

HOMEOPATHIC
CARE
IN A MEDICAL
CONTEXT



The background features a teal-to-white gradient. A dark teal horizontal bar is at the top. On the right, a white square contains a teal crosshair. On the left, a teal diamond shape is partially visible.

HOMEOPATHIC CARE IN A MEDICAL CONTEXT



REASONS FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENS TO SEEK HOMEOPATHIC CARE

Homeopathy has helped uncounted millions of people since its inception. It is very commonplace in many parts of the world including Europe, where millions of people use it on regular basis¹. The major reason why European citizens seek homeopathic care is to help in chronic conditions for which conventional medicine, in spite of its impressive development, has been unable to offer cure or even symptom relief. Furthermore, people are becoming increasingly worried about issues such as the evermore technological and impersonal character of conventional medicine, the detrimental side effects and toxicity of many prescription drugs, the growing resistance to antibiotics, and chemicals in the food chain. Other people choose homeopathy because its holistic approach mirrors their own values, beliefs and philosophical orientations towards health and life. Many mainstream general practitioners share their patients' concerns about conventional medicine, and over the last 15 years large numbers of mainstream doctors have started to either refer to or practise homeopathy and other forms of Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

Today's European citizens feel themselves responsible for their own lives, for their own health. They want to make their own choice of therapy, whether it belongs to conventional medicine or homeopathy. This right of self-determination is, in fact, a basic right of European citizens. Most users of homeopathy do not want to give up conventional medicine, but just want to choose the medical approach that seems to produce the best result in certain situations or that fits into their own lifestyle. They want to have the broadest possible choice of treatment, guaranteeing them the maximum level of safety and the most accurate information on the quality, effectiveness, safety, and possible risks, and they want to know that they are protected against unqualified individuals. The European Parliament correctly stated that "it is increasingly widely held that different methods of treatment and different approaches to health and illness are not mutually exclusive, but can on the contrary be used to complement one another."²

¹ According to a survey by European Commission order three Europeans out of four know about homeopathy and of these about 30 % use it for their health care.

² European Parliament resolution A4-0075/97

HOLISTIC APPROACH

European citizens increasingly recognise the benefits of a holistic approach to care, where the practitioner views them as a whole, rather than a clinical condition or a set of symptoms and takes the time to listen. From a holistic perspective, the patient is considered as unique, requiring individual assessment and treatment. As an integrated entity, including the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social and any other aspects of the total person. Individuals are seen as living systems that are self-healing, self-renewing, homeostatic and adaptive. Health is not merely the absence of disease/illness, but the ability of a system, e.g. cell, organism, family, society to respond adaptively to a wide range of environmental challenges. Disease is considered as a result of an off-balance state of the whole individual (mind and body) rather than a local disturbance.

Homeopathy looks beyond the labels of disease to cure their causes rather than merely their symptoms and it stimulates the body's own natural healing powers to bring health, vitality and well-being. It does not treat superficially by just driving away the symptoms but heals the patient from within. It uses medicines that cover the disturbance of the whole person rather than giving different medicines for different afflicted parts of the body. Patients often report improvement in overall energy, mood, quality of sleep, and digestion, and the disappearance of other symptoms apparently unrelated to the condition being treated with homeopathy.





HOMEOPATHY: FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN MEDICINE

Homeopathy has evolved from and within the culture of western, and particularly European, medicine. It was discovered over 200 years ago by a German physician, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann and has since developed into a sophisticated science of diagnosis and prescription. It is based on the similarity principle – ‘Let likes cure likes’ – which was recognized by physicians and philosophers since ancient times, but it was Hahnemann who recognized the universality of this principle and made it the basis of a complete system of medicine.

The similarity principle means that substances capable of causing disorder on any level in healthy subjects can be used as medicines to remedy similar patterns of disorder experienced by people when they are ill. In fact, homeopathy relates individual patterns of responding to environmental influences, infectious agents and potential stressors to specific homeopathic medicines that can remedy these susceptibility patterns. Skilled homeopathic prescribing requires that the characteristics of the chosen medicine should be as similar as possible to the characteristics of the illness in the patient. The more detailed the understanding of the symptom nuances of the patient, the more accurate the prescription. Thus, homeopathy is highly individualised and based upon a holistic assessment. As well as the patient’s actual complaint and conventional diagnosis, the following factors may play an important part in medicine selection, especially in chronic disease: the patient’s constitution, emotional and mental make-up, the way the patient responds to physical, emotional and mental influences/stress in his/her life, the patient’s personality, temperament, genetic predispositions and any strong family history of particular diseases.

Medical philosophy is coming more and more to the conclusion that the mere treatment of symptoms and organs can only help temporarily and that it is the healing power of the body as a whole that has to be enhanced. Homeopathy’s holistic approach of living organisms - humans as well as animals - is surprisingly consistent with modern concepts of systems biology and complexity science.

HOMEOPATHY: A COMPLETE SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

Homeopathic medicines are aimed at improving the level of health by stimulating the self-regulatory mechanism. Improving the level of health implies reducing any disease process as well as the susceptibility to illness and disease. That means that it is not limited to certain diseases but is universally applicable to all kinds of diseases. It can often be used as a first option in certain medical conditions, keeping more costly and potentially toxic treatment as a second option. In addition, it can offer therapeutic options where conventional treatments have failed or where conventional treatments do not exist for the problem, where they are contraindicated or not tolerated. In many disorders homeopathy should be a first choice treatment instead of a last resort.

In many cases of chronic disease homeopathic treatment can achieve results which would be considered impossible with conventional treatment. The therapeutic possibilities, however, depend on how much irreversible damage has, or has not, occurred, and on the extent to which the organism is able to recover. Limitations are specific surgical indications, deficiency diseases and very serious diseases in which gross anatomical changes have evolved. However, in incurable stages of a disease homeopathic treatment may relieve a patient to a large extent.

In injuries and accidents, homeopathic treatment can be of immense value. Homeopathy can even help if surgery is necessary. Homeopathic medicines can be given both pre-operatively and post-operatively to speed up healing and to counteract any effects of anxiety, shock and anaesthetics. In general, patients treated with homeopathy make a much more rapid post-operative recovery than patients who have not had this treatment.





HOMEOPATHY: AN EFFECTIVE TREATMENT

Homeopathic treatment is an effective method of healing - in both acute and chronic conditions, as claimed by millions of patients and thousands of homeopathic doctors. It may even offer long lasting to permanent cure, treating the disease from its roots, for most of the ailments. The body of clinical evidence for the effectiveness of homeopathy continues to accumulate. Several research studies have shown overall that three quarters of the chronically ill patients reported that they felt 'moderately better' or 'much better'. A number of rigorous clinical trials have shown homeopathy superior to placebo; others have shown it to have effects similar to conventional treatments³.

Homeopathy is an effective alternative to antibiotics in infectious diseases, producing no toxic side effects and bringing about rapid recovery. Viral infections are also very well treated with homeopathy. In addition, homeopathy is extremely effective for a variety of complaints occurring in children, including behavioural problems. Other medical conditions successfully treated are: skin diseases such as acne, boils, eczema, psoriasis, warts; musculoskeletal pain, arthritis, osteoarthritis, sciatica, bursitis and fibromyalgia; allergies, frequent infections; tension headache and migraine; heartburn, gastritis, constipation, intestinal conditions, irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease; frequent colds, sinusitis, tonsillitis, cough, asthma and respiratory infections; emotional conditions such as depression, anxiety, insomnia; menstrual disorders, premenstrual syndrome, infertility, hot flushes; morning sickness, labour induction, labour pain, lactation problems, breast inflammation (mastitis); coronary dysfunctions, liver disorders, Ménière's disease. There are many other conditions besides those listed where homeopathy is found to be effective.

³ Homeopathy: Overview and analysis of clinical research. World Health Organization, 2007

HOMEOPATHY: A SAFE TREATMENT

Homeopathy is safe. Unlike other medication, homeopathic medicines are non-toxic and harmless and do not have any adverse side effects. Patients unable to use conventional prescription drugs due to side effects can often safely use homeopathic medicines. Homeopathic medicines are natural, prepared from minute amounts of herbs, minerals and animal products. Their quality and safety are assured by the national medicine agencies based on European Union legislation and European Pharmacopoeia requirements. They are suitable for pregnant women, infants and children without worrying about the dosage.



Many childhood ailments can be very effectively and quickly treated with homeopathy without producing any side effects whatsoever. Unlike antibiotics and other such medicines, homeopathic pills do not hamper digestion, or lower the body's resistance. Neither do they cause any allergies nor cause any damage, even if taken over a long period. There is no toxicity, no addiction, no dependency, no withdrawal. Millions of people use it to help themselves, their families and their pets without any dangerous physical repercussions.



HOMEOPATHY: A LOW-COST TREATMENT

Homeopathic medicines are much less expensive than conventional prescription drugs, because they are generic, non-patented and non-patentable medicinal substances, produced at low costs. On average, homeopathic medicines cost less than €1 per day in acute conditions and a few cents per day (sometimes a fraction of a cent) in chronic conditions.

Since homeopathic doctors need to obtain a large amount of information from their patients, a longer consultation time is required. This means that consultations are more expensive than usual GP consultations. The overall costs of a homeopathic treatment may therefore be comparable to that of conventional treatment. In the long run, however, homeopathy saves money. Under proper homeopathic treatment not only the person's immediate complaints improve, but also his/her susceptibility to disease decreases as there is a general improvement in health and thus less need for medical consultations. So the cumulative costs are very low.

THE KEY BENEFITS OF HOMEOPATHY ARE:

A gentle system of healing

•

Treats the 'whole' person

•

Suitable for everyone,
young and old

•

Non-toxic with no
chemical side effects

•

No drug dependency

•

Improves physical and
emotional health

The long-term gain has been demonstrated by several research studies. They show that patients who were treated with homeopathy used fewer medications, had better health, fewer days off sick, fewer visits to medical specialists, less time in the hospital than patients of conventional physicians. Moreover, there are no costs associated with complications due to adverse medication effects. In other words, homeopathy may offer significant cost savings to public health bodies, and to the economy more widely.

QUALITY OF HOMEOPATHIC PRACTICE

European citizens are best served by ensuring that all practitioners are able to practise the skills of their particular therapy in a safe and competent matter. To this end, ensuring high standards of training is of critical importance. According to the European Parliament the regulation and co-ordination of training criteria imposed on the practitioners providing CAM therapies would constitute an essential guarantee for citizens and it is essential, in the interests of both patients and practitioners, that qualifications be harmonised at a high level⁴.

Homeopathy requires special knowledge and skills and is not an easy method to be mastered. It takes considerable training because the therapeutic objective as well as the practical approach to illness differs widely in homeopathy as compared to conventional medicine. Furthermore, homeopathic doctors should be able to combine the knowledge and skills in homeopathic practice with the knowledge and skills in the practice of conventional medicine. Since homeopathic treatment often needs to be prescribed within a broader care plan including an awareness of the need for conventional medical diagnosis, prognosis and treatments, qualifications should be at the same high level as in conventional medicine. A full medical education ensures the necessary clinical competence required, especially if homeopathy is applied as an alternative to conventional treatment.

Doctors who have completed homeopathic training may work in different ways. Their usual medical work as a generalist or a specialist in a particular medical field (e.g. gynaecology or paediatrics) may continue to be their core clinical activity complemented by the use of homeopathy. Alternatively, part or all of their working time will be dedicated to the use of homeopathy as their main therapeutic method. Full-time working homeopathic doctors at a specialist referral facility usually treat patients with more complicated chronic illness.



⁴European Parliament resolution A4-0075/97

HOMEOPATHY: ITS POSITION IN THE EU MEMBER STATES



When looking at the European Union as a whole, approximately 40,000 physicians, mainly in the ambulatory sector/general practice, have taken a training course in homeopathy. About 6 to 8 times more GPs prescribe homeopathic medicines on a regular basis without specific training, and even more do so occasionally, i.e. 40% of all French GPs and as many as 75% of all German GPs.

Homeopathy has been officially recognised by the government in several European countries, notably in Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Russia, and the United Kingdom. In Austria, Germany, Latvia and Switzerland doctors can obtain, after passing an examination, an additional qualification in homeopathy, recognised by the national medical association. In an increasing number of other countries the national medical associations have adopted a more favourable position towards homeopathy over the last few years.

In all European countries homeopathy is taught at private teaching centres. In some countries postgraduate homeopathic training courses are provided at universities. At many more universities familiarisation courses in homeopathy and other CAM methods have been introduced into the undergraduate medical curriculum, mostly optional, sometimes compulsory. Some hospitals in their out-patient departments currently provide homeopathic treatment by medical doctors, such as in Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

HOMEOPATHY AND THE EUROPEAN AUTHORITIES

The European Parliament, in its resolution of May 1997, took the position that homeopathy – as well as other CAM therapies – should be recognised, that a study into the safety, effectiveness, area of application be carried out and European legislation on CAM be formulated. The Council of Europe welcomed the European Parliament resolution and in its Resolution 1206 (1999) on non-conventional medicine in November 1999, it called on member states “to promote official recognition of these forms of medicine in medical faculties and to encourage hospitals to use them”. In addition, that “appropriate courses should be offered in universities to train allopathic doctors in alternative and complementary forms of treatment”. The Council of Europe clearly stated that “the best guarantee for patients lies in a properly trained profession, which is aware of its limitations, has a system of ethics and self-regulation and is also subject to outside control”. Although neither a resolution of the European Parliament nor a resolution of the Council of Europe is a binding act but a declaration of policy, these resolutions have led several countries to consider revising legislation in the field of CAM.

The legal and terminological framework for homeopathic medicinal products in the European Union is clearly laid down by the European Pharmacopoeia and the European Council Directives. The provisions for homeopathic medicinal products are integrated into the EU pharmaceutical legislation, regulating manufacturing, inspection, marketing and labelling. The Directives stipulate that homeopathic medicinal products be prepared in accordance with a homeopathic manufacturing procedure described by the European Pharmacopoeia or, in absence thereof, by the pharmacopoeias currently used officially in the Member States.





EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR HOMEOPATHY

The European Committee for Homeopathy or ECH is the European association of medical doctors and other statutorily regulated health professionals who practise homeopathy, as well as other professionals who can contribute to the development of homeopathy (such as researchers, documentarists and patients' organisations). It is aimed at promoting homeopathy as a specific clinical method used by medical doctors and also veterinary surgeons, dentists, and pharmacists, each within their own bounds of competence, promoting its harmonisation across Europe and representing all organisations that share the same aims. To

achieve this aim the ECH seeks to co-operate with governments, medical associations and any other relevant policy makers.

To date 38 homeopathic doctors' associations in 24 European countries are affiliated to the ECH, and many homeopathic veterinarians, dentists and pharmacists in Europe have also joined the ECH. The ECH comprises various subcommittees working in different fields, such as education, politics, pharmacy, documentation, research, provings (medicine tests), patients/users etc. Several ECH publications as well as other information on the work of the various subcommittees are available on the website: www.homeopathyeurope.org. The ECH's aim is to achieve full integration of homeopa-

thy within the European health care system, which will meet the growing demand among European citizens for homeopathic care within a safe medical context. The ECH takes the position that homeopathy is to become a fully-fledged branch of medicine with comparably high standards as those which exist in conventional medicine, which includes university chairs, being part of the undergraduate medical, veterinary, dental or pharmacy curriculum, being part of the specific training for General Medical Practice, and being recognised as a formal medical specialty.



The ECH has established several standards for the professional practice of homeopathy. It takes the position that in human medicine both a full medical qualification and a high quality qualification in homeopathy are required to provide high quality homeopathic care. The qualification requirements of a homeopathic doctor - knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes - have been laid down in the ECH Medical Homeopathic Education standard. It provides a consensus framework of training requirements for the safe and effective practice of medical homeopathy and outlines the syllabus for examinations leading to a qualification in homeopathic medicine, conferred by the organisations represented in the ECH. Recently the ECH has started a programme of accreditation of those teaching centres whose basic educational and examination standards meet the ECH requirements.





NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF HOMEOPATHIC DOCTORS

The 38 ECH affiliated national professional associations of homeopathic doctors, uniting approximately 6,500 homeopathic doctors across Europe, have an instrumental role in safeguarding all quality aspects. Requirements for (re-) accreditation, continued professional development, codes of conduct, disciplinary rules and locum tenens arrangements, enable the professional organisations to ensure an adequate professional practice.

They determine the professional profile of their members, set the training agenda, monitor the standards of the courses offered (duration and contents), set or approve the examinations, sustain appropriate systems of accreditation and monitor the continued professional development of the individual homeopathic doctors. In several countries a system of registration of qualified homeopathic doctors has been established so that all doctors who use the title of homeopathic doctor have received appropriate education and training, and have demonstrated an ability to apply their therapeutic skills in practice.

The details of all ECH affiliated associations of homeopathic doctors can be found at the ECH website: www.homeopathyeurope.org

VETERINARY HOMEOPATHY

There are about two thousand veterinary surgeons in Europe who provide homeopathic treatment to pets, food-producing and other animals (slightly more than 1% of the total number of vets). As in medical homeopathy, there are wide variations among countries in the degree of legal recognition and the ways in which veterinary homeopathy is practised. A few hundred vets in Austria, Ireland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom have a qualification in veterinary homeopathy that is recognised as a speciality. In most countries there are special homeopathic training programmes for veterinarians. In Hungary and Norway programmes are taught at universities, in some other countries by the veterinary organisations, in most countries at private teaching centres. The International Association for Veterinary Homeopathy (IAVH) has established minimum training standards and the requirements for teaching programmes, examinations and continuing education. The examinations lead to the qualification CertIAVH. The ECH closely collaborates with the IAVH.

Veterinary surgeons may use homeopathy in the whole spectrum of veterinary diseases, with therapeutic possibilities that are similar to those in human beings. Homeopathy can be of great economic value in the treatment of cattle with infectious diseases without residues of antibiotics in milk and meat. In the livestock farming sector homeopathic medicines may replace antibiotics, hormonal and other drugs in some cases of infections or inflammatory diseases or reproductive disorders, or may shorten the duration of an antibiotic treatment. Consumers are more effectively protected, because homeopathic preparations will cause negligible or no residue at all. In all EU Member States in organic husbandry, a Council Regulation stipulates that preference to homeopathic or herbal medicinal products should be given in the treatment of sick or injured animals and the use of chemically-synthesised allopathic medicinal products be limited to a strict minimum, in order to guarantee the integrity of organic production for consumers⁵. More information about veterinary homeopathy and the IAVH can be found at the website: www.iavh.org



⁵ Council Regulation 1804/1999/EC supplementing Regulation 2092/91/EEC



HOMEOPATHIC PATIENTS' ORGANISATIONS

Several European countries have homeopathic patients' organisations that represent patients using or seeking homeopathic treatment, while defending their rights and interests. To date these countries are Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Other European countries are in the process of forming a patients' group.

All these associations have joined the European Federation of Homeopathic Patients' Associations, EFHPA. This Federation seeks:

- To promote the integration of homeopathy into European healthcare
- To promote the harmonisation of the practice of homeopathy throughout Europe
- To promote and defend the quality of the science of medical homeopathy with the European authorities
- To defend the practice of homeopathy within medicine with the European authorities
- To assist all the people it represents in their national activities
- To represent individuals, as well as local, regional and national organisations throughout Europe who share the same aims concerning homeopathy and the freedom of choice of therapy

EFHPA is a member of the European Patients' Forum (EPF) and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and represents patients on the European Committee for Homeopathy (ECH).

More information about the EFHPA can be found at the website: www.efhpa.eu.





EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR HOMEOPATHY
CHAUSSÉE DE BRUXELLES 132, BOX 1
1190 BRUSSELS
BELGIUM

TELEPHONE: +32-2-3453597
FAX: +32-2-3461826
WEB SITE: [HTTP://WWW.HOMEOPATHYEUROPE.ORG](http://www.homeopathyeurope.org)
EMAIL: [INFO@HOMEOPATHYEUROPE.ORG](mailto:info@homeopathyeurope.org)