**History of Homeopathy**

By Dana Ullman MPH (Excerpted from [Discovering Homeopathy: Medicine for the 21st Century](https://homeopathic.com/product/discovering-homeopathy-medicine-for-the-21st-century/), North Atlantic Books)

The history of homeopathy begins with the discoveries of its founder Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843), a German physician. Hahnemann first coined the word “homeopathy” (“homoios” in Greek means similar, “pathos” means suffering) to refer to the pharmacological principle, the law of similars, that is its basis. Actually, the law of similars was previously described by Hippocrates and Paracelsus and was utilized by many cultures, including the Mayans, Chinese, Greeks, Native American Indians, and Asian Indians (1), but it was Hahnemann who codified the law of similars into a systematic medical science.

Hahnemann’s first comments about the general applicability of the law of similars were in 1789 when he translated a book by William Cullen, one of the leading physicians of the era. At one point in the book, Cullen ascribed the usefulness of Peruvian bark (Cinchona) in treating malaria due to its bitter and astringent properties. Hahnemann wrote a bold footnote in his translation, disputing Cullen’s explanation. Hahnemann asserted that the efficacy of Peruvian bark must be for other factors, since he noted that there were other substances and mixtures of substances decidedly more bitter and more astringent than Peruvian bark that were not effective in treating malaria. He then described his own taking repeated doses of this herb until his body responded to its toxic dose with fever, chills, and other symptoms similar to malaria. Hahnemann concluded that the reason this herb was beneficial was because it caused symptoms similar to those of the disease it was treating. (2)

This account epitomizes Hahnemann. First, he was translating Cullen’s work, which indicates that he was one of the more respected translators of his day. By the time he was only 24, Hahnemann could read and write in at least seven languages. He ultimately translated over 20 major medical and scientific texts. This story reveals Hahnemann as both an avid experimenter and a respected chemist. He had authored a four-volume set of books called The Pharmaceutical Lexicon, which was considered one of the standard reference texts for apothecaries/pharmacists of his day. (3) And this account also reveals Hahnemann as an audacious rebel. He was unafraid to speak his mind, even if it meant correcting the analysis of a very respected physician. He was unafraid to question commonly accepted truths. And he had enough initiative to seek his own alternative explanations.

After translating Cullen’s work, Hahnemann spent the next six years actively experimenting on himself, his family, and a small but growing group of followers. In 1796 he wrote about his experiences with the law of similars in Hufeland’s Journal, a respected medical journal in Germany. (4) Coincidentally, in 1798 Edward Jenner discovered the value of giving small doses of cowpox to people in an effort to immunize them against smallpox. Whereas Jenner’s work was generally accepted into orthodox medicine, Hahnemann’s work was not. In fact, there was so much antagonism to Hahnemann and the new school of medical thought he called homeopathy that entire medical journals were called Anti-Homoeopathic Archives or Anti-Organon (the Organon refers to the book that Hahnemann wrote as the primary text on the homeopathic art and science). (5)

Hahnemann was particularly disliked by the apothecaries because he recommended the use of only one medicine at a time and prescribing only limited doses of it. (6) Because he recommended only small doses of each medicine, the apothecaries could not charge much for them. And because each medicine required careful preparation, Hahnemann found that the apothecaries were not always making them correctly or were intentionally giving his patients different medicines. As he grew to distrust the apothecaries, he chose to dispense his own medicines, an illegal act at the time in Germany. The apothecaries then accused Hahnemann of “entrenching upon their privileges by the dispensing of medicines.” (7) Arrested in Leipzig in 1820, he was found guilty and forced to move.

He moved to Kothen, where he was delegated special permission to practice and dispense his own medicines by Grand Duke Ferdinand, one of the many European royalties who supported homeopathy. (8)

Despite the persecution, homeopathy continued to grow. It grew not just because it offered a systematic approach to treating sick people, but also because orthodox medicine was ineffective and even dangerous. There is general agreement among medical historians today that orthodox medicine of the 1700s and 1800s in particular frequently caused more harm than good. (9)

Bloodletting and application of leeches were common practices even through to the mid-1800s. One French doctor blood let so much that some jokingly estimated that he spilled more blood in his medical practice than was spilled throughout the entire Napoleonic Wars. (10). Benjamin Rush, considered the father of American medicine, asserted that bloodletting was useful in all general and chronic diseases. (11) As many as 41 million leeches were imported into France in 1833 alone. (12) In the United States, one firm imported 500,000 leeches in 1856; its competitor imported 300,000 (13). Besides bloodletting and leeches, orthodox physicians used medicines made from mercury, lead, arsenic, and various strong herbs to help purge the body of foreign disease-causing matter.

The combination of poor medical care and prejudicial reaction against homeopathy is certainly understandable in light of medical education at the time. Nathan Smith Davis, who was the driving force in the creation of the American Medical Association, described medical education in 1845:

*“All the young man has to do is gain admittance in the office of some physician, where he can have access to a series of ordinary medical text-books, and see a patient perhaps once a month, with perhaps a hasty post-mortem examination once a year; and in the course of three years thus spent, one or two courses of lectures in the medical colleges, where the whole science of medicine, including anatomy, physiology, chemistry, Materia medica, pathology, practice of medicine, medical jurisprudence, surgery, and midwifery are all crowded upon his mind in the short space of*sixteen*weeks…and his education, both primary and medical, is deemed complete.” (14)*

Even though historians and scientists today consider medicine of the 18th and 19th century as unscientific and even barbaric, orthodox physicians had the audacity to call homeopathy “quackery,” “unscientific,” “cultish,” and “devilish.”

Homeopathy posed a serious threat to entrenched medicine. Orthodox physicians criticized herbalists, midwives, and various other “non-regular” practitioners because they were not medically trained. Homeopaths, however, could not be discredited as being unlearned, since they were graduates from many of the same medical schools as “regular” physicians. In fact, many of the initial practitioners of homeopathy graduated from some of the most prestigious medical schools of the day. (15)

Orthodox medicine was also threatened because homeopathy offered an integrated, coherent, systematic basis for its therapeutic practice. In his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* Paul Starr noted, “Because homeopathy was simultaneously philosophical and experimental, it seemed to many people to be more rather than less scientific than orthodox medicine.” (16)

One of the most important reasons that orthodox physicians and drug companies disliked homeopathy was that inherent in the homeopathic approach was a sharp critique of the use of conventional drugs. Homeopaths were primarily critical of the suppressive nature of these drugs. They felt that they simply masked the person’s symptoms, creating deeper, more serious diseases. Homeopaths also noted that this masking of symptoms made it more difficult for them ultimately to find the correct medicine, since the person’s idiosyncratic symptoms are the primary guide to the individual selection of the medicine.

Perhaps the most important reason that conventional physicians disliked homeopathy and homeopaths was well expressed at an A.M.A. meeting by one of the more respected orthodox physicians who said, “We must admit that we never fought the homeopath on matters of principles; we fought him because he came into the community and got the business.” (17) Although most physicians, past or present, won’t as easily admit it, economic issues play a major role in what is practiced and what is allowed to be practiced.

Hahnemann’s principles therefore posed a philosophical, clinical, and economic threat to orthodox medicine.

Homeopathy began growing in the New World shortly after Hans Gram, a Dutch homeopath, emigrated to the United States in 1825. It expanded so rapidly that the homeopaths decided to create a national medical society. In 1844 they organized the American Institute of Homeopathy, which became America’s first national medical society. (18) Partially in response to the growth of homeopaths, in 1846 a rival medical group formed which then vowed to slow the development of homeopathy. (19) This organization called itself the American Medical Association.

Members of the A.M.A. had a long-standing animosity towards homeopathy and homeopaths. This feeling ran so strong that, shortly after the formation of the A.M.A., it was decided to purge all the local medical societies of physicians who were homeopaths. (20). This purge was successful in every state except Massachusetts. Because homeopathy was so strong among the elite of Boston, the A.M.A. allowed this exception, if the Society agreed not to allow any new homeopathic members. Then, in 1871, the eight remaining physicians were expelled from the Society for the heinous crime of being homeopaths.

In 1882 the AMA declined to acknowledge the delegates from the New York State Medical Society because this society had recently passed a resolution that recognized *all* properly graduated doctors (which thereby included homeopathic physicians).

Besides keeping homeopaths out of their societies, the A.M.A. wanted to discourage *any* type of association with homeopaths. In 1855 the AMA established a code of ethics that asserted that orthodox physicians would lose their membership in the A.M.A. if they even consulted with a homeopath or any other “non-regular” practitioner. (21) At the time, if a physician lost his membership in the local medical society, it meant that in some states he no longer had a license to practice medicine. Often, orthodox physicians, who controlled the medical societies, wouldn’t admit homeopathic physicians, and then would arrange for their arrest for practicing medicine without a license. (22) Ultimately, homeopaths set up their own local societies and established their own medical boards.

At a time in American medicine when physicians would very rarely, if ever, be reprimanded by fellow physicians, the ethical code on consorting with homeopaths was regularly enforced. (23) One Connecticut physician was expelled from his local medical society for consulting with a homeopath–his wife. (24) A New York doctor was expelled for purchasing milk sugar from a homeopathic pharmacy. (25) Joseph K. Barnes, the Surgeon General of the United States, was denounced for aiding in the treatment of Secretary of State William Seward on the night he was stabbed, and Lincoln was shot, simply because Seward’s personal physician was a homeopath. (26)

In a bizarre event, Dr. Christopher C. Cox was refused admittance into the Medical Society of the District of Columbia because he had served on the D.C. Board of health which had a member who was a homeopath. Dr. D.W. Bliss, a conventional physician, and colleague of Dr. Cox, also was expelled, not because he consulted a homeopath, but because he consulted with Dr. Cox who was previously expelled. Ironically, the Medical Society judged that Bliss and Cox had committed a heinous crime, even though it was in the treatment of Schulyer Colfax, the Vice President of the United States under Andrew Johnson. (27)

The A.M.A. and its members did anything possible to thwart the education of homeopaths. In the early 1840s and again in 1855 advocates of homeopathy convinced the Michigan legislature to establish a professorship of homeopathy in the department of medicine at the University of Michigan. The AMA resolved to deny recognition to the university’s “regular” medical graduates if a homeopath, as one of their professors, signed their diploma (at the time all professors signed graduates’ diplomas). The homeopaths brought their case to the Michigan Supreme Court three times, but each time the court expressed uncertainty as to its power to compel the Regents of the University to act. (28)

Finally, a compromise was reached. In 1875 the Michigan legislature voted to give money to a new hospital dependent upon the appointment of two professors of homeopathy, but it was also decided that only the president and the secretary of the university would sign the diplomas, thereby allowing their graduates to be recognized by the A.M.A.

Despite this compromise, almost every medical journal in the country urged the Michigan medical faculty to resign rather than participate in the training of homeopaths. (29)

The antagonism to homeopathy was not confined only to the United States; it was also widespread in Europe. A French medical student was expelled from his college for expressing interest in homeopathy. A “consultation clause” like the one in the United States was established in France. When J.P. Tessier, a conventional French physician, evaluated the results of homeopathy at Hospital Ste. Marguerite and announced to the Paris Academy that they were favorable, he aroused a storm of protest. (30) No orthodox medical journal would publish these results, and when he had it published in a homeopathic journal, he was summarily expelled by the medical society. (31)

In the 1830s the practice of homeopathy became illegal in Austria. Despite its illegality, many people used microdoses during the cholera epidemic of 1831. Statistics show that those with cholera who tried homeopathy had a mortality rate between 2.4 to 21.1%; whereas over 50% of those with cholera under conventional medical care died. (32)

In addition to the attacks by conventional physicians on the homeopaths’ right to practice, the right to join medical organizations and the right to medical education, conventional physicians sought to besmirch the reputation of homeopaths. Homeopaths were considered “immoral,” “illegitimate,” and “unmanly.” The opposition to homeopathy was not based on any scientific evaluation of this healing art but arose primarily because homeopathy and homeopaths were significant competitors to conventional physicians.

**The Rise of Homeopathy**

In an 1890 issue of *Harpers Magazine,* Mark Twain acknowledged the special value of homeopathy, noting, “The introduction of homeopathy forced the old school doctor to stir around and learn something of a rational nature about his business.” (33) Twain also asserted that “You may honestly feel grateful that homeopathy survived the attempts of the allopathists (orthodox physicians) to destroy it.”

Despite the significant oppression from the orthodox medical profession, homeopathy survived and even thrived in the 1800s and early 1900s. By 1900 there were 22 homeopathic medical schools, more than 100 homeopathic hospitals, over 60 orphan asylums and old people’s homes, and 1,000+ homeopathic pharmacies in the U.S. (34) These impressive numbers alone do not provide an accurate perspective on the significant impact that homeopathy had on American life.

Homeopathy attracted support from many of the most respected members of society. Its advocates included William James, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Nathanial Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Daniel Webster, William Seward, Horace Greeley, and Louisa May Alcott. William Cullen Bryant, the famous journalist, was president of the New York Homeopathic Society. (35) John D. Rockefeller referred to homeopathy as “a progressive and aggressive step in medicine”; the fact that he was under homeopathic care throughout the latter part of his life may be one reason he lived 97 years. (36)

Homeopathy’s popularity among respected classes was also evident in Europe. Besides its patronage by Britain’s Royal Family dating from the 1830s (37), homeopathy could count among its supporters Charles Dickens, W.B. Yeats, William Thackarey, Benjamin Disraeli, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, and Pope Pius X. (38)

Because abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Zabina Eastman were strong proponents of homeopathy, and because many individual homeopaths were politically progressive, the medicine itself became identified with causes of female and black emancipation. (39) Perhaps this spurred homeopathy’s popularity in the north,\* while retard its progress in the South. (40)

[\*Statistics indicate that the number of homeopaths in New York doubled every five years from 1829 to 1869. (41)]

Homeopathy was also disproportionately popular among women, not only as patients, but as its practitioners. The first women’s medical college in the world was the homeopathic Boston Female Medical College, founded in 1848. Four years later it became the New England Female Medical College, and in 1873, it merged with Boston University, another homeopathic college. (42) Homeopaths also admitted women physicians into their national organization considerably before orthodox physicians did. Homeopaths admitted women into the American Institute of Homeopathy in 1871, while women were not invited into the A.M.A. until 1915. (43) The orthodox medical school at Johns Hopkins finally agreed to accept women students as late as 1890, but not out of interests in women’s rights. They were offered a $500,000 endowment. (44) Harvard turned down this same offer. (45)

Many clergy not only were personally supportive of homeopathy, but they also helped spread the word about it. (46) Even Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, who generally was vehemently opposed to the use of drugs, acknowledged homeopathy’s value, saying, “Evidences of progress and of spiritualization greet us on every hand. Drug systems are quitting their hold on the matter and so letting in matter’s higher stratum, the mortal mind. Homeopathy, a step in advance of allopathy,\* is doing this.” (47)

[\* “Allopathy” is a word coined by Hahnemann to refer to orthodox medicine.]

The press was often very supportive of homeopathy, as the *Journal of the American Medical Association* regretfully acknowledged, “(W)e all know perfectly well that the sympathy of the press generally and of the public is with the homeopaths.” (48)

It is no wonder that Henry James, another advocate of homeopathy, portrayed this medical science in such a positive light in his novel *The Bostonians*. This reference is carried over in the recent movie made from this book. In a scene from this movie, which is set in the 1880s, Basil Ransom (played by Christopher Reeve) addresses Miss Birdseye, the grand dame of the women’s movement (played by Jessica Tandy):

Ransom: “You must tell me how much you take. One spoonful?

Birdseye: “I guess this time, I’ll take two. It’s homeopathic.

Ransom: “Oh, I have no doubt of that. I presume you wouldn’t have anything else.”

Birdseye: “Well, it’s generally admitted now to be the true system.” (49)

Although homeopathy was particularly popular among the educated and upper classes, it also had a good reputation among the poor. Some of this support no doubt resulted from the free homeopathic dispensaries in many cities. (50)

However, probably the most important reason that homeopathy developed such immense popularity was its success in treating the various infectious epidemic diseases that raged throughout America and Europe during the 1800s. Statistics indicate that the death rates in homeopathic hospitals from these epidemics were often one-half to as little as one-eighth of those in orthodox medical hospitals. (51) Cincinnati Homeopaths were so successful in treating people during the 1849 cholera epidemic that homeopaths published a daily list of their patients in the newspaper, giving names and addresses of those who were cured and those who died. Only 3% of the 1,116 homeopathic patients died, while between 48-60% of those under orthodox medical treatment died. (52)

The success of homeopaths in treating the yellow fever epidemic of 1878 that spread throughout the south was so impressive that homeopathy finally began to be noticed in the region. Deaths rates for those under homeopathic care were approximately one-third what they were for those using orthodox medicine. (53)

Besides offering effective treatment for infectious diseases, homeopaths provided care for a wide range of acute and chronic diseases. The observation that patients under homeopathic care lived longer led some life insurance companies to offer a 10% discount to homeopathic patients. (54) There is also actuarial evidence that more life insurance money was paid to beneficiaries of homeopathic patients because these people lived longer. (55)

The training of 19th-century homeopaths compared favorably to that of their orthodox physician colleagues. As I mentioned earlier, many homeopaths attended orthodox medical schools. Eventually, homeopaths developed their own medical schools or maintained departments of homeopathy within other medical schools. Boston University, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, Hahnemann Medical College, and the University of Iowa were but some of the schools teaching homeopathy. Historians today consider the education offered at the homeopathic medical colleges on par with the orthodox medical schools of the day. (56)

It is impressive to note that a higher percentage of graduates from homeopathic medical schools passed medical board examinations than did their orthodox medical student colleagues. (57)

Homeopaths showed impressive scholarship, both in books and journals. According to a U.S. Commission on Education in 1898, three of the four medical schools with the largest libraries were homeopathic colleges. (58) And at the turn of the century, there were as many as 29 different homeopathic journals.

Homeopathy’s popularity in the United States was obvious and deep-seated. And yet, when reading most books on the history of American medicine, we find little or no mention of it. When there *is* reference, it is generally derogatory, delegating homeopathy to an anomaly in medicine, a cult that ultimately disappeared, a science of placeboes rather than “real drugs,” or a medical heresy. It has been said that history is written by the victors, not by the defeated. The history of American medicine is but another sorry example of this maxim.

**The Fall of Homeopathy**

It is quite remarkable in itself that homeopathy survived the incessant and harsh attempts to destroy it. After the turn of the century, however, the A.M.A. became increasingly effective in suppressing homeopathy. In a strategic move to make themselves look like “good guys,” the AMA chose to “allow” graduates of homeopathic medical schools to join the AMA…as long as they denounced homeopathy or at least didn’t practice it. (59) The A.M.A. also chose to drop the consultation clause in 1901, not because they were no longer antagonistic to homeopathy, but because they had new efficient ways of defeating it.

In 1910 the Carnegie Foundation issued the famous/infamous Flexner Report. The Flexner Report was an evaluation of American medical schools chaired by Abraham Flexner, in cooperation with leading members of the A.M.A. (60) While pretending to be objective, the Report established guidelines meant to sanction orthodox medical schools and condemn homeopathic ones. The Report placed the highest value on those medical schools that had a full-time teaching faculty and those schools that taught a pathological and physiochemical analysis of the human body. Homeopathic colleges were faulted because of their preference for employing professors who were not simply teachers or researchers but also in clinical practice. Although homeopathic schools included many basic science courses, they also had courses in pharmacology which the Flexner Report did not consider worthwhile.

As one might easily predict, the homeopathic colleges overall were given poor ratings by the Flexner Report. According to the report, only graduates of those schools which received a high rating were allowed to take medical licensing exams. There were 22 homeopathic colleges in 1900, but only two remained in 1923. (61)

These schools were not the only ones hurt by the Flexner Report. Of the seven black medical schools, only two survived. The Report also contributed to a 33% reduction in women being graduated from medical schools. (62)

As a way of coping with new guidelines and passing the new licensing exams that stressed the basic sciences, homeopathic colleges decided to offer more education on pathology, chemistry, physiology, and other medical sciences. Although they offered better education on these subjects, their homeopathic training suffered greatly. (63) As a result, the graduates from these homeopathic colleges were less able to practice homeopathy well. Instead of individualizing medicines to a person’s totality of symptoms, many homeopaths began prescribing medicines according to disease categories. The consequences of this type of care were predictably poor results. Many homeopaths gave up the homeopathic practice, and many homeopathic patients sought other types of care.

There were other reasons for the sharp decline of homeopathy after the turn of the century. Orthodox medicine was no longer as barbaric as it was in the 1800s, and because of this, it didn’t drive as many patients away. Orthodox physicians also began incorporating several homeopathic medicines into their practice. Although they didn’t prescribe the same small doses as the homeopaths, their use of certain homeopathic medicines confused the public, who were having increasing difficulty in distinguishing orthodox physicians from homeopathic physicians. (64)

Another factor in the decline of homeopathy was its poor economic viability. Good homeopathic practice required individualization of the patient which demanded more time than most orthodox physicians gave to their patients. Since economics governs the way medicine is practiced more than is commonly recognized, the fact that physicians in the 20th century could make more money practicing orthodox medicine is a significant factor that led to homeopathy’s decline.

Perhaps history could have been changed if John D. Rockefeller, a strong advocate of homeopathy, gave the major grants he intended to homeopathic institutions. He had instructed his financial advisor, Frederick Gates, to do so. Since Gates was totally enamored with orthodox medicine, he never complied with Rockefeller’s orders. (65) This loss of potential funding was tragic, since Rockefeller gave away between $300-$400 million in the early 1900s, most of which went to orthodox medical institutions. (66)

The drug companies’ antagonism to homeopathy continued significantly to the collective efforts to suppress this form of medicine. Because the drug companies published medical journals, they could use them as mouthpieces against homeopathy and in support of orthodox medicine. Even the *Journal of the American Medical Association* acknowledged that “the medical press is profoundly under the influence of the proprietary interests (drug companies).” (67)

Along with the various external factors that hindered homeopathy’s growth, there were problems among homeopaths themselves. Disagreement within homeopathy has a long tradition. Hahnemann demanded that his followers practice precisely the way he did, “He who does not walk on exactly the same line with me, who diverges, if it be but the breadth of a straw, to the right or to the left, is an apostate and a traitor.” (68) As one could predict, many homeopaths did not practice as Hahnemann did.

The most famous homeopaths in the U.S. were primarily Hahnemannians. However, most homeopaths practicing in this country did not prescribe their medicines on the basis of the totality of symptoms, but primarily according to the chief complaint. These homeopaths prescribed medicines for specific diseases, and sometimes, they prescribed one medicine for a person’s headache, another for a digestive disorder, and another for a skin problem. Hahnemann and his followers were particularly adamant about the use of only one medicine at a time, and Hahnemann referred to those practitioners who used more than a single medicine as “pseudo-homeopaths” and other less kind things.

Throughout his life, Hahnemann used primarily medicines that were potentized 3, 6, 9, 12, or 30 times. Towards the end of his life, however, some of his colleagues experimented successfully in using medicines that had been potentized 90, 200, 1,000, or 10,000 times. In 1829 Hahnemann wrote a letter to a friend expressing disbelief in the effectiveness of these medicines. He was also concerned that the public would not place trust in homeopathy if practitioners utilized such extremely dilute medicines. He recommended that homeopaths not use anything more dilute than the 30th potency. (69) Later, Hahnemann acknowledged that these higher potencies\* had an effect, though there is no record of him ever using a medicine higher than the 1,500 potencies.

[\* Higher potency medicines are those which have been potentized 200, 1,000, 10,000, 100,000 or more times; lower potencies are potentized 3, 6, 9, or 12 times; a medium potency is one potentized 30 times.]

After Hahnemann’s death, the vast majority of Hahnemannian homeopaths adopted the higher potencies. The low-potency homeopaths, however, were not converted, and the stage was set for yet another opportunity for disagreement between homeopaths. The high and low-potency schools of thought developed separate organizations, hospitals, and journals. In 1901, because of the various disagreements among homeopaths, Chicago had four different homeopathic medical societies.

The poor training that the homeopathic schools offered after the turn of the century ultimately discouraged the rigorous approach that the Hahnemann method required.

From 1930 to 1975 there are not many horror stories of the A.M.A.’s oppression of homeopathy, primarily because it seemed that the AMA had already won the war. By 1950 all the homeopathic colleges in the U.S. were either closed or no longer teaching homeopathy. There were only 50-150 practicing homeopathic physicians, and most of these practitioners were over 50 years old.

And yet, it is hard to suppress the truth. Homeopathy has risen again, and this time, history will be rewritten.

**The Present Status of Homeopathy (as of 1988)**

Homeopaths throughout the world experienced varying degrees of opposition from orthodox physicians, but not anywhere near the systematic or intense attacks as those beset upon them by American doctors. When homeopaths have been given a relatively free environment to practice, homeopathy has been able to grow and flourish.

Homeopathy is particularly popular in Great Britain where the Royal Family has been under homeopathic care since the 1830s. (70) The *New York Times* noted that visits to homeopathic physicians are increasing in England at a rate of 39% per year. (71) A British consumer organization surveyed its 28,000 members and discovered that 80% had used some form of complementary medicine\* and that 70% of those who had tried homeopathy were cured or improved by it. (72) Not only is there growing interest from the general public, but there is also surprising acknowledgement of homeopathy by conventional physicians. The *British Medical Journal* recently published a survey of the attitudes of British physicians toward practitioners of complementary medicine. The survey discovered that 42% of the physicians surveyed refer patients to homeopathic physicians. (73) A different study published in *The Times* of London found that 48% of physicians referred patients to homeopathic physicians. (74) A study published in the *British Medical Journal* noted that in a survey of 100 recently graduated British physicians, 80% expressed an interest in being trained in either homeopathy, acupuncture, or hypnosis. (75)

(\* In Great Britain and to a small extent in the U.S. “complementary medicine” or “complementary therapies” is replacing the term “alternative medicine” or “alternative therapies.” Advocates of complementary therapies assert that their therapies are not “alternative” but are a growing part of mainstream medicine.)

This impressive growth in Great Britain is being matched in France. A recent survey of French doctors revealed that approximately 11,000 utilize homeopathic medicines, approximately 25% of the French public have tried or are presently using homeopathic medicines, and over 20,000 French pharmacies now sell homeopathic medicines. (76) This survey also noted that courses in homeopathy leading to a degree are offered in six medical schools. Homeopathy is taught in all pharmacy schools and in four veterinary schools. Homeopathy is growing so rapidly in France that a recent cover story of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, one of France’s leading magazines, noted that President Mitterrand and six medical school deans had called for more research on homeopathy. (77) The author editorialized, “It is a fact that homeopathy obtains results, sometimes spectacular results.”

In 1981 the Dutch government published a report on *Alternative Medicine in The Netherlands* 1981, which concluded that 20% of the Dutch public utilize alternative healing methods. The report also noted that homeopathy is one of the most popular therapeutic modalities. (78)

Homeopathy is widespread in Europe, but it is even more popular in Asia, especially in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Homeopathy spread in India, in part, because of the support it received from Mahatma Gandhi, who was reported to have said that it “cures a greater number of people than any other method of treatment,” but also because it has been effective in treating many of the acute infectious conditions and the chronic maladies on the subcontinent. As an article in the World Health Organization’s journal *World Health Forum* noted, “Homeopathic treatment seems well suited for use in rural areas where the infrastructure, equipment, and drugs needed for conventional medicine cannot be provided.” (79) Homeopathy is also considerably cheaper than conventional medicine, and any person, not just physicians, can learn to use a small number of medicines for simple common complaints.

Presently, there are over 120 four- or five-year homeopathic medical schools in India. Nineteen of the colleges are maintained by the state, most of which are affiliated with universities. (80) It has been estimated that there are over 100,000 homeopathic practitioners in India. An article in the *World Health Forum* acknowledged that “In the Indian subcontinent the legal position of the practitioners of homeopathy has been elevated to a professional level similar to that of a medical practitioner.” (81)

Homeopathy is not as popular in South America as it is in Europe or Asia, but it is still widely utilized. Homeopathy’s popularity in Argentina dates back to General San Martin, the country’s greatest hero, who was reported to have taken a kit of homeopathic medicines across the Andes in his efforts to free Chile and Peru from Spain in 1816. One of Argentina’s most respected homeopathic physicians, Dr. Francisco Eizayaga, has estimated that there are now approximately 2,000 doctors in Argentina who practice homeopathy, and approximately 3 million of Argentina’s 30 million people have used homeopathic medicines. (82)

Homeopathy is equally popular in Brazil, where there are also approximately 2,000 physicians who utilize homeopathic medicines. It is interesting to note that pharmacists in Brazil are required to take a course in homeopathic pharmacology in order to graduate. There are at least 10 homeopathic schools in Brazil, and several conventional medical schools have coursework in homeopathy. (83)

Besides homeopathy’s special popularity in the previously mentioned countries, it is widely practiced in Mexico, Greece, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Australia, South Africa, Nigeria, and the Soviet Union.

Homeopathy is re-experiencing a renaissance in the United States as well. In the early 1970s there were only 50-100 physicians who specialized in homeopathy, and yet by the mid-1980s, it can be estimated that there were approximately 1,000 physicians who specialize in homeopathy. According to the *Washington Post*, the number of physicians in the U.S. who specialized in homeopathy doubled from 1980 to 1982. (84) There is a concomitant increase in the use of microdoses by various other health professionals. Approximately 1,000 other health professionals in the U.S. use homeopathic medicines, and these include dentists, podiatrists, veterinarians, physician assistants, nurses, naturopaths, acupuncturists, chiropractors, and psychologists. Although these numbers still represent only a very small percentage of licensed health professionals, the rapidly growing interest in homeopathy portends significant increases to come.

The rediscovery of homeopathy by the general public is even more encouraging. The magazine, *The F.D.A. Consumer*, recently reported a 1000% increase in sales of homeopathic medicines from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. (85)

Contrary to some critics who think that people try homeopathy only because they are uneducated, research published in the *Western Journal of Medicine* showed that homeopathic patients tend to be considered even better educated than the average American. (86)

It is difficult to predict how popular homeopathy will be in the United States in the 21st century, though it is probable that most physicians will utilize at least some of the microdoses that research has proven to be effective. Growing numbers of consumers will also learn to self-prescribe homeopathic medicine for common acute conditions and will probably demand homeopathic care from their physicians for more serious medical conditions.

Clearly, homeopathy will play an increasingly important role in health care, for as internationally acclaimed violinist and humanitarian Yehudi Menuhin\* once said, “Homeopathy is one of the few medical specialties which carries no penalties–only benefits.”

(\* In addition to the various awards and achievements which the internationally acclaimed musician and humanitarian Yehudi Menuhin has, he is also the President of The Hahnemann Society, one of Great Britain’s major homeopathic organizations.)

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