



The Place of Homeopathy in Alternative Medicine

The results are in: a new study, conducted by Dr. David Eisenberg of Harvard Medical School and published in the Journal of the Medical Association, indicates that Americans are more likely to visit an alternative medical practitioner than a primary care physician and they are spending far more money on therapies that fall outside the mainstream. Visits are up 47% since 1990, raising the question: does this represent a dissatisfaction with Western allopathic medicine or is it a reflection of the patient's desire to take a more active role in their health? After listening to thousands of my patients, I am convinced that both reasons are valid.

Such a study is bound to stir up a reaction in the Western medical community. "Instead of tolerating alternative therapies," the editors of The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) said recently, "the government should be regulating them more strictly, given the documented cases of people harmed by tainted or misleadingly labeled herbal remedies." In addition, they said, alternative remedies-from homeopathy to healing touch to guided imagery-are getting a "free ride", since they are not held to the same standards of proof as conventional or allopathic medicine. It is this last statement that I want to scrutinize as unfair to certain medical modalities, especially Homeopathy. Western medicine in fact is very often guilty of these very same arguments that were brought up in the scathing NEJM article. How many medications, heralded as break-throughs only months or years ago, are now completely forgotten because they did not bring what they promised. Just as some of those supplements, they were fads promising rapid cures, but now are rapidly replaced by the new fads who have their fifteen minutes of fame.

I do have to agree with NEJM as far as nutritional supplements are concerned. They are too often considered a panacea, overprescribed and mostly unjustified. Almost every year one particular supplement becomes the "miracle cure", only to fall from grace the next year when the next fad appears. When you read about any "miracle cure", get out the salt shaker. It is often a lazy way to live "more naturally" without putting any effort into life style and dietary changes. Some of these nutrients have achieved scientific status, however, such as Vitamin E and Vitamin B6 as allopathic studies have demonstrated. And with the exhaustion of our soil, nutrients are not as abundant as they used to be, possibly necessitating some additional supplementation.

Herbs are yet another story. I was invited last year to introduce homeopathy to second year students at Tufts Medical School. Before my arrival, the professor had written on the blackboard some thoughts about "herbal medicine," believing that this was what Homeopathy stood for. His arguments were compelling and convincing. Herbal effects, he said, are difficult to monitor since mixtures usually contain more than one herb. So in case of a positive effect, we don't know which one worked, and in case of an allergic or adverse reaction, we don't know which one is responsible. Point well taken.

And he said, people can get sick from herbs and exhibit toxic side effects, even liver failure. True, although he forgot to mention that these cases are extremely rare, and usually caused when the patient ignores the prescribed amount and overdoses of his own free will. Of course nothing was mentioned about the fact that more people every year die from medications than from motor vehicle accidents, or that one third of illnesses in the U.S. are "iatrogenic" or "doctor/drug" induced. The recent issue of NEJM focusing on the dangers of alternative medicine chose to highlight two patients suffering mild symptoms from an herbal preparation containing digitalis mislabeled as plaintain. No mention was made of the thousands of patients who die each year from overdoses of medication prepared from digitalis. Digitalis toxicity is a well-known feature in the Western medical landscape, to the point that it is taken for granted and hardly worth mentioning. Nor is the fact that dozens of men have died so far from Viagra in its first few months on the market; remember the hue and cry over triptophan, which was taken off the market when only a handful of people died from it?

The professor also made the same point as in NEJM: that alternative medical modalities should be subjected to the same vigorous scientific checks as allopathic medicine such as "double blind" studies. This brings up two questions: Is Western medicine actually tested by double blind studies? And is this a valid way of assessing medication?

The first question is quickly answered. According to their own allopathic studies, 67% of prescriptions are made for side effects of the drugs, not on the effect demonstrated by the double-blind study. In other words, there is no double-blind test to back up 67% of the prescriptions for medications in this country. As for the validity of such testing, it does not apply to Homeopathy, as I will demonstrate by explaining the Laws and Principles of Homeopathy. (Homeopathy cannot be lumped together with herbal medicine and vitamin therapy, however, which are closer to Western medicine and do not share Homeopathy's laws.)

Our first Law, that Like cures Like, was formulated and applied by the Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, then further elaborated and put into practice by the famous German physician, Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843). The opposite Law in allopathy (Western medicine), "the Contrary cures the Contrary," leads only to a worsening of the disease, controlling the disease to some extent without curing it, while creating side effects. If you can't sleep, take a sleeping pill. If you are constipated, take a laxative. The result? The laxative creates more constipation. An ever-increasing dose is needed to get the same result because of the natural law, "Every action is followed by an equally strong and opposite reaction."

Vaccinations, heralded by Western medicine as the crown jewel of prevention, follows homeopathy's first law that "a similar disease cures a similar disease." But then vaccinations are administered in mixtures, which is just as bad as administering herbs in mixtures. Plus they are given to babies before their immune systems are fully formed. Result: direct toxicity easily observed (from SIDS, to epilepsy, deafness, cortical blindness, mental changes, etc.) to delayed effects which only a homeopathic physician would recognize (warts, recurrent infections, deep-seated organic diseases and auto-immune disorders). Vaccinations are also repeated too often and in much too high doses compared to the minute doses of homeopathy. A better solution would be to give vaccinations according to all Laws of Homeopathy, not just the first Law.

The second Law is the most controversial: use the infinitesimal dose, a dose so small that no molecules are left in the substance. Result: a gentle cure, speedy, with no side effects, allergic reactions and toxic after effects. In numerous studies (the Benveniste study at the Louis Pasteur Institute in France was one of them), the activity of these homeopathic remedies have been demonstrated with the laboratory methods of Western medicine. Of course, not one scientist can explain this phenomenon through existing physical and chemical Laws, but do we have the audacity to say that we know everything that there is to know in these sciences? Of course not. I also want to draw the attention of my medical colleagues to the Arndt-Schultz Law of Arndt-Schultz which says that, "Minimal doses of a drug stimulate, medium doses inhibit and large doses destroy cellular activity." Pasteur should have known this when he introduced his "mad-dog" or rabies vaccination, killing thousands of innocent people before he finally reduced the doses. This was 1888 and unfortunately, he did not learn from the genius of Hahnemann who already 100 years before Pasteur and Koch, cured epidemics of scarlatina, typhoid fever, cholera, syphilis, gonorrhoea and TB! That success alone has given Hahnemann his well-deserved place in history but he did so much more. Why does allopathy hide the results obtained in such epidemics? Just look at the statistics from the terrible Spanish flu epidemic of 1918. Patients treated with Homeopathy had a death rate less than 5%, with Western medicine more than 45-50%! And in the great cholera epidemic of 1831-1832 in Europe, starting in Russia, the death rate among patients treated with Homeopathy was almost nihil versus 50-60% in Allopathy! And these same remedies used in 1831 are still successful in such epidemics now.

Another Law of Homeopathy is the provings that all homeopathic remedies have been subjected to-the equivalent to the double-blind studies of Western medicine. There are major differences though. Homeopathic remedies are all proven on healthy subjects instead of on sick people and animals as in Western medicine. This makes more sense as a healthy subject with his intact Vital Energy can react better and also describe his mental and emotional reactions to the medicine-symptoms which are the most important to prescribe on in homeopathy. Has Western medicine ever thought what doses of experimental drugs do to the Vital Energy of sick people? And what can we expect from poor animals?

Just this week (November 15, 1998), an excellent series appeared in the Boston Globe regarding frightening medical experiments performed on mental ill patients: their medications were deliberately withheld, they did not give true informed consent, and they were subjected to horrific side effects of withdrawal and the new unproved drugs. These facts border on criminality; an alternative practitioner would have gone to jail long ago for treating patients like this. And I wonder how many doctors would subject themselves to the same treatment? But this is what Homeopathy has done! The majority of homeopathic remedies were safely tested on Homeopathic physicians, their students and family members. Western physicians should have the courage to subject themselves to the same drugs, experiments and procedures they subject sick people and animals to.

The other Laws guiding the Homeopathic physician in his treatment and management of the patient are not relevant here.

My only goal of this article is to show that Homeopathy stands apart from allopathic modalities through its scientific approach. No other modality, Western medicine included, is governed by so many infallible Laws of Nature.

I would encourage my fellow physicians, before rejecting Homeopathy, to study and apply it.

Countless detractors have done so before and have become the best advocates for Homeopathy. Aude sapere! Dare to know! Humanity will be the better for it.

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