

Introduction to Homeopathy

by Catherine Haug

This article expresses my own opinion, that is not necessarily shared by other members of ESP. I am not a doctor and am not qualified to advise you on your specific health situation. My intent in writing this article is merely to raise awareness and express opinion.

Along with herbology, homeopathy is a healing modality that is inexpensive, purports to be effective, and does not require the petroleum culture in its practice. What follows is my own essay on the subject.

Quackery?

Homeopathy is a much debated healing modality. There are many who describe it as "quackery," without scientific basis. This article is not intended to endorse the practice of homeopathy, but rather to describe it, to help you decide for yourself what you think.

Here are a few sites to explore on this subject:

- www.homeowatch.org (6)
- whatstheharm.net/homeopathy.htm (7)
- [Quackwatch -- Homeopathy: the Ultimate Fake, by Stephen Barrett, M.D.](#) (8)
- [Homeopathy -- quackery or a key to the future of medicine?](#) (9) is an edited transcript of a debate held at the University of Connecticut Health Center, Farmington, Connecticut, USA on 25 October 2007. "Six distinguished international speakers, including advocates and skeptics concerning homeopathy, debated the plausibility, theoretical principles, clinical and basic research evidence, ethical and other issues surrounding homeopathy."

Introduction to Homeopathy

First, a clarification: I am not a practicing homeopath, but I have much personal experience with homeopathic remedies and have experienced great successes (and also many failures in the quest to find the 'right' remedy).

Homeopathy is symptom, not illness based. These symptoms may, or may not seem related to your health issue, but remember that your body is a whole being, not a group of isolated parts. So while your main complaint may be, say, stomach distress, homeopathy is concerned also with your head, heart, lungs, skeleton, extremities, mind, emotions, and so on.

- First, you make a list of **symptoms**, both general and specific; include psychological, emotional as well as physical symptoms.
- Look up the main symptoms to find list of **applicable remedies**, using a *Materia Medica* and/or a Repertory;
- Then **refine the symptoms** to determine the correct remedy.
- Lastly, determine the **potency and frequency** of the remedy, again using the *Materia Medica*.

Oftentimes, two or more remedies will include most of your symptoms; to determine which is the one for you, you may need to delve deeper into your symptoms, and discern the difference between the two.

Law of Similars

Homeopathic theory is based upon Hahnemann's Law of Similars, which states that a substance that causes a particular symptom (or set of symptoms) will, with great dilution, aid the body in removing the same symptom(s).

For example, a properly diluted and shaken solution of bee venom will help your immune system erase the symptoms of a bee sting. Bee venom remedy is called *Apis Venenom*.

NOTE: This principle was the early basis of vaccines. But modern vaccines have strayed from this.

Naming of Remedies

Most remedies are named in latin (for example, *natrum muriaticum*, which is latin for sodium chloride, or table salt); and many are named by the latin abbreviation (*nat. mur.* in this example).

I think the use of latin names keeps an air of mystery around the remedies, so that our prejudices are held at bay. This reminds me of a favorite story, as a way to explain why the latin names are used.

A very dear friend of mine suffers from bipolar disorder. He was having difficulty with the side effects of his medication, so I suggested he try the homeopathic remedy, *Nat. Mur.* He had fairly good success with this, and so one day asked me what was in it.

After I explained that *Nat. mur.*, or *natrum muriaticum*, is latin for sodium chloride or table salt, he wanted to know why he couldn't just add more salt to his food. My answer, that the key to a remedy is that it is very dilute and that ordinary table salt would not work the same way, he lost faith in the remedy and stopped taking it. He went back to his mood swings and troubles.

Dilution & Succussion

The potency, or strength, of a remedy is achieved by dilution. I know this is counter-intuitive, but the more dilute the remedy, the 'stronger' it is, and the more deeply it will work in your body/mind/spirit.

Very potent remedies can be so dilute that chemistry is hard pressed to detect it. The remedy works, not by the chemical substance itself, but by its energy. And its energy is amplified by dilution.

The dilutions are marked by Roman numerals:

- X for 10-fold dilution (one drop of substance in 9 drops of water)
- C for 100-fold dilution (one drop of substance in 99 drops of water)
- M for 1,000-fold dilution (one drop of substance in 999 drops of water)

These are preceded by a number, as in 3X, which tells how many times that dilution has been done; that is, 3X means that 1 drop of the substance mixed with 9 drops of water to make 1X; then 1 drop of 1X with 9 drops of water to make 2X; then 1 drop of 2X with 9 drops water to make 3X.

'C' dilutions are more potent than 'X' dilutions; 3X is more potent than 1X.

After each dilution, the mixture is succussed, which is a type of vigorous shaking, to release and amplify the energy of the substance. Succussion involves holding the bottle with one hand and striking the bottom of the bottle against the palm of the other hand, over and over.

Determining the correct potency (dilution)

Homeopathy is really an art. First, it can be difficult and time-consuming to find the right remedy; then one must find the right potency. Oy vey! (or Uff Da! in Norwegian...)

Generally, chronic (long-standing) conditions require the higher dilutions (e.g., 30 C - 200 C); acute (new) conditions require the lower dilutions. Also, if you are not sure of the remedy, it's better to start out with a low dilution, to test it.

Taking the remedy

Before administering the remedy, succuss the container against your palm 5 or 6 times. Homeopathic remedies come in two forms:

- Most common are of lactose pills. These are tiny balls saturated with the remedy, and they come in a bottle about the size of a tube of lipstick. Some have automatic dispensers and others have a screw-on lid.
- A liquid solution in a dropper bottle

Lactose pills: Take 2-3 of these tiny pills under the tongue until they are fully dissolved. Most practitioners warn not to touch the pills with your fingers. I'm not sure why this is, since you will be touching them with your mouth tissues; perhaps they are concerned about the oils on your fingertips.

If the pills are in a bottle with a screw-on lid, tip out 2-3 pills into the lid and then dump from lid to under the tongue. If it is an automatic dispensing type, I recommend dropping them into the lid or a small glass before dumping under the tongue. Do not use a metal container for the remedies.

Liquid: Use the eye dropper to dispense 2-3 drops under your tongue, taking care not to touch your mouth with the tip of the eye dropper.

Antidoting substances

Certain substances with dominant aromas can antidote a remedy; that is, stop it from working. However, not all aromatic substances are antidotal, such as anise or licorice.

Classic examples are:

- mint, eucalyptus and other menthol substances (including mint-flavored toothpaste and mouthwash - use anise or licorice flavor instead)
- coffee
- camphor

A rule of thumb is to have nothing else in your mouth (except water) for at least 5 minutes before and after a remedy, and avoid the known antidoting substances at least 15 minutes before and after. Some remedies are so sensitive that you need to avoid the antidoting substances altogether, while taking the remedy.

Some remedies can antidote other remedies; this is usually mentioned in the *Materia Medica*.

Response to remedies

This is another counter-intuitive thing, but typically when taking homeopathic remedies, your symptoms get worse before they get better. So don't be tempted to stop a remedy if you have this kind of reaction; it's a sign the remedy is right for you.

For example, you may have skin problems as one of your symptoms (itching, dry, rash, redness, etc.). Such symptoms are almost always rooted in the liver. The right homeopathic remedy will encourage the liver to dump toxins into your system, to be eliminated through the organs of elimination: kidneys, colon, lungs and skin. As the remedy works, then, you may urinate more frequently, your bowels may become more active, your breath may become foul, and/or your skin may become more itchy, red, rashy).

Remember that this change is necessary and will pass as your body works to rebalance itself.

On the other hand, if you have NO response to a remedy, neither a betterment nor a worsening, it is probably not the right remedy. But continue to take it 3 - 5 days before rejecting it for another remedy.

Single vs Combined Remedies

Early homeopathy practitioners prescribed only one remedy at a time, but today, many practitioners combine several related remedies. This leads to much discussion among practitioners, as to which is more effective.

I personally am adherent to the single remedy solution, and for several reasons; here are a few that I can articulate:

- Combining with other remedies runs the risk of antidoting each other. This means that one remedy could lessen the effect of another remedy;
- The practice can obscure your response;
- While taking a remedy that is not right for you will not, generally, cause harm (because of the extreme dilution of the remedies), I still believe that the wrong remedy could interfere with the energy changes.

Why combine remedies?

This practice came about because it is **difficult to isolate the specific remedy** that is right for a patient at a given point in time, so by combining possible remedies, a prescriber can feel more confident that one of them will work. To this I would say that you could accomplish the same thing by trying them in sequence: Try one; if it doesn't work, try another, and so on. However, this does take time and sometimes, time works against the situation.

Another reason given for combining is that the **current disease may morph into another disease** (for example, influenza may develop into pneumonia), so combine the remedies for each to thwart that process. To this I would say that remedies are not disease-specific, and so this is an irrational argument. Homeopathy treats the whole person; remedies are determined by symptoms together with the patient's personality, and state of mind/emotions/spirit. Far better to treat the current condition; as it morphs into another, change the remedy.

Miasms

This is a very intriguing concept, and much disputed among homeopaths. The word 'miasm' refers to a cloud or fog in one's being, resulting from the suppression of a specific condition, either by one's ancestors, or when a child (5).

Hahnemann found that a few people with long-standing issues did not respond well to his treatment. With exhaustive study he concluded that there are three possible underlying problems, or miasms, that block healing; the only way to treat such people was first to treat the miasm. A fourth miasm was later added (4,5):

- *psora* (suppressed skin disorders)
- *sycosis* (suppressed gonorrhoea)
- *syphilis* (suppressed syphilis)
- *tubercular* (suppressed tuberculosis)

This is a very deep subject; too deep for this post. If you want to learn more, here are two references to get you started: [Natural Health DOC, on miasms](#) (10) & [Homeopathe International, on miasms, by T. Morrell](#) (11).

Profound results

Homeopathy can be a trial and error experience, as one searches for the correct remedy. This process can cause you to lose faith in this healing method. But I can assure you that when you find the correct remedy, the results will be profound. Here are a couple examples from my personal experience.

Facial Rash

When I was in my early 30s, I developed a painful, itching rash on my face. My doctor sent me to a dermatologist who could not help me, and greatly distressed me

when he speculated that I might have lupus. A friend suggested I see a new naturopath in our neighborhood.

Dr. Dan practiced herbology and homeopathy, and believed the problem was in my liver. He prescribed tinctures of yellow dock, milk thistle and dandelion. This helped, but the rash persisted. He tried several homeopathic remedies, but still only mild improvement.

One Monday, he'd returned from a weekend on Mt. Hood, and brought back fresh root of Oregon grape, which he prepared in a 6X dilution for me. I took my first dose before bed that night. When I awakened, the rash was gone! But it came back a little bit after I washed my face (the rash was sensitive to water). I continued to take the remedy and after 3 days, the rash was totally gone. GONE! Never to return.

Now, I'm not saying that this remedy will work for you; it all depends on your complex of symptoms.

Grief

My Mom died from cancer while visiting me in Oregon in 1991-1992. She had come to visit for Christmas, got sick, and was never able to return to Montana. Fortunately, she was with me, so that I was able to spend time every day with her, those most precious days of my life.

Mom and I had a rocky relationship. But emotionally, I was extremely dependent upon her, and dreaded what would happen to me after she died.

I had sought the help of another naturopathic doctor who specialized in difficult diseases like AIDS and cancer, to treat Mom during her last months. About a week before she died, and I knew the end was near, I went to Dr. Steve to help me cope with the inevitable. He prepared a 30M dilution of Ignacia amara.

I took this diligently over the next few days. I was very sad, but also brave as I faced the impending loss of my mother. Each day I felt stronger, uplifted, and protected by a sort-of cocoon. On Mom's last day, I was courageous enough to confess some of my secrets I'd withheld from her out of fear of her retribution, and to assure her of my love and trust. And when she died, I felt "gifted" of her love that I had never felt while she was living. And I know this was because the Ignatia opened my heart to her.

For more information

Refer to [*Demystifying Homeopathy*](#) (12), an online book for a brief, general discussion of homeopathy and suggested reading list. See also Sheryl Eaglewoman's article on [*Homeopathy*](#) (13).

Remedy guides are called Materia Medica; here's a sampling of online guides:

- [Homeopathy for Everyone](http://www.hpathy.com/repertory/index.asp) (<http://www.hpathy.com/repertory/index.asp>)
- [International Academy of Classical Homeopathy](http://www.vithoukas.com/content/view/34/45/lang.en/) (<http://www.vithoukas.com/content/view/34/45/lang.en/>)
- [A B C Homeopathy](http://abchomeopathy.com/) (<http://abchomeopathy.com/>)

References:

1. [Homeopathy of Everyone](http://www.hpathy.com/repertory/index.asp) (<http://www.hpathy.com/repertory/index.asp>)
2. [International Academy of Classical Homeopathy](http://www.vithoukas.com/content/view/34/45/lang.en/) (www.vithoukas.com/content/view/34/45/lang.en/)
3. [A B C Homeopathy](http://abchomeopathy.com/) (<http://abchomeopathy.com/>)
4. [Natural Health DOC, on miasms](http://homeopathy-homeopathics-remedies.naturalhealthdoc.net/Hahnemann-Miasms.htm) (homeopathy-homeopathics-remedies.naturalhealthdoc.net/Hahnemann-Miasms.htm)
5. [Homeopathe International, on misasms, by T. Morrell](http://www.homeoint.org/morrell/articles/pm_miasm.htm) (www.homeoint.org/morrell/articles/pm_miasm.htm)

URLs to links embedded in the text

6. [homeowatch.org](http://www.homeowatch.org/) (www.homeowatch.org/)
7. whatstheharm.net/homeopathy.htm (<http://whatstheharm.net/homeopathy.htm>)
8. [Quackwatch -- Homeopathy: the Ultimate Fake](http://www.quackwatch.com/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/homeo.html), by Stephen Barrett M.D. (<http://www.quackwatch.com/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/homeo.html>)
9. [Homeopathy -- quackery or a key to the future of medicine?](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6WXX-4RJXWNR-7&user=10&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=4fbc9177d451bb1887ccd707fd6b5b8) (www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6WXX-4RJXWNR-7&user=10&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=4fbc9177d451bb1887ccd707fd6b5b8)
10. [Natural Health DOC, on miasms](http://homeopathy-homeopathics-remedies.naturalhealthdoc.net/Hahnemann-Miasms.htm) ([/homeopathy-homeopathics-remedies.naturalhealthdoc.net/Hahnemann-Miasms.htm](http://homeopathy-homeopathics-remedies.naturalhealthdoc.net/Hahnemann-Miasms.htm))
11. [Homeopathe International, on misasms, by T. Morrell](http://www.homeoint.org/morrell/articles/pm_miasm.htm) (www.homeoint.org/morrell/articles/pm_miasm.htm)
12. Demystifying Homeopathy ('book on healing . com') << url contains suspected malware; use with caution (and remove spaces)
13. Sheryl Eaglewoman's article on [Homeopathy](http://www.livingresponsibly.com/Documents/WFP%20-%20MAR%201807-Homeopathy.pdf) (www.livingresponsibly.com/Documents/WFP%20-%20MAR%201807-Homeopathy.pdf)