Guest Editorial

The Brilliance of Homeopathic Medicine

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> "You must see and feel the internal nature of our patient as the artist sees and feels the picture he is painting. He feels it. Study to feel the economy, the life, the soul."
>
> *James Tyler Kent, MD* (1849–1916)

We homeopathic physicians often lament the lack of allopathic doctors joining our ranks. We wonder who will carry on our remarkable healing art when we are ready to hang up our shingles. And we worry about the future of homeopathy under the constant threat from mainstream, pharmaceutical medicine and governmental agencies.

Yet homeopathy may always be practiced by a minority of physicians because it takes courage to practice outside the standard of care and an open mind to think outside the conventional box. Indeed, the principles and practice of homeopathy are uniquely different from conventional medical thinking.

Conventional or allopathic medicine is based on a scientific model that assumes that reality exists objectively, independent of the observer. To quote from Dr Joel Shepperd in "Hahnemann's Pure Method of Science",[1] "Objective reality creates a world 'out there'. Objectivity isolates the 'inner world' as subjective and uncertain. The subjective perceptions such as tastes and odors cannot be verified in a standardized way. Subjective knowledge becomes less real than a reality that can be measured. Quantities and measurements become the accepted method to verify knowledge. Since only material objects can be studied this way, materialism becomes the standard of reality."

Homeopathy, on the other hand, is a phenomenological science—the study of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. Hahnemann found that the subjective experienced symptoms of an individual were, in fact, more important in the selection of the homeopathic medicine than measurable or observable ones. For example, the exact nature of a patient's headache—its location, the quality of the pain, what makes it better or worse, the time of aggravation, etc.—is more significant in its treatment than the diagnosis of a cluster headache versus a migraine.

There is no law of therapeutics that exists for conventional medicine: it is reductionist science, whereby treatment is based on a set of assumptions such as the germ theory or genetic theory—theories that change over time as new information about the nature of health and disease is discovered. Drugs are constantly being developed, removed and replaced as new information becomes available and side effects become known, unfortunately to the detriment of many. New information about the human microbiome, for example, has shown how human health is dependent on a complex symbiotic relationship between trillions of different organisms in a complex ecology within the human gut. The systematic destruction of the microbiome using antibiotics, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and other pharmaceuticals has led to an explosion of chronic inflammatory diseases responsible for 75% of total health care costs and the majority of deaths in the United States.[2,3] Studies have shown how just one antibiotic given in the first few months of life increases the risk of infections, allergies, asthma, and type 1 diabetes later in life.[4]

Homeopathy is a purely descriptive science, not a theoretical one. In homeopathy, provings (experiments) are done[5] and the person's subjective mental, emotional, and physical symptoms are recorded. Every aspect of a patient's life experience is explored and recorded. The patient's direct experience of his or her disease must correspond with the direct experience of the provers. This is the Law of Similars that Hahnemann so brilliantly unearthed. There is no theory interposed between the direct experience of a patient's disease and the direct experience of the provers. According to Shepperd, as soon as you impose some other ideology between the direct sensory experience of the patient and the direct experience of the provers, you lose the phenomenological accuracy of the methodology.

The system of homeopathic medicine is absolutely brilliant in its simplicity and powerfully effective in the execution of its principles. These principles are still in use today because they have withstood the clinical test of time. And,

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unlike the abysmal safety record of allopathic medicine,[6] homeopathy has an impressive 200-year safety record. Published in 2000, a worldwide review of the literature and consultation with multiple regulatory agencies led to the conclusion that any adverse reactions to homeopathic medicines were "mild and transient".[7]

For those of us physicians who were fortunate to discover homeopathy early in our careers, we have been rewarded with successful medical practices, the intellectual challenges inherent in the practice of homeopathic medicine, and the incredible gratification that comes from the nurturing of our compassion as we enter into the lives of our patients in an effort to understand the world from their unique point of view in our search for the simillimum.

Millions of satisfied patients globally are a continual testimony to Hahnemann's genius. It is through them that I believe homeopathy's future is assured.

Conflict of Interest
None declared.

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