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This is the most important newsletter I have written in my 20 years as a practitioner. So I urge you to please take the time to read it.

I'm writing this newsletter due to the relentless media attacks on homeopathy. The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally Davies, recently claimed that homeopathy is 'rubbish' and referred to homeopaths as 'peddlers'[1]. In so doing, she is rubbishing an entire profession which includes her medical colleagues and vets that practise homeopathy. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, but to use her position in this way is a massive abuse of her privilege for which she deserves censure. People understandably think that she must be right because she is the Chief Medical Officer. Her comments are misleading and inaccurate though; her language reflecting a personal prejudice rather than a considered scientific and medical view expected from a Chief Medical Officer.

Comedians and TV personalities also now feel qualified to join in. A comedian on BBC Room 101 recently claimed that Hahnemann (the founder of Homeopathy) was 'just a man with no qualifications'. Samuel Hahnemann qualified as a physician with honours and was fluent in 6 languages. It is becoming ridiculous. The big problem is though, if the same lies are repeated often enough in the media, people believe them. As a profession, we have no right of reply through the mainstream media outlets that persistently attack homeopathy; the broadsheet newspapers and the BBC. They publish our written replies only in 'letters' and avoid interviewing the practitioners who are our appointed media representatives. It is totally unjust and harmful to the homeopathic profession.

The question is: *why* this relentless criticism? The attacks on homeopathy are the same old recycled opinions: it is just placebo and so you have to believe in it for it to work and there is no evidence. Until about 10 years ago, there was little in the way of conventional trials for homeopathy. We knew it worked from 200 years of clinical experience. As a profession though, we understood that we needed conventional trails and research and so a lot of work has been done in this way, mainly by the homeopathic hospitals and vets. Research has also been carried out by scientists including physicists into the conundrum of ultra-molecular dilution – the basis of preparation of homeopathic medicines i.e. how do they work.

Here is a very brief sample of some of the work that has been done over the last 10 years -

1. The Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) is the gold standard of conventional medical testing. At the end of 2011, 163 RCT trials had been conducted using homeopathic medicine covering 77 different medical conditions[2]. It is difficult for homeopathy to perform well in these trials due to the individual nature of homeopathic treatment of disease. And yet the overall statistical results are strikingly similar to those RCTs using conventional drugs [3]. (This newsletter is not the place to describe these statistical results as they're lengthy and involved. I'll happily discuss them over the phone or in person).

2. There have been veterinary trials using homeopathy; one such trial involved 767 animals including dogs, cats, horses, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds and goats: 79% showed significant improvement[4] (A large trial that shows 79% of the patients – people or animals – experienced significant improvement is regarded as an excellent response in medicine). There have been other trials including 289 horses [5] and another involving 1,600 dogs and cats [6], also showing significant improvement by homeopathic medicine.

These results on animals surely invalidate the notion that homeopathy is only a placebo.

3. A 6 year trial of chronic conditions involving over 6,000 patients conducted by G.P.s at the Bristol Homeopathic Hospital revealed 70% significant improvement after homeopathic treatment[7]. All of these patients had previously seen a GP, most had seen a consultant and had experienced little improvement from conventional medical treatment.
4. Physicists with a background in quantum mechanics, have now placed the problem of ultra-molecular dilution into a mathematical framework; a big step forward in understanding how ultra-molecular dilution works.[8].

So why is it that the media, the government and medical commentators persistently refuse to genuinely consider these results, let alone publish the results, perpetuating the same lies over and over again that there is no evidence and that it's all down to placebo? Why is it that the public is kept in the dark as to the developments in homeopathy?

I don't pretend to have all the answers but here are a few facts and some thoughts:

* Critics of homeopathy argue against the NHS cost of homeopathy at £12million per year. And yet this represents a mere 0.011% of the total NHS budget. The NHS is spending £2 billion a year dealing with adverse drug reactions and over 1 million hospital admissions per year are due to adverse drug reactions [9].

Of course drugs have their place in medicine but these are very disturbing statistics and yet where is the medical, political and media concern? Criticising homeopathy seems to be far more important. Is criticising homeopathy deemed more newsworthy as it can be turned into journalistic sensationalism?

* Anyone who has done GCSE-level science will understand that on the face of it, it would appear impossible for homeopathic medicines to work. There is as yet no proven explanation as to how homeopathy works; several scientific models have been postulated including the memory of water. As there is no definitive proof as yet, it is easy to assume an attitude of 'it just can't possibly work'. This attitude is simply unscientific though, especially in view of the trials and research I have mentioned above. A much healthier scientific approach is to retain your scepticism but investigate the problem objectively. Scientific debate is healthy, but closed mindedness and prejudiced rubbish is of no service to anyone.

The brief course of human history is littered with 'the earth has to be flat' incidences. Phenomena exist before they are proven e.g. gravity existed before Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravity.

* Medical critics of homeopathy always assume the moral high ground and yet doctors commonly use treatments they don't fully understand and often do harm over time. Alex Karidis, a practising surgeon who had colitis, wrote recently: "...I knew that steroids are one of those treatments we apply to many illnesses without really knowing why they work... all you're doing is masking the problem" [10].

I reiterate that I'm not criticising conventional medicine, but there is a huge double standard in criticising homeopathic treatment because its action can't be explained while conventional medicine commonly uses treatments which aren't fully understood and that often do harm.

* There now appears to be an 'axis of power' at work between big media, government and pharmaceutical companies as they are so aligned in their attitude. This is not a conspiracy theory, but an observation of events over the last ten years. I don't know why this has occurred but perhaps part of the answer lies in Ben Goldacre's (a high profile GP) recent book about the influence of the drug companies: "Bad Pharma. How drug companies mislead doctors and harm patients" The title says it all. The pharmaceutical industry is now a £300 billion annual industry.

What to do? I have thought a lot as to how I can best respond to this situation. I believe that my best response is 'on the ground', by talking to people.

So I am asking for your involvement and cooperation here - If you know of any group that may be interested in listening to a talk about homeopathy, please contact me. Homeopathy is a safe and effective system of medicine; I strongly believe that people have a right to know about it. I have no problem with people being sceptical and have no wish to 'convert' people. I am very keen though to inform people and openly discuss the issues. So please, have a good think about any group that you know who *may* have an interest. I'm happy talking to anyone!

Please feel free to circulate this newsletter and contact me if you'd like more copies or wish to discuss any of the content.

With best wishes

Ian

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