Homeopathy at the European Parliament

The second EU Homeopathy Day was celebrated in Brussels on 2 April 2009. The theme of the day was ‘Homeopathy for a healthier Europe – Because it works for me!’ It focused on the important role that homeopathy plays in promoting health in individual patients, and how it can contribute to European health care.

The event was held in the European Parliament, hosted by Marian Harkin, a member of the European Parliament. It was attended by an audience of some 100 European politicians and officials, national and regional representatives in Brussels and representatives of the patients’, practitioners’, and doctors’ associations and of industry. The day was a joint initiative of the European associations of patients, practitioners, doctors and pharmacists of homeopathy and the European homeopathic industry association.

Dr Ton Nicolai, President of the ECH, opened and moderated the event. He explained why so many patients choose homeopathy and what it has to offer – a holistic approach, cost-effectiveness and safety: ‘Today’s European citizens feel increasingly responsible for their own lives, for their own health. They turn towards homeopathy because they have found conventional treatment ineffective for their illness, they have concerns about adverse effects of conventional prescription drugs or because the holistic approach mirrors their own values and philosophical orientation towards health and life.’

Marian Harkin MEP emphasised the important role homeopathy plays in promoting health in Europe. She spoke briefly of her own experience of homeopathy, and identified the key concerns of the patients, the doctors, practitioners and industry. On behalf of the European Parliament, she said ‘We recognise the choices you make. We will work with you to integrate complementary medicine, including homeopathy, into EU health policy’.

Helen Llewelyn, a patient of homeopathy who has suffered from endometriosis since she was 13 years old, gave a personal and moving story of her long and difficult journey towards health. She described years of debilitating pain and difficulties, the conventional treatment she had received, and the considerable difference that homeopathy has made to her health and her life. ‘Homeopathy helped me enormously and continues to help me today. For the first time in my disease’s history, someone has understood, someone finally ‘got’ what I have been experiencing.’

Professor Jaap Sijmons, Professor of health law, Utrecht University, explained how free choice of doctor and treatment is a basic right within the EU. He argued that legislators in Brussels should act in order to take patient’s rights seriously; they should develop a consistent regulation which does not exclude large parts of vital importance to homeopathic and anthroposophic medicines. He finished with an urgent call: ‘We are running out of time. Over the counter homeopathic and anthroposophic products are threatened with a ban. There is an urgent need to speed up the pace of respecting patients’ rights as regards complementary medicine.’

Professor George Lewith, Professor of health research at the University of Southampton talked about the need to approach the topic of complementary medicine from the point of view of the patients. ‘Patients suffer due to lack of collaboration amongst medical and health professionals on the provision of complementary therapies’. He spoke about the ‘turf war’ between conventional and complementary practitioners and called for ‘co-operation around the bedside or in the surgery’ and for ‘more thoughtful health strategies that look at the way patients manage their own health and work with them to take an integrated approach to health care’.

Dr Elio Rossi, Clinical Director of the Homeopathic Clinic, Campo di Marte Hospital, Regional Centre of Reference for the Tuscany Network for Integrative Medicine explained how homeopathy and complementary medicine have been integrated into the public health system in Tuscany, resulting in 59 public clinics for complementary medicine by 2008, which have received high user satisfaction. Dr Elio Rossi explained that, ‘This integration of complementary medicine in the public regional healthcare system is unanimously considered to be the most significant in Italy and at European level.’

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EU awards € 1.5 M grant for CAM research

Within the 7th Research Framework Programme of the European Union a pan-European consortium of researchers has been selected to carry out a project on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM): CAMbrella. The consortium includes researchers from the departments for Complementary Medicine at various universities across Europe, such as the Charité University of Berlin, Technical University of Munich, University of Bern, University of Zürich, University of Southampton, University of Southern Denmark in Odense, University of Tromsø, and other institutions such as the Istituto Superiore di Sanità in Rome, Dos Hermanas Clinic in Sevilla, and the International Academy for Holistic Medicine in Vienna.

On 17 May 2009 the Swiss people voted in favour of a constitutional article for complementary medicine in a national vote. 67 percent of voters supported the new constitutional article. Switzerland is the first country in Europe to set out in the constitution, authority for the state and constituent states (cantons), to take complementary medicine into consideration in the public health service.

Over the last few years complementary medicine has been politically marginalized in Switzerland. Therefore, the complementary medicine sector, including doctors, therapists, manufacturers and specialized traders, together launched and brought about a national popular initiative. This enabled Swiss voters to obtain a referendum for a constitutional amendment if they collected 100,000 valid signatures within 18 months.

Parliament availed itself of its right to oppose the proposers’ constitutional article and suggest a slightly diluted form. Since parliament’s counterproposal adopted all the core demands on a legal level, the original popular initiative was withdrawn. Therefore, the people only had to vote on a constitutional article, which, experience has shown, increases the chances of them voting in favour. Particularly because parliament and the government support the parliamentary proposal.

On 17 May 2009, Swiss voters clearly approved the constitutional article proposed by parliament. The majority of voters per canton also voted in favour, which is likewise a prerequisite for any constitutional amendment.

In accordance with the referendum, the Swiss Federal constitution will be expanded by an article stipulating that “The Federal government and cantons shall ensure that, within the scope of their jurisdiction, complementary medicine is taken into consideration”.

On this constitutional basis, parliament and the authorities have to implement the following requirements:
1. Admission of doctors of complementary medicine in the fields of anthroposophic medicine, homeopathy, neural therapy, herbal medicine (phytotherapy) and Traditional Chinese Medicine into the obligatory public health insurance system.
2. Creation of national diplomas for non-medical CAM therapists.
3. Integration of complementary medicine into teaching and research.
4. Safeguarding of proven remedies.

This development should be an inspiration to us all. It just goes to show how much can be achieved when everyone works together and manages to put their differences aside.

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The expected EU contribution will be € 1,498,598. The aim of this project is to develop a roadmap for future European research in CAM that is appropriate for the health care needs of EU citizens, and acceptable to the EU Parliament, as well as their national research funders and healthcare providers. The specific objectives are to develop an EU network involving centres of research excellence for collaborative research, to develop consensus-based terminology widely accepted in Europe to describe CAM interventions, to create a knowledge base that facilitates our understanding of patient demand for CAM and its prevalence, to review the current legal status and policies governing CAM provision in the EU and, to explore the needs, beliefs and attitudes of the EU citizens with respect to CAM. Based on this information, a roadmap will be created that will enable a sustainable and prioritised EU research roadmap for CAM.

These overall objectives will be achieved in 3 years. The project will be managed by a Steering Committee with the support of a Scientific Committee and an Advisory Board and will involve all the major European stakeholders in the field of CAM.
Stunning Cuban Experiences on Leptospirosis

An unprecedented research study has been done using homeopathic prophylaxis in Cuba on 2.4 million people to prevent the usual Leptospirosis outbreak after tropical flooding. Only 10 cases were reported after use of the homeopathic nosode instead of the usual several thousand cases of Leptospirosis.

On 10-12 December 2008 at the ‘Nosodes 2008’ conference in Havana (Cuba) the director-general of the Finlay Institute, an advocate of homeopathy herself, Dr. Concepción Campa Huergo, gave a presentation about controlling the local epidemic disease of Leptospirosis by using a Leptospira nosode.

Leptospirosis is an infectious disease caused by the spirochaete Leptospira transmitted to humans from rats. In humans it may cause a wide range of symptoms including high fever, severe headache, chills, muscle aches, vomiting, jaundice, red eyes, abdominal pain, diarrhea, or a rash. If the disease is not treated, the patient could develop kidney damage, meningitis, liver failure, and respiratory distress. Cuba goes through a yearly cycle of Leptospirosis epidemic, especially after the hurricanes flood the countryside and water pollution reaches its height. Many people are left homeless, flooded out and under the stress of disaster situation.

A part of the Ministry of Public Health, the Finlay Institute is the Cuban research institute. It has WHO qualified facilities, produces allopathic vaccinations and acts as supporting institution for research, production and development of high quality homeopathic products. Since Cuba is outcast by the USA government, the Cubans have come to depend on themselves for the production of medicines, health care programs, etc. And since they have no pharmaceutical multi-nationals to stop them, they were able to conduct the leptospirosis project on a massive scale unknown in the history of homeopathy.

On October November 2007, three provinces of the eastern region of Cuba were affected by heavy rainfalls causing floods of big areas and damage to sanitary and health systems. The risk of leptospirosis infection was raised to extremely dangerous levels with about 2 million people exposed to potentially contaminated water.

Considering this situation, the Finlay Institute prepared a leptospirosis nosode 200 CH using 4 circulating strains and following international quality standards. A multidisciplinary team travelled to the affected regions to conduct the massive administration of the nosode. Coordinated action with public health system infrastructures allowed the administration of a preventive treatment consisting in two doses (7-9 days apart) of the nosode to about 2,4 million people (4.8 million of doses). The coverage of the intervention rose up to 95% percent of total population of the three provinces at risk. Another dose, at a higher potency (10M), was given after the hurricane left the island.

The epidemiology surveillance after the intervention showed a dramatic decrease of morbidity two weeks after and a reduction to zero mortality of hospitalized patients. The number of confirmed leptospirosis cases remained at low levels and below the expected levels according with the local and international trends. The usual expectancy of infection even with allopathic vaccination would have been around a few thousand, with some deaths included.

The costs of the leptospirosis project were US$ 200,000, whereas the costs of ‘normal’ vaccination, only for the most at-risk populations, ie children, pregnant women, and the elderly, are about US$3,000,000.

What is remarkable is their application to such a large population, and its dramatic success, with full scientific verification. This experience could be extended to other diseases and other countries. The Finlay Institute is offering their facilities and specialists to spread this alternative to all regions needing emergent alternatives for epidemic control and prevention.


Homeopathy works in eczema and psoriasis

The Spring 2006 Newsletter described a prospective, multi-centre cohort study that was conducted by a research team at Berlin’s Charité University (Germany), including 103 primary care practices with additional specialization in homeopathy in Germany and Switzerland. In this study the use and effects of homeopathy under conditions of usual care were investigated (1). The study involved 3981 patients who consulted a physician for classical homeopathic therapy in 103 primary care practices in Germany and Switzerland. Disease severity and quality of life demonstrated marked and sustained improvements following homeopathic treatment period. The study indicates that homeopathic medical therapy may play a beneficial role in the long-term care of patients with chronic diseases.

In recent publications the results of homeopathic treatment in two subgroups of the above-mentioned study were described, one subgroup of children with atopic eczema (2) and another subgroup of 82 adults with psoriasis (3).

The study on atopic eczema included 225 children with a disease duration of 3.6 ± 3.8 years who were followed up for 24 months. Over the course of the study patients received 7.3 ± 6.4 homeopathic prescriptions, most frequently Calcium carbonicum (8.2%), Tuberculinum (7.2%), and Medorhini (6.8%). In total, 137 different homeopathic remedies were used. The strongest improvement in diagnoses and medical complaints was seen in the first 3 months, and it continued during the full observation period. After 24 months, the atopic eczema as well as the other baseline diagnoses were considerably relieved, while reductions in use of conventional medicines were observed.

The other study was aimed at evaluating details and effects of homeopathic treatment in patients with psoriasis. Forty-five physicians treated 82 adults, who had had psoriasis for an average of 14.7 years and of whom 96.3% had been treated before. Patients received 6.0 ± 4.9 homeopathic prescriptions. Diagnoses and complaints severity improved markedly with large effect sizes. In addition, the quality of life improved, while conventional treatment and health service use were

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considerably reduced.

It has to be kept in mind that these are not experimental studies (with control group, randomization, and blinding), but observational studies which are, by their character, less rigorous than experimental studies. The aim of these studies was to provide systematic and detailed information about status and effects of homeopathic medical care in usual care. And the results clearly demonstrate that under individualized (‘classical’) homeopathic treatment, patients with atopic eczema and psoriasis improved in symptoms and quality of life.

References:

European Information Centre on CAM launched

‘Complementary and Alternative Medicine is not evidence based’ - that is the mantra that is heard over and over again when meeting political decision makers. There is a strong need to convey the message that substantial and good quality research evidence in CAM does exist, and furthermore, shows potential for contributing to significant improvements in health care delivery and in public health.

Acquaintance with information on the scientific underpinning of CAM is greatly lagging behind its increasing use by European citizens. To plug the information gap the European Information Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (EICCAM) has been founded with the aim of providing and disseminating understandable, objective and high-quality information on the safety, effectiveness and efficiency of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM).

The outcome of research on complementary medicine is usually only presented in scientific journals and to fellow scientists, using scientific terminology. Consequently there is a communication gap. As long as this exists, it will be a barrier to CAM’s greater use.

EICCAM central purpose is to collect and update scientific information on CAM on a regular basis, converting the scientific information into a summarised and understandable format for the educated non-expert public. This information is independent, comprehensive, understandable and quality assured in order to contribute to informed decision-making by politicians, legislators and other stakeholders. The centre also networks with the scientific community, with CAM stakeholders, and is intending to organise or participate in scientific events on CAM.

EICCAM has been set up as a Public Utility Foundation under Belgian Law, with a Management Board and a Scientific Board. Both boards jointly decide on actions and activities while the Scientific Board selects the information input and output and, most importantly, ensures its quality and independence. The current scientific committee includes reputable scientists working at European universities and includes expertise in the CAM field. To date, they have published several ‘EICCAM Research Facts’ on studies in the field of homeopathy, acupuncture, anthroposophic medicine and herbal medicine, all downloadable from the website [www.eiccam.eu](http://www.eiccam.eu). More publications are in the pipeline.

EICCAM has already obtained some funding, but more funding will be needed to keep the Centre running and to continue to produce regular research facts. Readers of this article who are interested to make a donation to the funding of EICCAM or are aware of possible funding sources are encouraged to contact the Chair of the EICCAM Management Board, Dr Susanne Schunder-Tatzber, e-mail: [schunder@gamed.or.u](mailto:schunder@gamed.or.u).

Manifesto at Open Health Forum

On 11 December 2008 the Directorate-General ‘Health and Consumers’ organised the EU Open Health Forum conference in Brussels. This forum is a mechanism for the European Commission to get feedback from stakeholders on the implementation of the EU Health Policy and to identify the need for new policy initiatives at EU level. It also facilitates networking and exchange of best practice in the implementation of public health policies at EU, national, regional and local level.

The overall theme of the conference was “Developing and Implementing Health in the European Union”. It was aimed at strengthening the involvement of all stakeholders in contributing to the development and implementation of actions and activities to protect and improve the health of European citizens.

Delegates from a number of CAM organisations presented a manifesto with the following statements:
- Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is in strong demand among European citizens reflecting a need for more holistic patient-centred care;
- About 70% of the European population report that they have used CAM therapies;
- Clinical effectiveness of CAM is, in many cases, at least as high as the effectiveness of conventional medicine as shown by several long-term studies involving many thousands of patients;
- CAM has a positive safety profile and is effective, especially in industrialized medicine;
- CAM manufacturing techniques help protect the environment;
- Integration of CAM in general health care can help to reduce costs and the burden of mortality and morbidity caused by multiple adverse effects of many conventional prescription medicines;
- CAM is needed in fostering good health in Europe for the young and the old;
- CAM is a strong contribution to health promotion. For the benefit of all Europeans we strongly recommend that the European Union promote the integration of valid and effective medicinal traditions in its health policy.

The chairman, Mr Robert Madelin, Director-General of DG Health and Consumers, promised that the manifesto would be added to the minutes of the Open Health Forum.
Petition to the European Commission

Most readers will remember that the European Parliament in its resolution A4-0075 of 29 May 1997 called on the European Commission to launch a process of recognizing non-conventional medicine (or Complementary and Alternative Medicine).

To date, the European Commission has not taken any action in this direction. As to the legal recognition and regulation of homeopathy and other CAM therapies, the situation is still rather heterogeneous. In some Member States homeopathy has been officially recognized as a therapeutic method by the government, in some other Member States doctors can obtain an additional qualification in homeopathy, recognised by the national medical association/council. And there are Member States where the practice of homeopathy by either doctors or practitioners is forbidden. That means for example that a doctor in Sweden having received homeopathic training in Germany and the UK is not allowed to practice homeopathy in his own country, and that an Austrian doctor moving to Slovenia will have similar problems. That means that the EU principles of free movement of services and freedom of establishment are still far off in the field of homeopathy. Other CAM therapies are facing the same inequalities.

The situation also hampers the rights of European citizens to freely choose the practitioner or therapy they see fit. This is a violation of the European Union’s Charter of Fundamental Rights, in particular article 35.

A group of health professionals from Belgium and France have recently launched a website in seven languages where a petition can be signed. The initiators hope to receive a million signatures from European citizens. The petition requests that the European Commission take the legislative steps required for the legal recognition of non-conventional (complementary and alternative) medical disciplines.

Please visit the website [http://www.petitionecomed.eu](http://www.petitionecomed.eu) and make it known to all your friends and all your patients!

New journal on high-dilution research

A new open-access electronic journal specialized in the multidisciplinary field of studies on high dilutions has been launched. It is hosted by the GIRI, the Groupe International de Recherche sur l’Infinimental or International Research Group on High Dilution and Very Low Dose Effects, a group of research experts including pharmacologists, biologists, physicians, chemists and physicists who communicate, exchange experiences and develop joint research projects on ultra low dose substances or very high dilutions, homeopathic medicines included.

The International Journal of High Dilution Research is peer-reviewed and published quarterly. The journal is the successor of the former journal Cultura Homeopática, hosted by Instituto de Cultura Homeopática (ICEH) in Brazil. Its remit has been widened for two reasons: 1) the field of studies on high dilutions (HDs) has widened to cover areas other than its traditional medical perspective (homeopathy), including basic research on biological and physico-chemical aspects of HDs, applications such as agriculture and veterinary, as well related technological developments; 2) the international scope of current research.

The journal carries original papers, review papers and short communications in the following categories: 1) Basic research (Physics and Chemistry); 2) Basic research (Biology); 3) Clinical and Pathogenetic research; 4) Sociological research; 5) Theoretical and Historical research; 6) Pharmaceutical research; 7) Plant and Microorganism research; 8) Veterinary research.

Potential readers will need to register with the journal, to obtain a username and a password.

More information can be found at [http://www.feg.unesp.br/~ojs/index.php/ijhd](http://www.feg.unesp.br/~ojs/index.php/ijhd)

Call for colleagues interested in provings

The Homeopathic Drug Provings Guidelines is an outstanding piece of work of the ECH Provings Subcommittee. The guidelines comply with the requirements for medical research of the European Union and at the same time respect the method and spirit of homeopathy.

The ECH is a strong advocate of high-quality provings and seeks to intensify the work on this crucial aspect of the homeopathic method. The Provings Subcommittee therefore would like to get into contact with colleagues and representatives of associations or schools in the field of homeopathy who are interested in this work and would like to share their ideas and expertise.

Please contact the coordinator of the Provings Subcommittee Dr Jean-Pierre Jansen via e-mail: [jpjansen@antenna.nl](mailto:jpjansen@antenna.nl)
World homeopathy congress in Warsaw

The 64th Congress of the Liga Medicorum Homeopathica Internationalis (LMHI) will take place in Warsaw, Poland, from 26-30 August 2009. The Congress Venue is the famous Concert Hall of the „Palace of Culture and Science“ in the center of Warsaw. The main topic of the Congress „Timeless Quality Homeopathy“ comprises holistic and individualized care as well as obstacles to homeopathic treatment. Avail yourself of your opportunity and share your experiences, your knowledge and your ideas on these issues with homeopathic colleagues from around the world. The Scientific Committee will present not only a courageous and exciting hypothesis on the working mechanism of homeopathy but also a revolutionary view of the organic origin of our illnesses. About 20 speakers from many different countries have already confirmed their participation. The official congress language is English. Simultaneous translations into other languages will be provided on demand.

News from the LMHI

The International Homeopathic Medical League LMHI (Liga Medicorum Homeopathica Internationalis) is breaking new ground in the field of public relations. It has relaunched its website and corporate design which is aimed at facilitating readability and recognition. The Press Office of the German homeopathic doctors’ association in Bonn is in charge of the new website’s content management and of further LMHI publications.

One of their first public relations initiatives is an electronic Liga Newsletter which is planned to be published twice a year in addition to the traditional Liga Letter. The e-newsletter will provide up-to-date information on the latest developments in the field of homeopathy worldwide.

The LMHI website is accessible at [www.lmhint.net](http://www.lmhint.net).

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Please send any contributions for the newsletter to the ECH secretariat

European Homeopathic Library

The European homeopathic library in Koethen will be opened on 9 October 2009. The historical building, the former Infirmary of the Merciful Brethren in the near vicinity of the Hahnemann house, has just been renovated. The library is expected to accommodate 10,000 books.