

Homeopathy

Although during the past 200 years many people in Britain, Europe and America have felt better consulting a homeopath, orthodox doctors are scornful. According to them, homeopathic remedies only work because the people who take them believe that they will work. Scientists are skeptical because they are convinced that the remedies do not contain enough of the substance to have any effect. But the idea of taking the smallest possible amount, or minimum dose, of the remedy is fundamental to homeopathy. The British Medical Association's 1986 report on alternative medicine rejected homeopathy out of hand – the theory of minimum dose was irrational.

Dr Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843), the father of homeopathy, objected to the barbarous practices of allopathic medicine. 18th century doctors relied on blood letting and prescription of poisonous mixtures of drugs. Hahnemann noticed that substances which produced the same symptoms as a particular disease could be used to cure it. Hahnemann came across this phenomenon (first described by Hippocrates) when he experimented with cinchona or Peruvian bark, from which quinine is derived. Knowing that the drug was effective against malaria, he took it and found that he developed all the symptoms of malaria. Through extensive testing on himself, friends, and family, he drew the drug pictures of hundreds of substances and established the law of similars, or treatment of like by like.

Since the substances were often toxic, Hahnemann began to experiment with methods of diluting them to find the smallest possible dose – a cure without side effects. He diluted one part of the substance with 99 parts of a mixture of water and alcohol and gave the result 100 powerful shocks, or successions. He called this dilution the first centesimal potency.

In the London cholera epidemic of 1854, the death rate in orthodox London hospitals was 53.2 percent, compared with a death rate in the London Homeopathic Hospital of 16.4 percent. This striking difference may be accounted for by other aspects of homeopathy – its emphasis on diet, exercise, and fresh air and the patient's spiritual, emotional, and intellectual wellbeing. Whether the minimum dose is vindicated or not, patients will continue to seek relief from the ailments conventional medicine cannot cure. And they will continue to benefit from the time and attention they receive from homeopathic practitioners.

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