

WHO ATTACKS HOMEOPATHY

By Dana Ullman, MPH - 27th August 2009

I am sorry to report that the World Health Organization has embarrassed itself by providing misinformation about homeopathic medicine as a result of a “dirty tricks” campaign by Sense about Science and Young Voices of Science.

<http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/index.php/site/project/392/>

These British organizations have a history of providing biased and one-sided information to the public, to the medical community, and to the public health community, and sadly, representatives from WHO have been successfully misinformed about homeopathy and homeopathic treatment.

Homeopathy not a cure, says WHO

20 August 2009

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8211925.stm>

I sincerely hope that WHO proactively retract the statements that have been proven to be inaccurate.

Please note that the homeopathic community stands with WHO in wanting the best and most comprehensive medical and health care for the world’s population. The vast majority of practising homeopaths in the world today do not seek to rely upon only homeopathic treatment for people with serious illnesses, just as good medical care cannot and should not rely only upon conventional pharmaceutical agents for the prevention or treatment of every disease. The tools and treatments that are made available by conventional physicians are not the only tools and treatments that are useful in the prevention and/or treatment of diseases. Likewise, no homeopaths think that only homeopathic medicines are appropriate for every individual.

When Hippocrates asserted “First, do no harm,” he sought to encourage physicians (and anyone) to use safer treatments before applying more risky therapeutic methods. In this light, homeopathic medicines can be as a part of what might be called “first medicine,” and in this light, the use of homeopathic medicines or other natural therapeutics does not mean that homeopaths are against the appropriate use of conventional medical treatments.

Controlled Clinical Research in the Treatment of Childhood Diarrhea

Representatives of WHO have made erroneous statements included Joe Martines, who on behalf of Dr Elizabeth Mason, Director, Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development, was quoted as saying, "We have found no evidence to date that homeopathy would bring any benefit."

This statement is surprising because researchers at the University of Washington have conducted three trials showing efficacy in the use of homeopathic medicines in the treatment of childhood diarrhea. One of these studies was published in the prestigious journal, *Pediatrics* (Jacobs, et al, 1994), and the combined results of three studies that totaled 242 children showed a highly significant result in the duration of childhood diarrhea (P=0.008).

Further, Mr. Martines provided additional misinformation by asserting, "Homeopathy does not focus on the treatment and prevention of dehydration - in total contradiction with the scientific basis and our recommendations for the management of diarrhoea." The above studies utilized oral rehydration therapy (ORT) for ALL patients, whether they were given homeopathic treatment or a placebo. Because of the limitations of ORT, it is important to know that homeopathic medicines have repeatedly been shown to augment the benefits of ORT.

Controlled Clinical Research in the Treatment of Influenza

Additional dirty tricks from the Young Voices of Science were evidence when they sought to discourage the WHO from recommending the use of homeopathic medicine in the treatment of influenza, even though there is a well-known body of evidence to show the efficacy of homeopathic medicines in the treatment of this common ailment.

Several studies have confirmed the efficacy of homeopathic medicines in the treatment of influenza, primarily success from the use of *Oscillococcinum*.TM (Ferley, 1989; Cassanova, 1992; Papp, 1998). Each of these trials was relatively large in the number of subjects (487, 300, 372), and all were multi-centered placebo-controlled and double-blind. Each of these trials showed statistically significant results.

The "Cochrane Collaboration" is an internationally respected group of researchers who evaluate scientific studies. In 2005, they reviewed seven studies using *Oscillococcinum* in the prevention or treatment of influenza. Three prevention trials (n = 2265) and four treatment trials (n = 1194) were evaluated. *Oscillococcinum* treatment reduced length of influenza illness by 0.28 days (95% confidence interval 0.50 to 0.06). *Oscillococcinum* also increased the chance of a patient considering treatment effective (relative risk 1.08; 95% CI 1.17, 1).

The authors of this research review considered these results "promising," though not strong enough to warrant a general recommendation to use *Oscillococcinum* for first-line treatment of influenza or influenza-like syndromes. Because "first-line treatments" for influenza, including the common antiviral medicines, have some serious safety concerns, the WHO can and should realize that some people in the world want to consider using safer methods, such as homeopathic medicines, in addition to or in replacement of these antiviral medicines. When you consider that Tamiflu's side effects are serious enough that Japan has outlawed its use for children between 10 and 19 years

of age, WHO should recognize and even promote safer treatments in which there is a body of scientific evidence to suggest efficacy of influenza, and homeopathic medicines can and should be considered.

Controlled Clinical Research in the Treatment of People with AIDS

It is also inaccurate to say that there is no evidence that homeopathic medicines are useful in the treatment of people with AIDS. Most homeopaths do not recommend the sole use of homeopathic medicines in the treatment of people with AIDS, and there is a reasonable body of evidence to show that homeopathic medicines have a place as a part of an overall comprehensive health care strategy.

A review of clinical and laboratory studies used homeopathic medicines and Ayurvedic remedies was published in 2008 and concluded, "Overall, the studies reported positive effects and even 'cure' and reversal of HIV infection, but frequent methodological flaws call into question their internal and external validity" (Fritts, Crawford, Quibell, et al 2008).

At the 17th annual International AIDS Conference in Mexico City (August 3, 2008), Germany's leading broadcasting service, Deutsche Welle, spoke to one of Germany's leading AIDS researchers Hans Jaeger. Dr. Jaeger says he's optimistic about finding a cure to the deadly viral disease. Jaeger's team made presentations on 10 research projects at this conference, and he highlighted to this news service the research about which he was most excited--<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,3530953,00.html>.

Jaeger told the news service, "One project of interest around the world has to do with a homeopathic medicine: It was originally developed in Brazil and then very heavily used in South Africa, but it was one in which we did not think much could be done with. We conducted a pilot study and found that patients who did not show satisfactory improvement to their immune systems when treated with our regular medicines did, in fact, improve when they received this homeopathic medicine for a period of several months.

"This shows the closing of a circle. A medicine from Brazil travels to South Africa, is then researched and tested by us in a Western country. We were very skeptical about the project and can show in Mexico that this relatively inexpensive homeopathic substance can lead to improvements of the immune system."

Researchers working in the Indian government conducted a double-blind placebo controlled study of 100 HIV+ individuals, 50 of whom were in CDC stage II (asymptomatic) and 50 of whom were in CDC stage III (with persistent generalized lymphadenopathy/PGL)(Rastogi, 1999). Each subject was interviewed in the same fashion, though half were given a homeopathic medicine and the other half given a placebo during a 15-month period of time. Patients with PGL who were given an individualized homeopathic medicine experienced elevation in CD4 T-cells from pre- to

post-treatment ($P < .01$) and in CD8 lymphocytes ($P < .05$). There was also a statistically significant difference in CD4 cells between treatment and placebo groups.

The researchers found no statistically significant results in patients with CDC stage II HIV infection. This research suggests that homeopathic medicines are more effective in treating those people who are HIV+ who have some symptoms rather than those who are asymptomatic. This is not surprising, as homeopaths utilize symptoms as “clues” to help determine the best choice of a remedy.

IN SUMMARY

I encourage the WHO to formally retract some of the inaccurate statements that some of its representatives made to Sense about Science and Young Voices of Science. I encourage WHO to make a special plea to the BBC who erred in not verifying the accuracy of its report. Finally, I encourage the WHO to encourage its representatives to be more careful in dealing with Sense about Science and Young Voices of Science who have now been shown to not provide reliable health, medical, or scientific information.

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