

*Ian Webster DSH, MARH
Registered Homeopath
Bramblebye Cottage
Buckfast TQ11 0HN
tel: 01364 644717
0791 764 4413*

www.flyinghomeopath.co.uk

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As you may be well aware, homeopathy has been in the media spotlight recently, particularly with regard to the Science and Technology Committee which called for Evidence of Homeopathy. There has been a lot of press regarding the conclusions the Committee reached: that there is no evidence for homeopathy and that it can only work by placebo. Subsequent newspaper articles, editorials and TV programs claimed that it is a waste of NHS money to spend it on homeopathic medicines when the NHS denies the public expensive anti-cancer drugs. So homeopathy ought to be dropped from the NHS, has been the media's popular conclusion.

As a profession, we initially welcomed the Science and Technology Committee (STC) as an opportunity to demonstrate the substantial and growing body of evidence for homeopathy – double blind trials, statistical analyses and research involving large numbers of patients. The formation of the STC was driven by Dr Evan Harris MP, a GP and the Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Science. The Chair of the STC was clear in his remit as to the purpose of the committee: "...this is *not* an inquiry into whether homeopathy works or not. This is an inquiry which follows a series of evidence checks across a number of government departments to see whether in fact there was any evidence to support the Government's policy towards homeopathy...". Yet the questioning by the Chair (Mr Willis) and by Dr Harris focussed on 'homeopathy can't work'. The majority of witnesses that were called by the Committee to provide oral evidence had very little or no experience of homeopathy and included well known anti-homeopathy commentators such as Ben Goldacre.

Three witnesses were called who had an understanding of homeopathy. Dr Peter Fisher, lead clinician at the Royal Homeopathic Hospital in London submitted an impressive body of evidence that has been meticulously compiled over many years at the Hospital. It was ignored. Other Homeopathic Hospitals also submitted evidence compiled over years. All the evidence submitted has been ignored.

Evan Harris treated Dr Fisher with contempt in his questioning and then publicly ridiculed Dr Fisher's statements when addressing a group of fanatics opposed to homeopathy. It was a disgusting piece of cheap theatre by Dr Harris that deserved censure by his own party and was clearly in breach of the Good Medical Practice as laid down by the General Medical Council.

What followed? Dr Harris was lauded in mainstream media and the House of Commons. Given the supposed aims of the Science and Technology committee, it turned out to be a scandalous and sickening political and media sideshow.

As to the argument that NHS money is wasted on homeopathic medicines, here are some pertinent facts:

- * the annual NHS budget for homeopathic medicines is £157,000
- * the annual NHS budget for pharmaceutical drugs is £11 billion
- * The NHS wastes around £200 million every year on drugs that aren't used

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As to the age old criticism of homeopathy being only a placebo, our response is straightforward - homeopathic treatment has shown to be very effective in the treatment of babies and animals, including veterinary homeopathic treatment of farm herds.

Molecular chemistry is the basis of pharmaceutical drug preparation. The idea that medicine can work *only* if it is molecular, is assumed and asserted as fact by critics of homeopathy. Yet where is their proof? There is none.

As a scientific model, molecular chemistry can not satisfactorily explain the action of ultra molecular dilution, the basis of homeopathic medicinal preparation. We need to look to developments in quantum physics - the so called 'new science' (now over 100 years old) - for scientific models to explain homeopathy.

When there is a 'traditional review' of homeopathic treatment, conventional medicine assumes the moral high ground as if it represents the gold standard of medical treatment that homeopathy (or any other system of medicine) has to measure up to. Whilst conventional medicine undoubtedly performs a wonderful service in life saving procedures, treatment of severe infection and surgery, it fails to successfully treat many of the chronic diseases that commonly afflict us. This really deserves serious consideration when you consider the thousands of billions of pounds spent on drug research and treatment over many years.

As a culture, we may live longer, but we are certainly not becoming healthier through our dependence on pharmaceutical drugs. Drugs rarely *cure* chronic illness. Drugs control and suppress symptoms and at times, this is of course necessary. However, as a frontline treatment for babies through to the elderly, I strongly question the notion that in order to treat illness, our bodies need to be made toxic by drug use. It is very difficult to obtain UK figures for adverse drug reactions, but research indicates around 40% of patients may experience drug side effects with a significant number of deaths. Recent research in America indicated that in one year alone, 783,936 patients died from adverse drug reactions. As a colleague remarked, this is equivalent to six jumbo jets falling out of the sky every day! And yet why isn't there a media outcry and a Science and Technology Committee publicly investigating this level of risk in conventional medical treatment?

Homeopathy is a safe and highly effective system of medical treatment that some 6 million people in the UK alone used within the last year. We have the evidence and plenty of it, to demonstrate the efficacy of homeopathic treatment. Judging by the determined and malicious campaign to 'smear' homeopathy, it is clearly unsettling the *status quo*.

The most important people, the patients, have not had a look-in throughout the STC's review of homeopathy. Patients have been offered the choice of homeopathic treatment under the NHS since its inception in 1948. If you look at the NHS Choices website, one hundred per cent of patients would recommend the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital to a friend. Enough said.

In future, I wish to email newsletters to you rather than post them. This will save me a lot of time as well as save on paper, post etc. For people who aren't online, I will continue to mail your newsletter. Don't be concerned that I'll be regularly bombarding your inbox. There will continue to be about two newsletters per year. I also plan to include the newsletters on my web site. If you do not wish to receive the newsletters, let me know.

So would you please spend just a couple of minutes and email me so I have your address. You don't have to say anything other than who you are if it is not obvious from your email address. My email address is on this letterhead or you can go onto my website and click on the address on the banner. Thanks for your help with this.

And a big thank you for your continued support of Homeopathy.

Let's hope warmer weather is on the way and you enjoy the spring and summer.

Ian

[If you want references or would like to discuss any material in this newsletter, give me a call]