

BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care

Complementary Therapies BMHP5001

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Academic Report

Homeopathy

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Introduction

Homeopathy is one of the CAMs (Complementary and Alternative Medicines) widely popular in Europe. It is a branch of medicine that appeared in 1796. The founder of homeopathy is the German physician Samuel Hahnemann, who found a new approach to producing and using medicines. The main principle of homeopathy is similarity ("similia similibus curantur", like cures like, that is, the treatment of the disease consists in the use of small doses of drugs that, in large amounts, cause symptoms of the disease in a healthy person (Britannica, n.d.).

This report shows an overview of the history of Homeopathy and how it utilizes in modern medicine. Research in homeopathy is expanding. For example, clinical trials aim to evaluate the safety and efficacy of homeopathic medicines, and they can be considered a valuable addition to homeopathic research (Bellavite, 2014). The paper will describe the efficacy and contraindication of Complementary therapy and identify how it compares with traditional treatment methods. The report will evaluate the statutory and voluntary self-regulation systems.

Main body

History and uses of Homeopathy

Two principles of homeopathy were first put forward by the Greek physician Hippocrates (460 - 375 BC): "Similia similibus curentur" - like is treated by like and "Contraria contraries curentur" - the opposite is treated by the opposite. (Petrescu, 2016)

More than two centuries ago, the world learned about the German scientist, doctor, chemist, philosopher, linguist - about Samuel Friedrich Christian Hahnemann (1755 - 1843). The scientist knew eight languages, one of which was Greek, which allowed him to study the works of Hippocrates. The principle of "similarity" aroused particular interest in him. Hahnemann received his medical degree in Erlangen in 1779 (Nancy, 2011).

Hahnemann introduced collective terms: "allopathy" (from the Greek. Allos - "other", pathos - "disease"), exposure to means other than the nature of the disease itself, and "homeopathy" (from the Greek homios - "similar", pathos - "disease"), the use of such a medicine in small doses, which in large doses can cause symptoms like the symptoms of the patient's disease. Hahnemann published his first work in 1796 as an Outline of a New Principle for Determining the Healing Power of Medicines. Then, in 1810, his famous work "The Organon of the Healing Art" followed (Loudon I., 2006).

His famous aphorism "like heals like", which is often called "the principle of similarity", is known. As an example, he cited Jenner's use of vaccinia against vaccinia to prevent smallpox.

Hahnemann introduced collective terms: "allopathy" (from the Greek. Allos - "other", pathos - "disease"), exposure to means other than the nature of the disease itself, and "homoeopathy" (from the Greek homios - "similar", pathos - "disease"), the use of such a medicine in small doses, which in large doses can cause symptoms similar to the symptoms of the patient's disease ...

Hahnemann saw that the fight against symptoms gives temporary success; more often, the disease intensifies and deepens. In addition, taking drugs in large doses often caused poisoning in patients and aggravated diseases.

Homeopathic physicians usually begin treatment by looking at the medical records of their patients. Doctors consider the physical, mental, and emotional state of patients and their diseases.

Only after this does the doctor decide on the suitability or impossibility of using homeopathic medicines. In classical homeopathy, the practitioner compares one remedy to a set of symptoms (similium). Clinical homeopathy includes combinations of drugs based on different symptoms of the disease. For example, in the case of chronic diseases in a patient, a homoeopathic doctor prescribes treatment, taking into account the drugs already taken by the patient. There are certain principles for making homeopathic remedies: dilution and potentiation. Homeopathic products are made from plants (such as red onions, arnica [mountain grass], poison ivy, belladonna [deadly nightshade], and nettles), minerals (such as white arsenic), or animals (such as crushed whole bees). Homeopathic medicines come in various forms: granules, drops, tablets, suppositories, ointments (NCCIH, 2021). Homoeopathy is used for numerous diseases such as:

- asthma
- ear infections
- hay fever
- mental health conditions, such as depression, stress and anxiety
- allergies, such as food allergies
- dermatitis (an allergic skin condition)
- arthritis
- high blood pressure (NHS, 2021).

There are several areas of homoeopathy:

- Unicism, when only one drug is prescribed.
- Pluralism, when several drugs are prescribed, taking into account the patient's psychotype.
- Complexism when companies produce complex homeopathic remedies that can be taken without the appointment of a homeopathic doctor (Petrescu, 2016).

Efficacy and contraindications of Homeopathy

In homeopathy, there is an ongoing scientific debate using research data. Proponents of complementary therapy deny or overvalue the importance of randomized controlled trials (RCTs). Critics do not believe in any positive results in the literature review.

Five systematic reviews examined the RCT literature on homeopathy in general (individualized homeopathy, clinical homeopathy, complex homeopathy, isopathy).

It must be emphasized that all these therapeutic directions are different. Individualized homeopathy requires lengthy doctor - patients conversations, whereas the other three forms do not. Four out of five systematic reviews concluded that the homeopathic intervention is likely to differ from the placebo. In contrast, Shang's recent global systematic review concluded that the clinical effects of homeopathy are those of placebo". (Shang A, 2005)

Research has shown disagreement between the main concepts underlying the theory of homeopathy with fundamental scientific concepts. For example, homeopathic medicines can be highly diluted. Consequently, a material believed to be an "active ingredient" cannot be measured, which poses severe problems for research such drugs. However, recent studies have begun examining the physical properties of these drugs to determine if they can be characterized in the future. (Robert T Mathie, n.d.)

Contraindications to use of homeopathic medicines exist for specific surgical indications and oncological and severe psychiatric diseases.

Despite the opinion about the complete safety of homeopathic medicines because of tiny and ultra-low doses, there are side effects. There are three types of side effects of homeopathic medicines:

- Toxic effect - drugs with prolonged, uncontrolled use can be derived from certain metals (Mercurius solubilis, Arsenicum album, Plumbum metallicum) in low potencies (below C6 or D12) with prolonged, uncontrolled use a toxic effect.

- Allergic action - any herbal preparation in low potencies, where there is a material substrate (up to C12 or D24), insensitive people can give an allergic reaction.
- Induction of drug pathogenesis - when using a homeopathic remedy in high potencies, susceptible people may show symptoms of drug pathogenesis of this drug.()

Comparing with traditional treatment

The NHS currently provides homeopathy to patients who want it and describes its health benefits. It costs £ 92,412 a year, instead of the £ 9.2 billion spent on Prescriptions in primary care: for example, paracetamol combined with tramadol costs £ 2 million per year).

A large study was conducted that analysed 6500 patients treated at the Bristol Homeopathic Hospital, including over 23,000 visits; 70% of patients informed "improved health", and 50% informed "significant improvement".

The best results were recorded in children with eczema or asthma and adults treated for inflammatory bowel disease, irritable bowel syndrome, menopause problems, and migraines (institute, n.d.).

Considering that homeopathic treatment is sought because traditional medicine has not been clinically beneficial or because it is contraindicated, these outcomes show that homeopathic formulations give very good "value for money." (FSHom, 2017)

A multicentre observational study in an actual medical setting compared the efficacy of homeopathy and conventional medicine. (Riley D, 2001).

Thirty researchers from six clinical centres and four countries took part in it. A group of patients with one of the following conditions was studied: upper respiratory complaints, lower respiratory complaints, and ear complaints.

After 14 days of homeopathy care, patients improved by 82.6% and 68% among patients receiving traditional medicines. The incidence of side reactions in the traditional treatment group was 22.3% and 7.8% in the homeopathy group. The study results show that homeopathy is no less effective than traditional medical care in treating patients with these three conditions.

Let us take another example.

In a randomized controlled international clinical trial, the efficacy of homeopathic treatment for URTI was analysed. (Thinese-Mallwitz M, 2015). Five hundred twenty-three patients aged 1 to 65 years received standard treatment on-demand or homeopathic medicines (Influcid).

Influcid tablets contain 6 homeopathic substances (Aconitum 3D, Bryonia 2D, Eupatorium perfoliatum 1D, Gelsemium 3D, Ipecacuanha 3D and Phosphorus 5D).

It was given to children in the homeopathy group for 7 days (8 tablets/day for the first 72 hours, 3 tablets/day for the next 96 hours). Paracetamol syrup, ambroxol syrup, and oxymetazoline nasal spray were offered to all children as traditional medicines as needed. On the 4th day, an improvement in the state of health (no fever) was observed. It was concluded that homeopathic treatment shortens URTI duration, reduces standard drugs, and is well tolerated. (Paolo Bellavite, 2019)

The use of homeopathy has many advantages over traditional chemical medicines. One of them is that homeopathic medicine is made from natural components: of plant, mineral, and animal origin.

The body better tolerates these drugs; therefore, they can be used for a long time, and the effect of their use is higher than chemical ones. Homeopathic medicine is selected individually, according to the signs of the disease, lifestyle, and character traits.

For example, Homeopathy in treating depression uses only natural remedies like plants and minerals. In contrast, traditional treatments for depression include antidepressants (Viksveen, et al., 2018). Antidepressants have many side effects, such as feeling sick, headache, muscle pain, reduced appetite, and confusion (NHS, 2021).

How Homeopathy is regulated

Traditional medicine is governed by special laws called statutory occupational regulation. It means that the practitioners are qualified and follow the rules of practice.

Many alternative medicine practices are not regulated by professional legislation.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), homeopaths must be trained at the university level in many countries. Moreover, many Member States have developed additional rules and regulations in addition to this training.

In the UK, homeopathy is not on the list of alternative medicine currently regulated by a professional body.

It follows that anyone can practice homeopathy without proper knowledge and experience. If clients are unhappy with their homeopathic treatment, they have no legal rights other than customary civil and criminal rights. The law does not require homeopaths to adhere to standards of practice.

In the UK, two NHS hospitals represent homeopathy, usually practised privately. Some general practitioners also provide homeopathy services. Homeopathic medicines are available without a prescription.

Professional organisations can help people find alternative medicine professionals they can trust.

Homeopathic organizations in England include:

- Alliance of Registered Homeopaths
- Society of Homeopaths
- British Homeopathic Association
- Institute of Complementary and Natural Medicine

Voluntary regulation protects the safety of patients but, at the same time, does not provide scientific evidence for the effectiveness of treatment.

For example, the Faculty of Homeopathy is a voluntary organization that includes healthcare therapists with a medical license who also practice Homeopathy. Organizations controlling the work of these specialists will not regulate their homeopathic practices. However, they will look into issues connected to the professional behaviour of their registered practitioner. (IBDrelief, 2021)

Practitioners can join professional associations or voluntary registries. Joining associations or registries obliges medical practitioners to be qualified and adhere to specific standards of practice.

However, there are no legal requirements for joining.

Organizations like the Society of Homeopaths and the Federation of Holistic Therapists maintain a register of practising homeopaths. The Office of Occupational Standards accredits these registries.

Suppose someone wants to use the services of a homeopath. In this case, he should contact professional organizations or voluntary registries to help find a practitioner. People can also check if the association or register handles complaints and what action they will take if people are concerned about the treatment.

Ethical considerations

Homeopathy is defined as a controversial industry. Opponents of this therapy believe that homeopathy as a form of medicine does not work because its clinical trials have failed to provide evidence of its effectiveness in treating diseases. The concept of *similia similibus curantur* has no scientific or logical basis, as a molecule can have no therapeutic effect if it has been removed by dilution. The concept of a scientific law, which has yet to be discovered to "explain" homeopathy, comes down to random assumptions.

Based on this, some serious ethical problems arise, such as: when homeopathy is offered to patients, taught to students, or otherwise promoted. (Smith, 2011)

Medical ethics is a methodical approach to moral problems. Society and patients need to be assured those hard solutions are not arbitrary and independent of the special moral stance taken by practitioners. The choice must be made in the interest of the patient. Ethics is about HOW dilemmas are decided, not WHAT the right choices or actions should be. A central element of modern clinical ethics is dignity and respect for the patient. People can understand and decide about their treatment. Ethics rarely provides a perfect solution.

All members must carefully follow this Code and its Appendices: The society of Homeopaths, Qualified and Insured to Practice, and those students who take courses recognized by the public (Hpathy, 2006).

It informs about professional homoeopaths established and maintained standards and anyone interested in homeopathic treatment.

Professional homeopaths are accountable to their patients, the public and their colleagues. As a member of the Society, the professional homeopath agreed to observe and comply with this Code of Ethics and provide the Company with a signed statement confirming this agreement.

The guidelines encourage homeopaths to be honest and accountable in their work.

They exist for the benefit of patients, the development of mutual understanding between colleagues, and enhancing reputation and the profession's advancement.

It must be understood that the Code will not address all ethical and practical issues. It aims to provide a framework for establishing ethical practices.

Recommendations

The results of clinical trials and systematic reviews remain uncertain. Some of them have shown that homeopathy is marginally effective, and most have shown that it has no curative outcome. Unfortunately, many of the trials included in the systematic reviews were not ideal in design, application, or sample size.

Discussions about the legitimacy of homeopathy have focused on its evidence base and mechanism of action.

Critics have concluded that homeopathy is not scientifically substantiated and unethical.

Proponents of homeopathy believe that it is ethical because it meets the needs of patients and provides significant benefits for them.

The main advantages of homeopathy are efficiency, harmlessness, the possibility of long-term use, absence of dependence, and production of drugs from environmentally friendly raw materials. Homeopathic medicines can be used both for treatment and rehabilitation and prevention of adults and children.

It is important to remember that homeopathy is not a magic pill that heals right away; there are no immediate homeopathic remedies. They are taken many times, in time and months, to achieve results.

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