concern about pharmaceutical companies. *The Risks of Prescription Drugs*, edited by Donald W. Light, details problems of inadequate government regulation, growing incidences of side effects, and the commercialisation of social life and medical decisions. He comments '...how privatization of medical risk has grown with the ever-increasing

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/C_Blease/publication/51765836_The_principle_of_parity_The_'placebo_effect'_and_physician_communication/links/56e014de08aee77a15fe87f4.pdf> [Accessed 23 June 2019].

³¹ Shapiro and Shapiro, *The Powerful Placebo*, pp. 124, 228–237.

³² Jessica Hamzelou, 'Hormones boost placebo effect by making you want to cooperate', *New Scientist*, 24 August 2015. Available at: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn28087-hormones-boost-placebo-effect-by-making-you-want-to-cooperate/> [Accessed 24 June 2019].

³³ Marie Prevost, Anna Zuckerman, and Ian Gold, 'Trust and The Placebo Effect', *Oxford Scholarship Online*, p. 141. <DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199680702.003.0005> [Accessed 28 April 2019].

³⁴ David Peters, 'Preface', in *Understanding the Placebo Effect in Complementary Medicine: Theory Practice and Research*, ed. by David Peters (United Kingdom: Churchill Livingstone, 2001), pp. ix–xiv (pp. xi–xii).

³⁵ Michael Calnan and Rosemary Rowe, *Trust matters in health care* (Maidenhead: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill Education, 2008) p. 41.

ingestion of drugs for more and more conditions, many with questionable clinical basis and approved by a regulatory system that often fails to provide adequate risk protection’.³⁶

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

My target groups were a group that meets monthly as a book club in London and a walking group that meets monthly in Whitstable. All questionnaires were emailed and resulted in 100% response rate from 17 people, 15 female and 2 male, with ages ranging from 18 to 65 years old. Of these, four agreed to do semi-structured interviews.

The main opinions that emerged in both questionnaires and interviews are:

- Homoeopathy has medical value, relieves symptoms
- The importance of creating balance physically and emotionally in health and wellness.
- It works, but we have yet to understand how – responses suggested it could be a result of creating balance, belief in it, or placebo effect.
- Dislike for the NHS ban; all stressed the importance of patient choice, which was seen to be an intrinsically good thing.
- Distrust of pharmaceutical companies, including concern over side effects of prescription medications.
- Concern over the cost of homoeopathy, both in defence of the decision to ban it and as something people disliked about it.

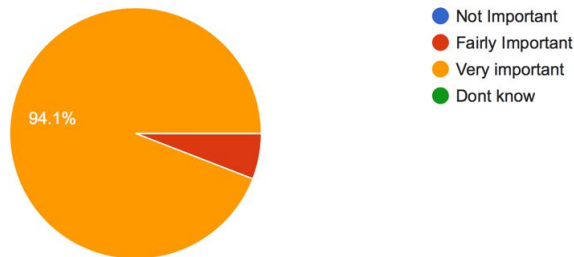
The questionnaire findings revealed very positive attitudes towards homoeopathy. All thought it was unreasonable for UK doctors and pharmaceutical companies to override patient choice without fully understanding how it works. Results also highlighted concerns about how pharmaceutical companies seem to dominate our lives; all but one participant were aware of the pharmaceutical industry’s increasingly hostile attitude to homoeopathy and consider this position untrustworthy.

Interestingly, all but one considered that ‘creating balance’ is important to health and wellbeing, suggesting that Paracelsus’s doctrine, centuries after his observation that homoeostasis is a key to good health, still holds true for my respondents, as evidenced by their responses to Question 5.

³⁶ Donald W. Light, ‘Bearing the Risks of Prescription Drugs’, in *The Risks of Prescription Drugs*, ed. by Donald W. Light (New York, NY, and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 10–67 (p. 15).

Do you think creating balance physically and or emotionally is important in health and wellness

17 responses



The interviews, which enabled people to express a personal account of their beliefs and opinions of homoeopathy, were based on establishing rapport, asking open-ended questions, and encouraging responders to speak in their own voice. I listened *for* depth in the interviewee and *from* depth in myself, remaining open and curious, aware of my own beliefs and bias as I attempted to adopt a position of neutrality and enter the world of the interviewee more consciously. Time spent with transcripts and recordings was an important part of the immersion into the material, it allowed me to pick up nuances and detail.

Below is a brief description of each interviewee; all names have been changed.

- Jane, aged 18, lives in Whitstable and has used homoeopathy all her life. Initially this would have been her parents' choice; now she chooses it for herself, believing it to be safe and effective.
- John, aged 52, lives in Canterbury and has used homoeopathy in the past. He feels uncomfortable in its lack of scientific base but has still seen it work; he also expressed concern over some of the claims made by homoeopaths.
- Catherine, aged 58, lives in London. She has experience of using homoeopathy successfully as part of an integrated healthcare approach alongside conventional methods for 25 years. She felt it possibly it was placebo but believes placebo to be a real physiological process.
- Margaret, aged 59, lives in Whitstable, would like more alternative treatments on the NHS, recognises cost is important, and also how choice is elusive because what people want is often unconsciously influenced by what is available. This view was also expressed by Jane.

The main themes that emerged from the interviews were a sense of safety in homoeopathy, which linked trust issues; concerns about cost and patient choice; a preference for a holistic approach; and the importance of creating balance physically and emotionally. Although most did not attribute

homoeopathy's positive results to the placebo effect, many of their comments were markers of placebo.

Safety and trust/distrust

What emerged more fully from the interviews was a feeling that interviewees liked homoeopathy in principle. Despite not understanding how it works, they liked the safety of it. Two of the four commented that keeping homoeopathy available within the NHS kept it as a safe option, as it could be monitored within a clinical setting. The relationship between the pharmaceutical companies and their influence in medicine, politics and choice was of concern, an echo of Donald W. Light's work on prescription drugs.

Jane said the ignorance around alternative medicine surprised her. When she talk to her friends, many of whose parents were employed by pharmaceutical companies, she finds:

They are all interested when I explain what [homoeopathy] is. My generation are really into plant-based and natural and are aware that chemicals are destroying the planet, so it's ignorance, it's a lack of information.

Catherine, when talking of conventional medicine, commented:

Nothing is 100% effective for every single person, that's not how it works, and that's what drug companies try and guarantee that makes them untrustworthy.

Joe commented:

Chemicals destroy the body and always carry a risk of side effects, ... I think drug companies are entirely driven by money and greed...

Margaret commented:

.. I know modern medicine is brilliant in many ways but the rise of side effects and lifestyle diseases I think are badly managed.

Cost and Patient Choice

Cost was an issue for all interviewees and linked to patient choice and trust issues. In the UK we have a specific cultural relationship to healthcare: all participants grew up enjoying a universal healthcare system free at the point of contact. This relationship invites further research into choice and cost, especially as an estimated 9 million people in the UK use some kind of alternative health care,

according to Dr Robert Verkerk.³⁷ Interestingly, cost is cited by both the NHS (as justification for the ban) and 23.5 % (4) of participants in what they dislike about homoeopathy. In fact, homoeopathy accounts for less than 0.004% of the NHS budget, including doctor's salaries.³⁸

Margaret commented:

One of my big concerns is cost. Homoeopathy is an elitist thing in a way which is not good. In fact in some ways it is surprising that the NHS has banned it as I thought it was a cheap form of medicine...

All had strong feelings about the NHS ban on homoeopathy, citing the importance of patient choice.

Catherine said:

It should absolutely not be banned, if it is being banned just because we don't know how it works that isn't good enough, I mean I don't know how a telephone works but I still use them and believe in them...

Joe said:

Freedom of choice should be your absolute right. ... It's really undemocratic to limit people's choice in what's available to them...

Margaret commented:

... we should have choice available within the NHS ... it protects the public against quacks.

The debate around cost and patient trust is complex; Calnan and Rowe noted the impact of patient choice on NHS finances, saying: 'Patient choice will influence financial flows in the NHS as choice is being linked to 'payment by results... with money flowing with the patient'.³⁹

Whole person and balanced mind/body approaches

When asked to explain their experience of a homoeopathic consultation, all described a positive experience of being listened to, feeling hopeful, and trusting the practitioner, who was described as

³⁷ Robert Verkerk, quoted in Richard Eaton, 'Complementary Medicine Roundup December 2017', *College of Medicine and Integrated Health* (29 November 2017). Available at: <https://collegeofmedicine.org.uk/complementary-medicine-roundup-december-2017/> [Accessed 28 April 2019].

³⁸ Good Thinking, *NHS Homeopathy Spending*, no date, <<https://goodthinkingsociety.org/projects/nhs-homeopathy-legal-challenge/nhs-homeopathy-spending/>> [Accessed 25 June 2019].

³⁹ Calnan and Rowe, *Trust matters in health care*, p. 41.

empathic and warm. Responders commented that understanding their symptoms within a different and larger context than the conventional healthcare system to be useful, educative and revelatory, and felt they were participating in and/or taking responsibility for their own health.

Joe said he likes a methodology that includes physical and emotional aspects in treating the person, noting:

... emotional balance is really important to physical wellbeing... I think if you remain emotionally unbalanced for any length of time stresses your physical body start to develop as symptoms.

What he disliked and expressed concern about were false claims made by homoeopaths:

... I struggle with the whole concept of non-materialism in homoeopathy, the small doses involved. I feel uncomfortable when homoeopathy claims to cure cancer or autism or [to] stop you catching malaria.

Catherine commented that she loves homoeopathy's holistic and balanced approach:

It makes me feel that everything is linked ... emotions play as much a role in health as physical symptoms.... It's... so different from going to a GP ... you are in and out of a doctor's office with pain killers in 5 minutes and then back in a week for more pills to stop the ulcer forming because of the painkillers ... Its feels like homoeopathy engages with something beyond us ... creates an internal balance.

Margaret commented:

I like homoeopathy it helped me get pregnant or I believe that it did. ... I've had personal experience of it working brilliantly on my children.... I like the connections it makes me make... in a strange way it makes me take more responsibility for my own health. I think it should be available and included as a healing tool in an integrated medical approach ...

All of these responses bear out Prevost et al.'s point of the importance of an integrated medical approach that includes human psychology as it is embodied.⁴⁰

Placebo

Responses to whether homoeopathy could ever be considered a placebo drew a majority 'No' in the questionnaires, only one considered it to be placebo. All interviewees were wary of the term, believing it carried a negative connotation. Although all participants were unsure how homoeopathy works, the interviewee responses gave more detail into their thinking around this, and their comments were often key markers of the placebo effect. The Shapiros defined these markers as: the doctor/patient

⁴⁰ Marie Prevost et al, 'Trust and The Placebo Effect', p. 141.

relationship, the doctor's communication style, and patient and healer belief in the treatment, and these can be seen clearly expressed in the following responses.⁴¹

Jane said:

It's not placebo ... there is an energetic connection about being given something and knowing that someone cares about you. It's a kind of consciousness of your own ability to heal, like having a faith, maybe a whole spiritual level that I don't know about but it is very interesting.

Joe said:

... in a consultation there is trust and hope and a feeling of being listened to. I think homoeopathy is closely related to placebo rather than science based or quantum physics...

Catherine commented:

I know nobody really understands how it works. ... I believe it's more than placebo but I believe placebo is really powerful... I think we seek and embrace placebo in many areas of our lives unconsciously, and in many ways what a genius thing it is.

In summary, the questionnaires allowed a broad analysis of responders' attitudes and usage of homoeopathy, while the final three questions gave them an opportunity to express deeper feelings and thoughts. These themes that emerged from the questionnaire were further expanded on in the interviews, bringing nuance and depth.

Conclusion

This research sought to discover people's experiences of homoeopathy in the light of it being banned within the NHS due it being considered ineffective and costly. Using a questionnaire and in-depth interviews, this research enquired into people's beliefs, narratives and experiences about health and healthcare, exploring attitudes towards homoeopathy within the wider context of its cultural, medical and political standing/

The main themes that emerged were a positive feeling towards homoeopathy, a belief in its medical value and efficacy in relieving systems, the important of physical and emotional balance in health, a dislike of the NHS ban, strong views on the importance of patient choice, a lack of trust in pharmaceutical companies, a preference for a holistic approach, and concerns over the cost of homoeopathy. Although all were unsure how homoeopathy 'works', only one attributed it to placebo, even though many of their responses were markers of the placebo

⁴¹ Shapiro and Shapiro, *The Powerful Placebo*, pp. 124, 228–237.

The results suggest a disconnect between participants and NHS views on the effectiveness of homoeopathy. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this research paper it seems further research should be considered into more transparency in decisions of medical choice available within the NHS, and to consider emerging academic research about placebo studies and its place in our physiology.

In a philosophical context, this debate could be framed as between those who believe there are no forces operative in nature other than material ones, based on knowledge gained only from observable phenomenon in a material world, and those who believe that imagination and intuition – based in personal and qualitative experience – offer another avenue to medical knowledge. In conclusion, this research shows that homoeopathy is medically valued by the small section of the population represented in this research, who however have little or no voice within the medical framework in the UK.

APPENDICES

A. Questionnaire Responses

Q1 Are you	Q2 What age range are you ?	Q3 Do you live in the UK	Q4 Do you use any form of Alternative Medicine	Q5 Do you think creating balance physically and or emotionally is important in health and wellness	Q6 Have you ever consulted a professional homoeopath	Q7 How often have you used homeopathic medicine	Q8 Even though Homoeopathy works on animals do you consider it important that you believe in it for it to work?	Q9 Would you ever self- prescribe over the counter remedies	Q10 Do you think using homoeopathy regularly can be a means of preventative medicine?	Q11 Do you consider homoeopathy safe for babies and children?	Q12 Did consulting a qualified practitioner help you explore and understand your symptoms in greater detail?	Q13 I consider the practice of homoeopathy to be	Q14 Do you consider homoeopathy could be harmful
Female	25-45	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Regularly weekly or monthly	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Rational within its own context	No
Female	45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Occasionally 2- 3 times a year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Rational within its own context	No
Female	45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Regularly weekly or monthly	It helps if you do	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Rational within its own context	No
Female	18-25	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Randomly	It helps if you do	Maybe	Yes	Only when prescribed by a Practitioner	Yes	Placebo	Maybe
Female	over 60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Occasionally 2- 3 times a year	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Science based	Maybe
Male	45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Occasionally 2- 3 times a year	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Science based	No
Female	45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Regularly weekly or monthly	It helps if you do	Yes	Don't know	Only when prescribed by a Practitioner	Yes	Rational within its own context	No
Female	45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Randomly	No	Yes	Yes	Only when prescribed by a Practitioner	Yes	Science based	No
Female	45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Randomly	No	Yes	Maybe	Only when prescribed by a Practitioner	Gave me insights I had not considered	Rational within its own context	Maybe
Female	45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Occasionally 2- 3 times a year	No	Maybe	Maybe	Only when prescribed by a Practitioner	Gave me insights I had not considered	Rational within its own context	Maybe
Female	Option 45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Occasionally 2- 3 times a year	It helps if you do	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Partially	Rational within its own context	No
Male	25-45	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Regularly weekly or monthly	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Rational within its own context	No
Female	45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Randomly	It helps if you do	Only with advice from shop or pharmacy staff	Maybe	Yes	No	Rational within its own context	No
Female	18-25	Yes	No	Fairly Important	No	Never	Yes	Yes	No	Only when prescribed by a Practitioner	Gave me insights I had not considered	Rational within its own context	Yes
Female	18-25	Yes	No	Very important	No	Never	It helps if you do	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Rational within its own context	Maybe
Female	45-60	Yes	Yes	Very important	Yes	Randomly	No	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Rational within its own context	No
Female	45-60	Yes	No	Very important	No	Randomly	It is irrelevant to me	Yes	Don't know	Yes	Yes	Science based	No

A. Questionnaire Responses, continued

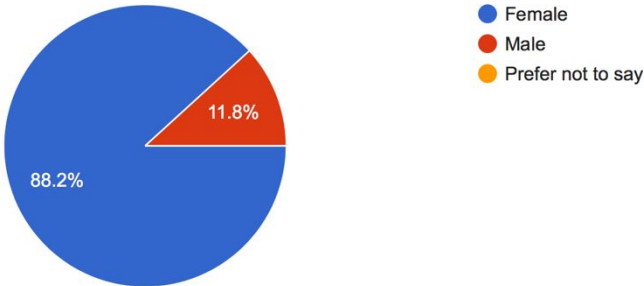
Q15 Is it important for you to be able to buy remedies without consulting a practitioner?	Q16 How important is it to you to have the choice of buying and using homoeopathy whether or not you personally believe in it?	Q17 If your personal experience of homoeopathy in treating a specific condition did not assist would you still consider using it?	Q18 Do you think it is reasonable for UK doctors and drug companies to override patients choice by attempting to ban homoeopathy, because it is not fully understood how it works	Q19 There is a dramatic rise in medical induced illness (iatrogenic illness) how much does that worry you ?	Q20 Pharmaceutical companies seem to be dominating more and more of our lives, do you agree?	Q21 Pharmaceutical companies are increasingly hostile to homoeopathy do you think this position is a trustworthy one?
Yes	Essential	Yes	No	Very much and increasingly so	Strongly agree	No
Yes	Very important	Yes	No	A lot	Strongly agree	No
Yes	Essential	Yes	No	Very much and increasingly so	Strongly agree	No
Only from a health food shop or pharmacies	Very important	Yes	No	Very much and increasingly so	Agree	No
Yes	Very important	Yes	No	Very much and increasingly so	Agree	No
Yes	Very important	Yes	No	Very much and increasingly so	Strongly agree	No
Yes	Essential	Maybe	No	A lot	Agree	No
Only from a health food shop or pharmacies	Very important	Yes	No	A lot	Strongly agree	No
Yes	Very important	Yes	No	A lot	Agree	No
Only from a health food shop or pharmacies	Important	Yes	No	A lot	Strongly agree	No
Maybe	Very important	Yes	No	A lot	Agree	No
Yes	Essential	Yes	No	Very much and increasingly so	Agree	No
Only from a health food shop or pharmacies	Very important	Yes	No	A lot	Strongly agree	No
Maybe	Very important	Yes	No	A lot	Strongly agree	No
Maybe	Important	Maybe	No	A lot	Strongly agree	Maybe
Yes	Very important	Maybe	No	Very much and increasingly so	Strongly agree	No
Maybe	Very important	Maybe	No	A lot	Agree	No

A. Questionnaire Responses, continued

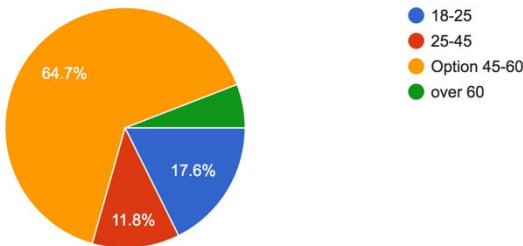
Q22 What do you like about homoeopathy	Q23 What do you dislike	A24 In your own words is there anything you would like to add	Q25 Would you be willing to participate in an interview
It is safe	N/A	I am worried about drug companies stopping alternative medicine from a financial point of view rather than a true medical point of view	No
N/A	N/A	No	Yes
Gets to the root cause of the issue & helps YOU heal YOURSELF	Nothing	Big pharma are way too pushy, powerful and corporate - no one likes it	Yes
I like the fact that it provides the opportunity to get a natural and personal form of treatment which is specific to your emotional as well as physical state and that it encouraged you to become more in touch with your body and how to treat yourself both mentally and physically in order to assist your own healing.	I dislike that is not currently widely accessible and there is a lack of information and understanding around it publicly.	No	Yes
Simplicity	Nothing	I would trust it to work and not be harmful	Maybe
That the patient is treated holistically	N/A	No	Yes
It helps me reduce physical symptoms	It's hard to get hold of reliably	It should not be banned	No
It makes sense	Nothing to dislike	I am appalled that the banning of homeopathy is even being contemplated.	Yes
Holistic approach.	N/A	Whilst I said that homoeopathy maybe could be harmful, I meant in the wrong hands (as with any other discipline)...not as a practice itself	Maybe
It's about taking responsibility for your own health and asking yourself what might work. Feels connected to the natural world.	That it's only available to those who can pay.	No	Maybe
That it's gentle yet powerful and it treats all aspects of a condition - mental, spiritual, emotional, physical and that the homeopath considers the whole being not just the 'disease'.	Not being able to consume mint/use minty toothpaste whilst using it.	Thank you!	Yes
It is safe	Nothing	Choice of healthcare is important to me	No
It seems relatively harmless compared to traditional pharmaceutical medicines	Would like to know more about the evidence base	Re the above I understand that this is difficult given that published research is often based on large randomised RCTs which typically are funded and influenced by the pharmaceutical industry. This makes it harder to "prove" the benefits of non-traditional or alternative medicines, when the scientific and research arena is less invested in researching this.	Maybe
Seems quite rational	Not fully grasping it	N/A	Yes
The fact that it is natural and there are several different ingredients and plants that can be used for a lot of ailments	The lack of accessibility	It should be more popular	Yes
That it is a holistic medicine that takes account of the whole person taking into account, emotional health, diet etc., unlike typical medicine that seems to predominantly treat the symptoms (driven by the pharmaceutical industry, a paradigm of western science and other resourcing factors). when considering my health issue science t	that you can't get it on the NHS and thus not accessible to all	when considering my health issues, I want to be able to think about and understand how the issues can be resolved in the longer term and without the use of pharmaceuticals where possible since I feel the industry is so profit driven, which is unethical and potentially damaging to people's health	Yes
It feels gentle, unaggressive. Holistic and natural.	N/A	n/a	Maybe

B. Charts

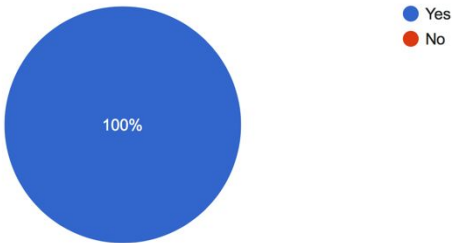
Q1
What gender are you?
17 responses



Q2
What age range are you in?
17 responses

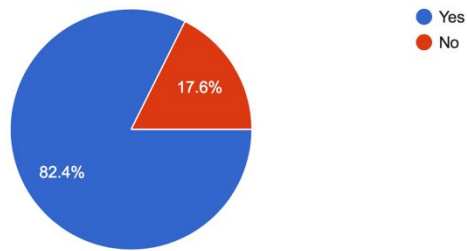


Q3
Do you live in the UK?
17 responses



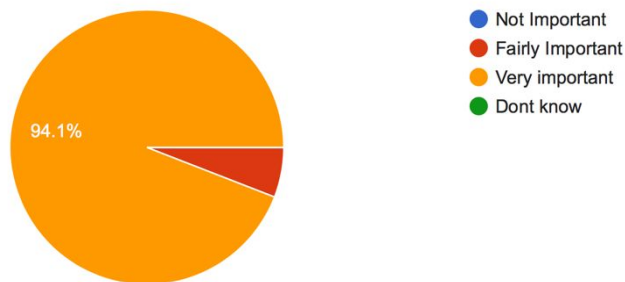
Q4 Do you use any form of Alternative Medicine

17 responses



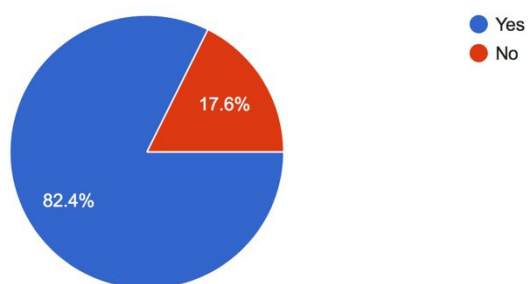
Q5 Do you think creating balance physically and or emotionally is important in health and wellness

17 responses



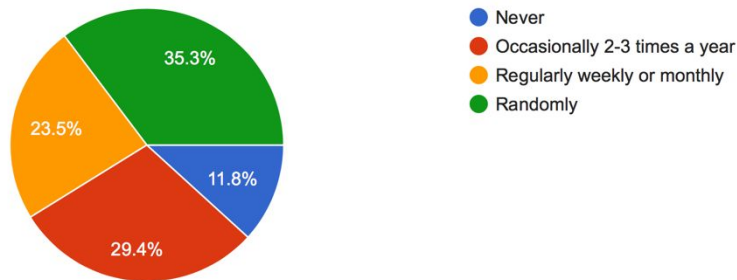
Q6 Have you ever consulted a professional homoeopath

17 responses



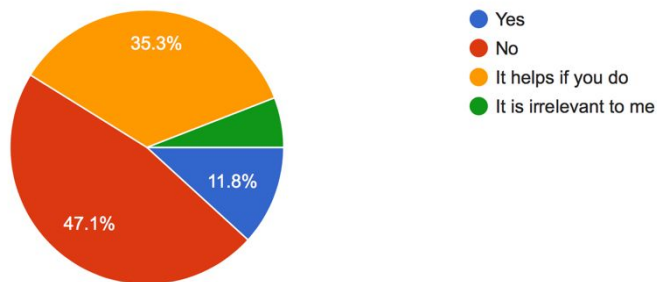
Q7 often have you used homeopathic medicine

17 responses



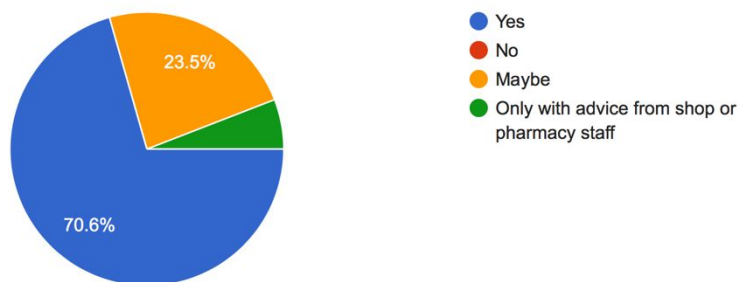
Q8 though Homoeopathy works on animals do you consider it important that you believe in it for it to work?

17 responses



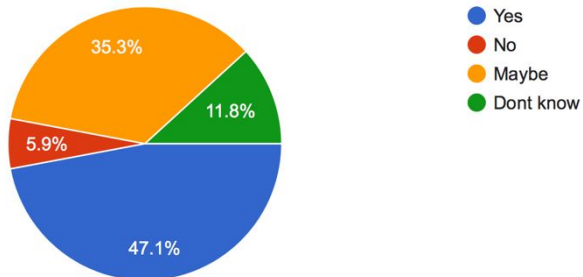
Q9 Id you ever self prescribe over the counter remedies

17 responses



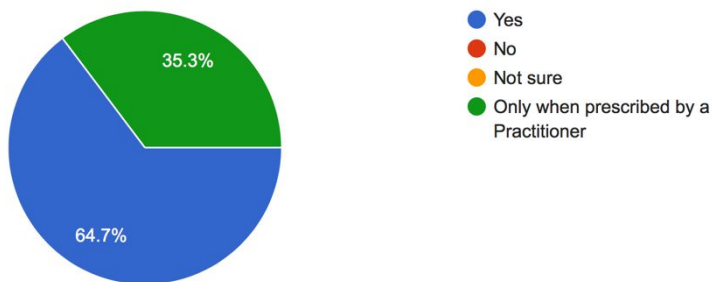
Q10 Do you think using homoeopathy regularly can be a means of preventative medicine?

17 responses



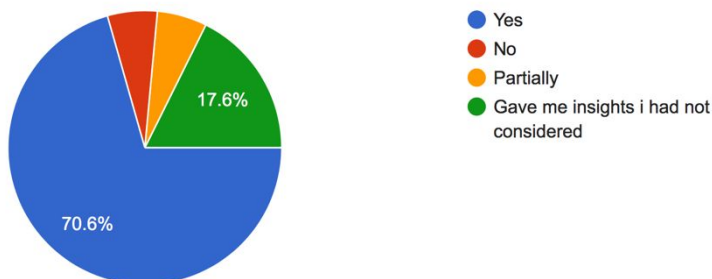
Q11 Do you consider homoeopathy safe for babies and children?

17 responses



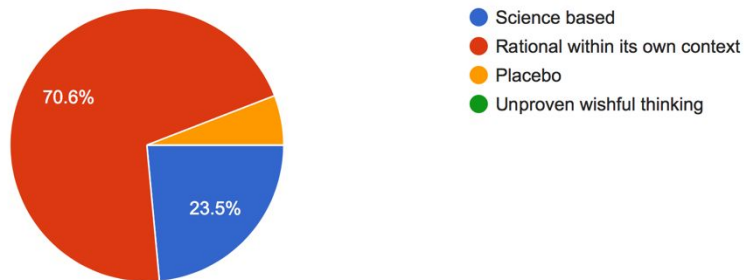
Q12 Consulting a qualified practitioner help you explore and understand your symptoms in greater detail?

17 responses



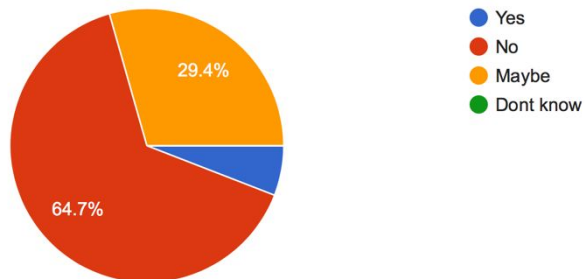
Q13 Consider the practice of homoeopathy to be

17 responses



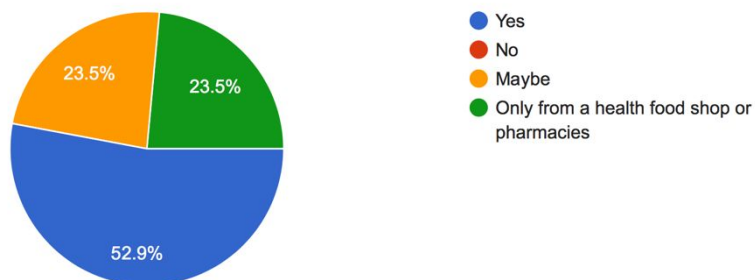
Q14 Do you consider homoeopathy could be harmful

17 responses



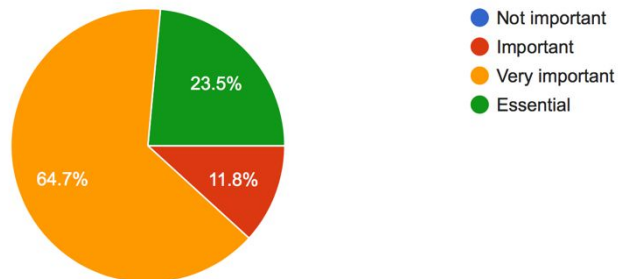
Q15 How important for you to be able to buy remedies without consulting a practitioner?

17 responses



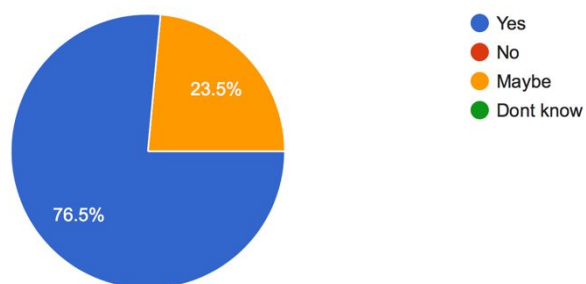
Q16 How important is it to you to have the choice of buying and using homoeopathy whether or not you personally believe in it?

17 responses



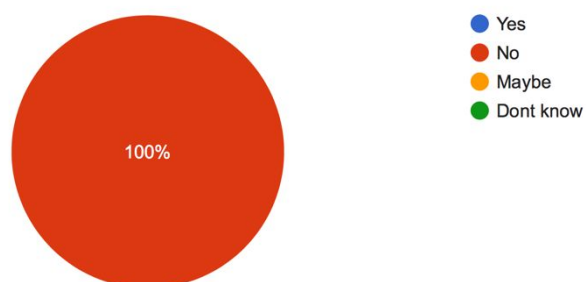
Q17 If your personal experience of homoeopathy in treating a specific condition did not assist would you still consider using it?

17 responses



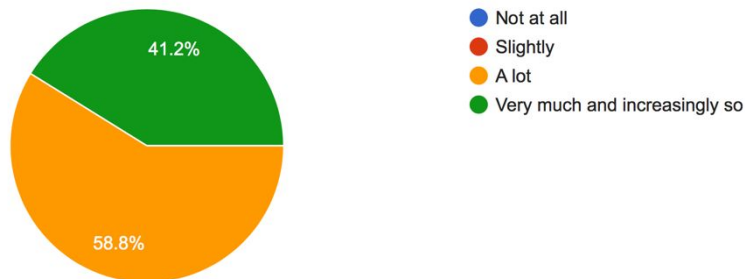
Q18 Do you think it is reasonable for UK doctors and drug companies to override patients choice by attempting to ban homoeopathy as it is not fully understood how it works?

17 responses



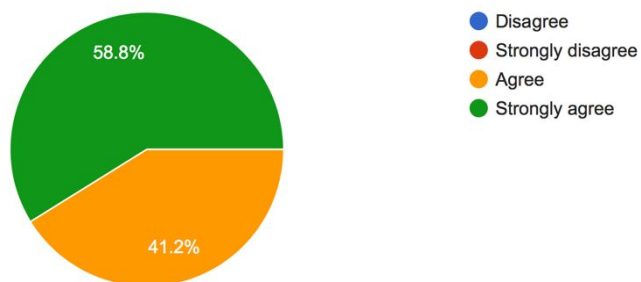
Q19 is a dramatic rise in medical induced illness (iatrogenic illness) how much does that worry you ?

17 responses



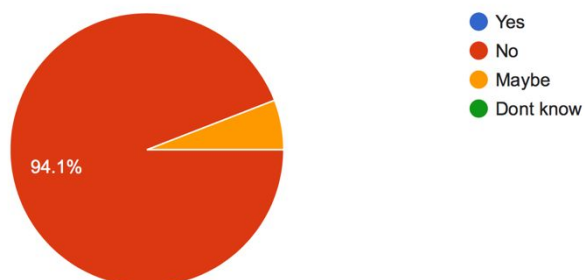
Q20 naceutical companies seem to be dominating more and more of our lives, do you agree?

17 responses



Q21 naceutical companies are increasingly hostile to homoeopathy do you think this position is a trustworthy one?

17 responses



Q22 What do you like about homoeopathy 17 responses

It is safe

Gets to the root cause of the issue & helps YOU heal YOURSELF

I like the fact that it provides the opportunity to get a natural and personal form of treatment which is specific to your emotional as well as physical state and that it encouraged you to become more in touch with your body and how to treat yourself both mentally and physically in order to assist your own healing.

Simplicity

That the patient is treated holistically

It helps me reduce physical symptoms

It makes sense

Holistic approach.

It's about taking responsibility for your own health and asking yourself what might work. Feels connected to the natural world.

That it's gentle yet powerful and it treats all aspects of a condition - mental, spiritual, emotional, physical and that the homeopath considers the whole being not just the 'disease'.

It is safe

It seems relatively harmless compared to traditional pharmaceutical medicines

Seems quite rational

The fact that it is natural and there are several different ingredients and plants that can be used for a lot of ailments

That it is a holistic medicine that takes account of the whole person taking into account, emotional health, diet etc., unlike typical medicine that seems to predominantly treat the symptoms (driven by the pharmaceutical industry, a paradigm of western science and other resourcing factors). when considering my health issue science t

It feels gentle, unaggressive. Holistic and natural.

Q23 What do you dislike 13 responses

Nothing

I dislike that is not currently widely accessible and there is a lack of information and understanding around it publicly.

Nothing

It's hard to get hold of reliably

Nothing to dislike

That it's only available to those who can pay.

Not being able to consume mint/use minty toothpaste whilst using it.

Nothing

Would like to know more about the evidence base

Not fully grasping it

The lack of accessibility

that you can't get it on the NHS and thus not accessible to all

Q24 In your own words is there anything you would like to add? 17 responses

No

fine

I am worried about drug companies stopping alternative medicine from a financial point of view rather than a true medical point of view

Big pharma are way too pushy, powerful and corporate - no one likes it

No.

I would trust it to work and not be harmful

It should not be banned

I am appalled that the banning of homeopathy is even being contemplated.

Whilst I said that homoeopathy maybe could be harmful, I meant in the wrong hands (as with any other discipline)...not as a practice itself.

Thank you!

Choice of healthcare is important to me

Re the above I understand that this is difficult given that published research is often based on large randomised RCTs which typically are funded and influenced by the pharmaceutical industry. This makes it harder to “prove” the benefits of non-traditional or alternative medicines, when the scientific and research arena is less invested in researching this.

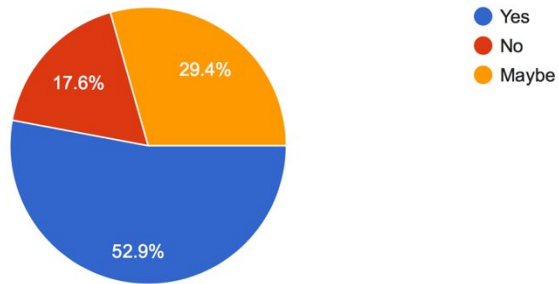
N/A

It should be more popular

when considering my health issues, I want to be able to think about and understand how the issues can be resolved in the longer term and without the use of pharmaceuticals where possible since I feel the industry is so profit driven, which is unethical and potentially damaging to people's health

n/a

Q25 Would you be willing to participate in an interview
17 responses



Victoria Young – HPCA7002 – Essay 2

BLANK QUESTIONNAIRE

Perceptions of Homoeopathy

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST

This survey is asking for your thoughts and opinions on homoeopathy and your opinion about choice within medical healthcare.

It is an academic survey for a research module conducted by Victoria Young a research student at University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

It will take about 20 minutes to complete

CONFIDENTIALITY

Thank you in advance for your participation. Please be aware that this is entirely confidential and anonymous, nothing will be stored kept or shared that could identify you.

* Required

Please tick before continuing *

☐ I agree to my information being used for this research module

Are you *

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Prefer not to say

What age range are you ? *

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 25-45
- ☐ Option 45-60
- ☐ over 60

Do you live in the UK *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you use any form of Alternative Medicine *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you think creating balance physically and or emotionally is important in health and wellness *

- ☐ Not Important
- ☐ Fairly Important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Dont know

Have you ever consulted a professional homoeopath *

☐ Yes

☐ No

how often have you used homeopathic medicine *

☐ Never

☐ Occasionally 2-3 times a year

☐ Regularly weekly or monthly

☐ Randomly

Even though Homoeopathy works on animals do you consider it important that you believe in it for it to work? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ It helps if you do

☐ It is irrelevant to me

Would you ever self prescribe over the counter remedies *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe

☐ Only with advice from shop or pharmacy staff

Do you think using homoeopathy regularly can be a means of preventative medicine? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Dont know

Do you consider homoeopathy safe for babies and children? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Only when prescribed by a Practitioner

Did consulting a qualified practitioner help you explore and understand your symptoms in greater detail?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Partially
- ☐ Gave me insights i had not considered

I consider the practice of homoeopathy to be *

- ☐ Science based
- ☐ Rational within its own context
- ☐ Placebo
- ☐ Unproven wishful thinking

Do you consider homoeopathy could be harmful *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Dont know

Is it important for you to be able to buy remedies without consulting a practitioner? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Only from a health food shop or pharmacies

How important is it to you to have the choice of buying and using homoeopathy whether or not you personally believe in it?

★

- ☐ Not important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Essential

If your personal experience of homoeopathy in treating a specific condition did not assist would you still consider using it? ★

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Dont know

Do you think it is reasonable for UK doctors and drug companies to override patients choice by attempting to ban homoeopathy, because it is not fully understood how it works ★

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Dont know

There is a dramatic rise in medical induced illness (iatrogenic illness) how much does that worry you ? *

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Slightly
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Very much and increasingly so

Pharmaceutical companies seem to be dominating more and more of our lives, do you agree? *

- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

Pharmaceutical companies are increasingly hostile to homoeopathy do you think this position is a trustworthy one? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Dont know

What do you like about homoeopathy *

What do you dislike

Your answer

In your own words is there anything you would like to add *

Your answer

Would you be willing to participate in an interview *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

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Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

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