

# EUROPEAN CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OF HOMEOPATHIC DOCTORS

## Basic principles of the code

High-quality professional practice can be distinguished in five levels or aspects:

- 1. Principles of human relations as included in basic rights and the foundations of legal order: the right of inviolability of the human body, the right of privacy, the right of free choice, the right of good care etc.
- 2. Principles of assistance:
  - focussing the attention on the patient's interest
  - respecting individual diversity

• considering human beings as fashioned by a great number of mutually influencing internal and external factors (constitution, environment, life-style etc.)

- 3. Basic criteria for the practitioner's attitude
- 4. Basic criteria for therapeutic action
- 5. Basic criteria for day-to-day practice.

The principles referred to in aspects 1 and 2 are not further elaborated upon below because they are prerequisites of any professional assistance. This applies also to the basic criteria mentioned in aspects 3,4 and 5, but specific characteristics of homeopathic practice are interwoven with them. Therefore attention should be focused on these specific characteristics.

## The code itself

## A. About the doctor-patient relationship

- 1. the homeopathic doctor shall not betray the patient's confidence (e.g. by giving unnecessary treatments or prescribing unnecessary medicines; by evoking or increasing fear);
- 2. the treatment must not violate the patient's integrity:

- no pressure shall be exerted on the patient, the doctor gives only advice;
- all actions are directed to make/keep the patient independent of care as quickly as possible;
- the patient shall be treated as equal;
- the patient's own responsibility shall be respected;
- the patient has the right to consult another health care provider;
- the homeopathic doctor shall take the patient's philosophy of life into consideration;
- 3. the homeopathic doctor shall pay sufficient attention to the problems presented by the patient and take sufficient time for a consultation;
- 4. the homeopathic doctor shall only apply treatments to which a patient has consented (after being sufficiently informed);
- 5. the homeopathic doctor shall establish a relationship with the patient based on mutual trust so that the patient can express any problem or dissatisfaction with the doctor;
- 6. the homeopathic doctor shall not disclose any information about any patient which comes to his/her attention through his/her professional relationship with the patient, except:
  - where required to do so by rule of law;

• in an emergency or other dangerous situation where in the opinion of the doctor the information may assist in the prevention of possible injury to the patient or to another person;

- where the patient has consented to the nature and extent of the disclosure;
- 7. the homeopathic doctor shall practise under his/her own name, also in case of association in a group practice;
- 8. the homeopathic doctor shall take up an independent position towards commercial institutions or people in the medical/pharmacological field;
- 9. the homeopathic doctor is allowed to refuse to treat the patient (any longer), if in all fairness s/he cannot be expected to start or continue the treatment, e.g. if the doctor is not qualified or capable of certain actions (or not capable to any help anymore) or if the physician is of the opinion that a relationship based on mutual trust no longer exists; in that case s/he shall notify the patient of the reason and help the patient, if necessary, to find other medical assistance.

### **B.** About the therapy

1. in every action the homeopathic doctor assumes that a human being is fashioned by a great many mutually influencing internal and external factors (constitution, environment, way of living, etc.); preferably the doctor shall not suppress any symptoms if that is harmful to the patient as a whole. A distinction should be made between symptom suppressing treatments with short-term effect and a total treatment directed at a long-term general amelioration of the patient's condition. If the patient's vitality permits, preference should be given to the latter.

- 2. prevention and advice about the relationship between lifestyle and complaints as well as clarification on the choice of the treatment should be given prominence in the therapeutic process;
- 3. in all actions the homeopathic doctor should consider the self healing power of every human being as a basic principle; this should be supported, aroused or activated and only very exceptionally counteracted;
- 4. the treatment must be aimed at enabling the patient's growth and/or development as a free individual, overcoming his/her problems or illness, and at preventing the patient's dependence;
- 5. the homeopathic doctor shall have acquired skills -by sufficient training- in practice of his/her profession as well as use of approved examination equipment and materials;
- 6. the homeopathic doctor shall be familiar with the possibilities and limitations of both conventional medicine (medical diagnosis, prognosis and treatments) and homeopathy. If s/he considers homeopathic therapy to be indicated, s/he shall be capable of applying it and of evaluating it in accordance with the principles of homeopathy;
- 7. the homeopathic doctor shall keep up the required standards of knowledge, training and expertise by taking refresher courses and continuing-education, by conferring with colleagues and consulting the professional literature;
- 8. the homeopathic doctor shall refrain from actions s/he is not schooled in;
- 9. the homeopathic doctor shall personally take the full responsibility for any therapeutic action (and shall not pass it on to authors, manufacturers etc.); in case of delegating actions to other (not independently authorised) health care providers, the final responsibility remains with the referring doctor;
- 10. the homeopathic doctor shall not bring his/her profession into discredit; s/he shall not criticise, condemn or otherwise denigrate either a colleague or a member of other health care professions, but show due respect to them;
- 11. the homeopathic doctor shall strive for consultation and/or collaboration with other health care providers involved, in general and for the benefit of the well-being of individual patients; s/he shall refer patients to a colleague whenever an examination or treatment is beyond his/her capacity or to another appropriate health care practitioner whenever a patient can be helped better elsewhere; s/he shall guard against undesired thwarting; s/he shall report, only with the patient's consent, about his/her therapeutic actions to referring colleagues and other colleagues involved in the treatment of the patient;
- 12. the homeopathic doctor shall make the results of his/her research and clinical experience known in a methodical and honest manner without distorting the facts and shall not keep new knowledge or methods of treatment to him/herself; s/he shall not advertise or lay claim to secret or exclusive methods of treatment or that s/he is able to produce extraordinary cures;
- 13. the homeopathic doctor shall not accept any orders contrary to the professional ethics.

## C. About day-to-day practice

1. the homeopathic doctor shall keep his/her appointments properly;

- 2. the homeopathic doctor shall be available on days and at times that are clearly indicated;
- 3. the homeopathic doctor shall provide the reception of patients during his/her illness or absence by a locum tenens; the doctor shall treat a patient if it is within his/her competence;
- 4. the homeopathic doctor shall inform the patient properly at or before the first consultation, if possible in writing (by means of a brochure or public notice in the waiting room) about:
  - the professional association of which s/he is a member;
  - his/her qualifications and what these imply;
  - the anticipated fees, the duration and course of the treatment;
  - a realistic picture of the therapeutic prospects;
  - complaint procedures;
- 5. the homeopathic doctor shall be working according to a definite method of assessment or shall be making a flexible plan of treatment -in consultation with the patient-, in which a first goal is defined and in which it is stated when assessment will take place (first assessment not later than after three months);
- 6. the homeopathic doctor shall keep up accurate and thorough records of the patient and shall gather only those data that are necessary for the treatment; the records are to be kept secure and confidential at all times, access being restricted to the doctor, his/her assistants and agents, unless the patient otherwise gives consent; upon request from a patient to supply a record of his/her treatments or to forward that patient's record to another colleague, the doctor is to dispatch forthwith all the basic and essential information from that patient's case-notes;
- 7. the homeopathic doctor shall provide premises and examination equipment/materials that are functional and hygienic and safeguard privacy;
- 8. the homeopathic doctor is not allowed to sell prescribed or advised preparations either in his/her own practice or through his/her own trading firm or through a pharmacy/chemist, unless s/he is permitted by the health authorities to do so ('dispensing doctors'); neither is s/he allowed to receive commission for prescribed or advised preparations; a dispensary of medicines for immediate administering is allowed;
- 9. the homeopathic doctor shall only advertise in a proper and professional manner for the purpose of informing members of the general public as to his/her location details and specialised practice of homeopathy;
- 10. the homeopathic doctor shall allow inspection of authorised institutions to his/her premises and also, if necessary, to the patients' records (subject to the patient's written consent).