



FEDERAZIONE ITALIANA
ASSOCIAZIONI E MEDICI OMEOPATI
FIAMO

FIAMO – Italian Federation of Homeopathy Association and Practitioners

The truth about homeopathy

Presentation

Homeopathic medicine has existed for 200 years. Its history has been characterised by enthusiastic adherence, by suspicious but constructive approaches, but also by open opposition.

In the last two decades, the homeopathic community of doctors, veterinarians and pharmacists has repeatedly been subjected to fierce criticism.

Often, the criticism stems from a lack of knowledge of the fundamental aspects of homeopathy, to the point of confusing it with phytotherapy or food supplements.

Other times, negative judgments focus on an alleged lack of scientific evidence, disregarding the evidence in the scientific literature.

Finally, hostility has sometimes turned into stubborn denigration attacks, which have to distort the real characteristics of homeopathy and of its practitioners.

On the contrary, we know that homeopathy is practised by honest and passionate professionals who add the therapeutic resources offered by the homeopathic method to their conventional medical training.

We trust that this document will be a source of knowledge and inspiration for all those who wish to learn about homeopathy and who are willing to approach and discuss it without prejudice.

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Bruno Galeazzi
National President

1.0 PREMISE

Homeopathy was born in the early 1800s. It was developed by a German medical doctor, Samuel Hahnemann, as an example of how the inductive experimental method described by Francis Bacon could be applied to medicine. The key text about the homeopathic method, *Organon of medicine*, recalls in its epistemological approach the *Novum Organum* by F. Bacon, in which the foundations of the scientific method of nature investigation are laid, in contrast with the Aristotelian logic described in the *Organon* by the ancient Greek philosopher.

At Hahnemann's time, medicine had advanced in the knowledge of anatomy and macroscopic physiology, but in the diagnostic and therapeutic areas it was still based on the ancient concepts formulated by Hippocrates and Galen: the doctrine of the 4 humors, the reliance on basic therapeutic aids such as purging, vomiting, bloodletting and the use of medicinal herbs based on the empirical tradition.

During the 19th century and throughout the 20th, advances in the fields of microscopic anatomy (histology), biochemistry and molecular biology were key milestones in the history of medicine, which adopted the scientific method of inquiry and ascertainment of the appropriateness of prescribed therapies in all of its applications.

In order to make an effective use of the scientific method of basic sciences, physics and chemistry, medicine had to simplify the study of the patient, circumscribing the investigation of the various parts of the organism based on the methods of inquiry made available by technology (mechanistic reductionism). The result was a fragmentation of knowledge in highly specialized sectors, and therefore the management of the disease based on a localized focus on the pathology, which implied the loss of a systemic comprehension of sick individuals as beings who are located within their own history and within the environment in which they live.

The development of the homeopathic method was based from the outset on a heavy focus on the dimension of the sick individual, rather than on the pathology viewed as a nosographic entity disconnected from the individual dimension. Facing the fragmentation of their suffering into defective basic parts, as if the organism were nothing more than a sophisticated biological *meccano*, the individual living in our age does not feel understood and accepted in the systemic, bio-psycho-social dimension of their suffering and rightly seeks a global approach to their illness in homeopathic medicine.

Despite these premises, Homeopathy has always been the subject of disputes and attempts to limit or even suppress it.

Media disinformation and discredit campaigns against Homeopathy are still carried out regularly on a local, national, or even global scale. This has especially intensified in recent years, during which an unprecedented media offensive has been unleashed worldwide, with special strength in Italy.

Dozens and dozens of articles, and even numerous books against Homeopathy have been published by influential members of the official scientific community. Observations and replies put forth by homeopathic associations or individuals are regularly ignored.

This report aims to provide comprehensive and objective data on Homeopathy, in the hope that they may help the people who are trying in good faith to form an opinion of their own on the subject in order to get a clearer picture.

2.0 – AN OVERVIEW OF HOMEOPATHY

Before proceeding, it is the case to outline the basic principles of Homeopathy and its specific features.

Homeopathy is a clinical and therapeutic method based on the "Law of Similars", formulated by doctor Samuel Hahnemann at the end of the 18th century, and on the use of medicines in "infinitesimal doses".

The law of Similars states it is possible to cure and heal a sick person by administering to them a substance which, in a healthy person, produces the characteristic symptoms of their illness.

The law of Similars was discovered through a series of experiments by Hahnemann (1755-1843), originating from a casual observation while reading a pharmacology book of the time: the toxic effects of China, which was already used at the time for the treatment of malaria, were similar to those found in subjects with malaria. Hahnemann hypothesized that such odd fact concealed a principle of Nature. He began to experiment on himself and on some collaborators the pathogenetic effects of a number of common vegetable and mineral substances, and to record in detailed form all symptoms caused by these substances on healthy subjects. These first observations formed the basis for the subsequent therapeutic application to patients with pathological symptoms similar to the experimental ones, and provided confirmation of the validity of the similarity principle. Thus Homeopathy was born (Etymology: *Omoios* = similar and *Pathos* = disease).

According to this principle, each substance is administered individually to healthy humans in low doses, which are harmless from a toxicological standpoint, to record the symptoms and functional signs it causes (Pure Pathogenesis). The results of these experiments on healthy humans are subsequently integrated with the knowledge derived from conventional medical Toxicology. For each tested substance a specific symptomatological picture is eventually outlined which, compared with a similar disease, indicates the therapeutically effective remedy.

In homeopathic clinical practice, the doctor, after having formulated a conventional clinical diagnosis in any case, takes into consideration the whole psycho-physical symptoms of the patient and administers the *Simillimum*, that is, the medicine which is most similar to the specific ways in which the patient expresses their own illness: the therapy is therefore strictly personalized.

A specific therapeutic action cannot be attributed to a specific homeopathic medicine for a given disease, as occurs in conventional medicine, if the specific modalities that characterize the patient have not been recorded, as we mentioned above. For each single disease, as defined based on the nosographic criteria of conventional medicine, different homeopathic medicines may be appropriate, depending on the individual characteristics of the patient.

Homeopathic therapy acts in harmony with the body's natural defense and rebalancing response and leads to natural improvement or healing, resulting from the correction of the deep functional imbalance which made the symptoms of the disease emerge.

The practice of classical Homeopathy requires a long and articulate professional training, since in order to make a prescription, the doctor must be able to effectively identify in each single clinical case, within hundreds of homeopathic medicines, the most appropriate medicine for the patient being treated.

Classical Homeopathic Pharmacology comprises single-substance medicines derived from the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms.

To avoid the possible intensification of the symptoms of the disease due to the reaction of the organism facing the action of the substance which is most similar to the disease, the medicine is administered to the patient in infinitesimal doses, obtained through progressive dilutions and succussions (which are a form of mechanical shaking aimed at "dynamizing" the preparation). By virtue of these infinitesimal doses, the homeopathic medicine is totally devoid of any toxicity and side effects which may emerge in the presence of molecules in ponderal doses.

The classic, single-substance homeopathic medicines cannot be considered "specialties" created by any individual manufacturer, since they are exclusively derived from natural substances; each of them has an identifying name in Latin, based on the classifications in use in the different kingdoms of nature.

3.0 – HOMEOPATHY AND THE OTHER HOMEOTHERAPIES

From classical Homeopathy, other therapeutic methods have emerged over time which rely on medicines produced according to the homeopathic method (progressive dilutions and succussions), but neither have the same epistemological status nor the same prescription methodology as Homeopathy (Complexism, Homotoxicology, Homeopathic Immunotherapy, Organotherapy, Isotherapy, etc.).

Anthroposophical Medicine – which also has a specific epistemological status of its own, different from classical Homeopathy – relies on medicines that are produced in similar ways to homeopathic medicines.

A peculiar feature of these homeotherapies is that the medicines they rely on, unlike the single-substance medicines of classical Homeopathy, are all exclusive specialties of their respective manufacturers.

4.0 DATA AND REGULATIONS ON HOMEOPATHY

4.1 Homeopathy Around the World

- Homeopathy is the second therapeutic system in the world after Western Medicine, in terms of number of users;
- There are about 500,000 doctors and veterinarians practicing Homeopathy in the world, and about 50,000 in Europe (WHO data¹);
- Patients using Homeopathy are about 600 million worldwide and 150 million in Europe²;
- Homeopathy is officially accepted and regulated in many European and non-European countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Spain, India, Brazil, Mexico, US, etc.)³;
- In India, Homeopathy was officially recognized in 1974 and had two important supporters in Mother Teresa (who introduced it in the leper hospitals of Calcutta) and Mahatma Gandhi in 1936. It is governed by a special Ministry, AYUSH, which controls all of the traditional systems of medicine practiced in India. In 1973, a Homeopathic Central Council was created which controls the training and practice of Homeopathy established by a parliamentary act (The Homeopathy Central Council Act). To date, there are 195 university training schools and 43 postgraduate training schools which guarantee high-quality education, and a Central Research Council (CCRH) with 22 institutes and units. There are currently approximately 300,000 officially registered homeopathic doctors. There are also around 700 production laboratories, 235 homeopathic hospitals, with 11,099 beds in total, and 8,117 clinics in the confederation territory. It has been estimated that there are at least 300 million patients using homeopathic treatments⁴;
- In 2011, the Swiss government, before granting citizens the reimbursement of expenses incurred for a number of unconventional medicines, commissioned a team of scientists to review those disciplines. The results for Homeopathy were positive⁵;
- In Switzerland, Homeopathy is currently reimbursed by the national health system, exactly as conventional therapies;
- In 2016, the UNI / EN 16872 European standard was published to define the minimum quality standards for homeopathic treatment within a medical context, ensuring high standards in education, training and practice of Homeopathy by qualified doctors. Patients who choose Homeopathy should get clear guarantees about the quality and standard of care they will receive. In addition to this, the standard aims at harmonizing at European level the rules about homeopathic practice by doctors and integrating high-quality Homeopathy into European healthcare;

In 2018, the Association of German Medical Specialists recognized Homeopathy as a specialization of conventional medicine⁶;

- In 2020, Bavaria added to the organizational structure of its Ministry of Health a Department of Traditional and Complementary Medicines, including Homeopathy⁷.

4.2 Homeopathy in Italy

- The practice of Homeopathy is exclusively allowed to doctors and veterinarians, two groups of professionals qualified to take care of sick people;

- There are around 2,000 doctors trained in classical Homeopathy, while approximately 20,000 use other homeotherapies;

- About 9 million Italian citizens use homeopathic treatments; they are mostly women, and in general belong to the segments of the population with higher education⁸;

- Homeopathic “products” were recognized as medicines as early as 1992 at European level, and 1995 at the Italian national level; as of June 30, 2017, the regulation on homeopathic medicines was fully approved and the proper manufacturing methods were established; since January 1st, 2019, each homeopathic medicine has its own A.I.C. number (Marketing Authorization)⁹;

- Homeopathy was recognized in Italy as a medical activity in 2002 by F.N.O.M.C.e.O. (the National Federation of Doctor and Dentist Associations);

- In 2007 (Resolution no. 51, 23 February), on the grounds of the acknowledgement of the nine Non-Conventional Medicines (including Homeopathy) which took place in 2002, F.N.O.M.C.e.O. “forcefully [demanded] a legislative intervention by the Parliament, leading to the approval of a specific regulation on Non-Conventional Medicines and Practices that will allow to also respect in these domains citizens’

right to health protection, enshrined in the Constitution, which may only be possible by fully achieving and assessing the practitioners’ professional skills”;

In 2008, a document addressed to patients of Non-Conventional Medicines, including Homeopathy (“Information to Citizens on the Safety of Complementary and Non-Conventional Medicines”), written by various official medical institutions (Higher Health Institute, Italian Pharmacology Association, etc.) stated that “in most cases, the efficacy is based on the use and on consolidated practice, rather than on evidence produced by using the same scientific methods used for conventional treatments”; the same document acknowledged and confirmed the professional figure of doctors practicing Non-Conventional Medicine: “If you seek complementary or unconventional therapies, always rely on an experienced doctor, asking for information from your GP, your local NHS center, the Board of Medicine of your province or accredited Scientific Societies”¹⁰.

- professional training in Homeopathy was regulated in 2013 by the State-Regions Conference, which set the standards for primary training in Homeopathy and introduced specific registers of trained homeopaths, compiled and filed with the provincial Boards of Doctors and Veterinarians;
- some universities (Bologna, Siena, Catanzaro, etc.) have introduced courses in Homeopathy;
- some local NHS centers and hospitals provide Homeopathy services.

5.0 CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE VS. CLASSICAL HOMEOPATHY

5.1 Nosological Classification and Therapeutic Guidelines

- Conventional medicine classifies and treats the various diseases based on a specific therapeutic indication for each of them (therapy protocols), regardless of the specific ways in which each patient expresses their disease.

Conventional medicine treats the disease.

- In Homeopathy, the homeopathic medicine isn't identified based on the disease, but on the specific symptoms through which the patient expresses their disease; for the same disease, the appropriate medicine for a given patient is identified among tens or even hundreds of homeopathic medicines.

Homeopathy treats the sick person based on the specific nature of their suffering.

Furthermore, since the identification of the most suitable homeopathic medicine may also take place in the absence of a precise nosological diagnosis, only considering the symptoms displayed by the patient and their constitutional and behavioral features, Homeopathy may also be used effectively in dysfunctional cases that precede the onset of a certain disease, thus administering a valuable preventive therapy.

5.2 - Doctor-patient relationship

- Following the clinical-diagnostic act, the process followed by conventional medicine is increasingly based on standardized "therapy protocols" accepted by the global scientific community. The sick person with their specific features disappears. Often, the doctor-patient human relationship is not considered essential.

- Since the therapy in Homeopathy must be tailored for the patient in great detail to avoid treatment failure, the clinical process necessarily requires a close interpersonal relationship with the patient. Consequently, this "technically" essential relationship also fosters a good empathic and interpersonal relationship.

5.3 - Therapeutic Objectives and Results

- In the vast majority of cases, conventional medicine acts by blocking the manifestation of the local symptom; consequently, despite its effectiveness with regards to symptoms, it may not lead to total recovery and the restoration of health, defined as the complete restoration of the ability to adapt and self-manage facing the physical, psychological and social challenges experienced by the individual; in chronic cases it often relies on the same symptomatic drugs as in acute cases, with undoubtedly effective but not permanent results, and it does not prevent diseases from becoming chronic;
- By selectively stimulating the body's natural defense and rebalancing mechanisms, Homeopathy acts on a systemic level; it tends to stimulate a gradual and stable healing process for the individual; it is a particularly effective therapy, as well as in many acute cases, also and above all in chronic cases;
- Since Homeopathy is a therapy that stimulates the functions and natural defenses of the organism, it's not effective and cannot be used as a substitute medicine in cases of non-reactivity due to the absence or severe deterioration of organs or functions.

5.4 - Research of Active Ingredients and Selection of Usable Products

- Conventional medicine makes sizeable economic investments in the search for new active molecules through biochemical and biological studies, research in the field of ethnic medicine, tests on animals, etc.; only a few of the tested substances become marketable drugs with proven efficacy.
- Homeopathy tests any substance, at non-toxic and therefore harmless doses, on groups of healthy human subjects and draws additional information from already established toxicological literature. All studied substances, since they will be administered in infinitesimal and therefore non-toxic doses, may be used for therapy.

5.5 - Pharmacological Tests - Side Effects

- Conventional medicine must take numerous steps to detect any toxic effects on humans, any side effects and the risk-benefit ratio of drugs that are to be used for clinical purposes;
- The homeopathic medicine, taken in infinitesimal doses, does not require any toxicological tests and cannot have any side effects; expectations about its efficacy are based on the correct identification of the medicine, based on the principle of similarity.

5.6 - Complexity and Production Costs

- Both the complexity and the production costs of conventional drugs are often very high;
- Homeopathic medicines are produced using very simple technology (alternating progressive dilutions and succussions); thanks to the progressive dilutions, numerous doses may be prepared using only a small quantity of substance, however expensive; production costs are very low.

5.7 - Manufacturing Balance Sheets

- The yearly revenues of all homeopathic companies worldwide combined amounts to less than 1% of the yearly revenues of conventional pharmaceutical companies.

5.8 – Healthcare & Social Costs

- Conventional medicine entails significant costs; 80-85% of the costs for the Italian regional administrations is related to healthcare, the costs of conventional drugs are constantly increasing, and national health systems are hardly able to bear the rising costs;

- European epidemiological studies on the population treated mainly with classical Homeopathy have shown that this therapy allows national health systems to reduce health costs by 40-45%^{11 12 13 14 15 16}.

5.9 - Pharmacological Patents

- All conventional drugs are patented and only grant a monetary income to the company that produces them;
- The single-substance homeopathic medicines used in classical Homeopathy, being produced from natural substances, cannot be registered as specialties and each medicine may be produced and sold by any company.

5.10 - Turnover in the Use of Conventional vs. Homeopathic Medicines

- Conventional drugs are subject to a continuous turnover based on the discovery and marketing of new, more effective active ingredients, which replace the previous ones;
- The homeopathic medicines used in classical Homeopathy are not subject to obsolescence; over time and on the basis of clinical experiences shared at global level, each medicine is understood and experimented in more and more detail, providing practitioners with increasingly in-depth knowledge of the therapeutic potential of each medicine.

6.0 HOMEOTHERAPIES – CLASSICAL HOMEOPATHY – CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE

Medicines used in homeotherapies are hybrids that share some features with classical Homeopathy medicines and others with conventional medicines:

- As classical Homeopathy medicines, they are produced in very low or infinitesimal doses, they are not toxic and cannot have side effects;
- Unlike the homeopathic medicines used in classical Homeopathy, which are always single-substance, except for rare exceptions they are based on multiple homeopathic stocks in standard formulation;
- Unlike classical Homeopathy medicines, the great majority of homeotherapy medicines are to be used for individual diseases and/or syndromes, and their prescription is comparable to conventional medicine, without any personalization for the individual patient; in fact, homeotherapy complexes may also be prescribed by doctors who are not trained in Homeopathy, as a substitute for conventional drugs, whenever this is deemed possible;
- As conventional drugs, each of them is registered as a specialty of the company that manufactures it and is the object of exclusive sale.

7.0 THE LONGTIME OPPOSITION AGAINST HOMEOPATHY

There is a historical, articulate but consistent ideological movement, two centuries old by now, which is completely devoted to opposing Homeopathy. Actually, it is truly surprising that respectable men of science and culture devoted themselves, and still do, to discrediting Homeopathy with such zealous commitment.

In present and past media reports, Homeopathy is described in a hasty and grossly caricatural manner.

The "script" followed by the most recent confrontations seems to have been carefully written based on the most usual methods of communication: a series of negative observations, limited to a pre-formed logical field out of which no communicator, regardless of their ideological tendency, dared or dares to venture.

Such attitude raises the legitimate suspicion that these various interventions might not be occasional, that behind all this there might be a precise intention and a pre-established project, pursued with determined persistence.

The arguments proposed by Homeopathy's systematic detractors are always the same, that is, Homeopathy allegedly isn't valid:

- 1) because it is a “pre-scientific” therapy, based on non-scientific, “invented” principles;
- 2) because sufficiently valid scientific studies have not yet been submitted to support it;
- 3) because it relies on medicines taken at infinitesimal doses, in which the active principle is consequently extremely diluted or even absent from a chemical/pharmacological standpoint;
- 4) because, as a consequence of the previous point, it only acts due to a placebo effect.

Based on the concepts outlined above, the press campaigns appear each time as a final, unappealable sentence against Homeopathy.

7.1 - "Homeopathy is a ‘pre-scientific’ therapy, based on non-scientific, ‘invented’ principles”

Homeopathy was not developed by Hahnemann based on vague pre-scientific ruminations, but essentially on a real, random and apparently paradoxical clinical-toxicological observation of his: the similarity between the toxic symptoms of China on healthy people and the symptoms of malaria, which was already being treated with China itself at that time.

From that observation made "on the field", which confirmed the ancient medical assumption (Hippocrates) of the law of Similars (*Similia similibus curentur*), the whole homeopathic pharmacological research began, based precisely on the experimental administration of various substances to healthy humans and on their clinical application on patients who showed symptoms similar to those that emerged while the various substances were being experimented.

Quoting from the *Organon*, the key text on Homeopathy:

paragraph 6: "The unprejudiced observer realizes the futility of metaphysical speculations that cannot be verified by experiment. He sees in any given case of disease only the disturbances of body and soul which are perceptible to the senses ... As far as the physician is concerned, is not that which reveals itself to the senses in symptoms the very disease itself?"

paragraph 7: "So it is the totality of symptoms ... it is this integration of symptoms, we said, that must be the main way, or even the only way, through which the disease allows us to find the necessary remedy".

Furthermore, the allegation about "pre-scientific" Homeopathy is unjustified, because in an era when conventional medicine was still based on empirical methods, Homeopathy, on the contrary, brought to medicine a precise reproducible procedure for research on medicines that are useful for various diseases.

With regard to Homeopathy's theoretical and epistemological approach, subsequently and consequentially derived from clinical experience, the concept of "Vital Energy" in the first homeopathic texts was borrowed from the theories circulating at the time; the imbalance of such energy would lead to different diseases, and its rebalancing would lead to healing. The 19th-century concept of Vital Energy was subsequently elaborated and updated over time by homeopaths, using the notions of physiopathology, which was gradually discovered by conventional medicine.

The updated definition of "Vital Energy" was established by the "Officina Homeopathica" study group founded in 2007 within FIAMO: "Vital Energy is the set of structures and functions of the organism (defined as self-organized, open and endowed with teleonomy, i.e. oriented towards the higher functions of our existence) which, through informational messages of various kinds, tend to maintain the systemic balance of sensitivity and activity, as well as adaptation to the environment."

To put it more simply, Vital Energy is "systemic reactivity", the set of physiopathological mechanisms that allow the body to keep itself in balance, that is, in a state of health. Furthermore, the advances in theoretical physics, which led to the development of the Standard Model, based on Quantum Field Theory and the most recent results of quantum biology studies, gave promising theoretical glimpses of a concept that were present in original works by Hahnemann, albeit expressed in the obsolete language of his time.

Over time, Homeopathy has been interpreted by taking into account the discoveries made by Pasteur (toxin theory), by the great French and Italian constitutionalists (Martiny, Bernard, Santini, etc.), from whom Homeopathic Constitutionalism derives, up to the adoption in recent decades of more recent and advanced notions of Physics, which propose valid hypotheses on the non-chemical mechanism of action of homeopathic medicines, and finally of PsychoNeuroEndocrineImmunology (PNEI) and of Neurosciences that bring a systemic approach to physiopathology.

Taking into account that Homeopathy, by virtue of its methodological approach and the clinical experience gained over time, has always maintained a holistic, systemic vision of the patient, one may legitimately say that Homeopathy has found in the new systemic sciences of medicine a confirmation of its own epistemology, even ending up placing itself – from the point of view of the therapeutic approach – at the forefront within the context of scientific medicine.

7.2 - "Sufficiently valid scientific research has not yet been submitted in support of it"

The tendency to deny "a priori" the therapeutic validity of Homeopathy on the mere basis of the alleged scarcity of scientific works on the absence of molecules of the active principle in homeopathic medicines at higher dilutions (characteristic of infinitesimal doses), without observing and ascertaining firsthand the validity of homeopathic treatments, is illogical and incorrect, precisely from a scientific point of view.

In principle, based on the history of medicine, the first step in scientific knowledge is the observation of the phenomenon; only subsequently, and as far as possible, one attempts to identify its causes and methods. The fact that a conclusive and agreed-upon description of the mechanism of action has not yet been reached does not deny the very existence of the phenomenon.

Conventional medicine itself has often progressed on the grounds of reproducible empirical therapeutic experiences, often even random or originating from ancient popular habits, which have only subsequently been analyzed and justified by scientific research.

Some examples:

- Phytotherapy has brought to us centuries of effective empirical experience in the treatment of many ailments and diseases, long before its therapeutic efficacy was proven by recent research in pharmacological chemistry.
- The first vaccination (Jenner's 1798 publication) was only administered successfully on the grounds of intuition and empirical criteria half a century before the discovery of bacteria.
- Aspirin was marketed in 1899, but only in 1970 was its mechanism of action discovered in detail. Aspirin was used for 71 years without knowing its mechanism of action, for the simple fact that its clinical efficacy was evident.
- Digitalis: in 1775, William Withering, a famous Birmingham physician, was informed that an elderly peasant woman had a cure for patients suffering from dropsy after all interventions by official medicine had failed. He did not think in the least to underestimate such information; on the contrary, studying the ingredients of the decoction which was being used empirically he suspected that its therapeutic effect was due to *Digitalis Purpurea*, a very common herb in the countryside. The use of digitalis on 158 patients suffering from congestive heart failure resulted in complete success in 101 cases. Humility and observation: these were the main qualities of Withering, who used digitalis without having the slightest information about its mechanism of action. However, with all the due caution related to its toxicity, the therapy worked, therefore it could and should be used in patients.

Doctors cannot forget the facts that have marked the history of their science – and most importantly, in pursuing objectivity, they must not neglect the importance of careful observation of reality.

7.3 - "From a chemical-pharmacological point of view, it relies on medicines at infinitesimal doses, in which the active ingredient is consequently extremely diluted – if not absent"

With regard to the "insufficient" scientific publications and the action of infinitesimal doses, consulting scientific databases allows to find countless works. We present some data below. From 1991 to 2019, 20 meta-analyses were published, out of which:

- 11 had a positive outcome (Kleijnen, 1991¹⁷; Boissel 1996¹⁸; Linde 1997¹⁹; Wiesenauer 1997²⁰; Barnes 1997²¹; Jacobs 2003²²; Kassab 2009²³; Hahn 2013²⁴; Mathie 2014²⁵; Boehm 2014²⁶; Stub 2016²⁷)
- 2 had positive results but low methodological quality (Linde 1998²⁸; Cucherat 2000²⁹)
- 1 had a negative outcome (Shang 2005³⁰: widely contested, even by the academic world itself^{31 32 33})
- 5 had an inconclusive outcome (Smith 2003³⁴; Van Haselen 2003³⁵; Coulter 2007³⁶; Mathie 2015³⁷; Peckham, 2019³⁸)

Although the above-mentioned meta-analyses present quite interesting evidence in favor of Homeopathy, none of them have ever caused the same media hype as 2 works which, on the contrary, aimed at equating it with placebo:

- The only overtly negative meta-analysis, published in the "Lancet" (Shang 2005), which compared 110 homeopathic studies with the same number of conventional medicine studies on the same clinical conditions. Following the division into subgroups, which caused the loss of the original pairings, the final evaluation was merely based on 8 homeopathic studies vs. 6 following the approach of conventional medicine: Homeopathy = placebo. This meta-analysis was also widely criticized by authoritative academic researchers (Ludtke and Rutten 2008; Rutten and Stolper 2008; Hahn 2013), according to whom "To conclude that Homeopathy lacks any clinical effects, it was necessary to ignore more than 90% of all available studies".

- The Australian report: in March 2015, an Australian government body, the National Health Medical Research Council (NHMRC), released a report which formulated a clearly negative evaluation of Homeopathy. As in the previous case, the judgment was only based on 5 studies (out of 176 studies selected originally), all of which had a negative outcome (NHMRC 2015³⁹). Following in-depth investigations, the NHRMC was reported to the Commonwealth Ombudsman for fraud: after 4 years, in August 2019 it was forced to exhume a previous report, started in 2012, the existence of which it had always denied and which it had abruptly suspended, as it was favorable to Homeopathy (HRI 2019)⁴⁰.

Much more numerous are the systematic reviews that have been carried out: over 70, most of which were in favor of Homeopathy. Some examples:

A review of 93 pragmatic RCTs (Mathie 2003⁴¹) found positive results for homeopathic medicine for 8 out of 35 medical conditions examined: infantile diarrhea, fibromatosis, hay fever, flu, pain (various types), chemo side effects and radiation therapy, sprains and upper respiratory tract infections.

- A review of 5 RCTs presented statistically significant results in subjects with stage III AIDS, and specific benefits on physical, immunological, neurological, metabolic and quality of life conditions, including an

improvement in lymphocyte count and a viral load reduction in patients who received homeopathic treatment (Ullman 2003⁴²).

- A review on the efficacy, cost-benefit and safety of Homeopathy, conducted with HTA⁴³ technology on behalf of the Swiss Federal Office of Health. The results were positive for Homeopathy in 29 studies on allergies and infections of the upper respiratory system. 20 out of 22 systematic reviews identified at least one end point in favor of Homeopathy.

During an in-depth review of the literature on clinical trials in Homeopathy, the London Faculty of Homeopathy identified 204 RCTs published in peer-reviewed journals from 1950 to 2014 (Mathie 2014). From this group, it was possible to extrapolate 104 RCTs vs. placebo for 61 different clinical conditions. 22 of these had been replicated.

All of these studies reached the highest level of evidence (Ia):

- 43 RCTs with positive results
- 5 with a negative outcome
- 56 with an inconclusive outcome

As of June 2021, the well-known scientific studies database PubMed contained 6,123 entries under the heading "Homeopathy" (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>).

Furthermore, with the advent of EBM culture, the production of qualitative/quantitative research with relation to Homeopathic Medicine has grown significantly: just consider that during the 1990-2000 decade alone, over 1,800 articles were published in PubMed.

The following, more specialized scientific sites are also available:

Homeopathy Database, launched in May 2018 by F.I.A.M.O. (Italian Federation of Homeopathic Associations and Doctors) <https://database.fiamo.org>⁴⁴

L.M.H.I. (Liga Medicorum Homeopathica Internationalis)⁴⁵

H.R.I. (Homeopathy Research Institute)⁴⁶

G.I.R.I. (Groupe International de Recherche sur l'Infinitesimal)⁴⁷

International Journal of High Dilution Research⁴⁸

Compendium of Abstract of Studies on Extracts, Homeopathy and High dilutions⁴⁹

Prof. Paolo Bellavite's website - University of Verona⁵⁰

WissHom (Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Homöopathie)⁵¹

Within basic research, as regards the physical and chemical properties of the water in which homeopathic medicines are diluted, a significant amount of instrumental evidence was collected that differentiates such water from so-called "fresh water". A growing number of research results on the physio-chemical properties of homeopathic medicines suggest that information is present, even though researchers are still studying the details of the mechanism of action.

A recent systematic review examined physical and chemical studies published from 2003 to 2018 (Tournier 2018⁵², 2019⁵³, 2021⁵⁴) and evaluated the results obtained in 11 experimental areas, including: NMR, spectroscopy, electrical impedance, analytical methods, etc. Studies conducted with the first 3 techniques provided the most promising results. Among these, it is worth mentioning a study conducted with NMR which showed that high dilutions have highly specific physico-chemical configurations of the original substances, mediated by fluctuations in the electromagnetic field (Van Wassenhoven, 2017⁵⁵). In light of the 183 publications evaluated and the results reported, the authors conclude there is evidence of specific physico-chemical features of homeopathic preparations that differentiate them from control substances (Tournier 2021⁵⁶). It is rather interesting to note that the studies produced in Italy and Germany have produced the highest level of scientific evidence (Ia).

The works cited cannot be considered completely exhaustive, but they are certainly not scarce, and the conventional scientific world could at least grant the benefit of the doubt as regards the efficacy of Homeopathy.

7.4 - Homeopathy only acts through a placebo effect

As for the alleged placebo effect of homeopathic treatments, the clinical application of Homeopathy to veterinary medicine has been stressed regularly since the mid-19th century. The effectiveness of these treatments is hard to question, but it is no coincidence that the latest hostile press campaigns also concern homeopathic veterinarians, obviously only on the basis of statistical and meta-analytical considerations, never empirical ones. The arguments put forth seem rather poor, for that matter: animals apparently heal due to their owners' loving care towards them ("caregiver effect = love effect") ... is this supposed to work even in the case of entire farms?!

More information in the Homeopathy Database of the F.I.A.M.O. website:

https://database.fiamo.org/?section=Veterinary#_1

We'd also like to point out that for some decades, a homeopathic discipline called "Agro-Homeopathy" –that is, Homeopathy applied to agriculture – has been developed in many countries within various Research Institutes, also in Italy, at the University of Bologna (Dep. of Agricultural Sciences - Plant Pathology Area - Prof. Lucietta Betti - Prof. Giovanni Dinelli).

Numerous studies, published on international scientific journals, have highlighted the morphological, biochemical and molecular effects of homeopathic preparations on plant models *in vitro* and *in planta*. The efficacy of these preparations, certainly not attributable to the placebo effect, has also been recently highlighted within the field. For this purpose, we suggest to browse the "Agro-Homeopathy" section of the F.I.A.M.O. Database, which contains 95 published and indexed studies as of today.

https://database.fiamo.org/?section=Agro-Homeopathy#_1

In Milan, as part of EXPO 2015, a homeopathic vegetable garden was created, with visible results for anyone wishing to see the action of Homeopathy on plants with their own eyes, instead of assessing it on the grounds of remote meta-analyses.

Agro-Homeopathy is therefore providing important evidence which contradicts the hypothesis that Homeopathy acts through the placebo effect.

7.5 - Media campaigns are presented every time as a "final" and unappealable sentence against Homeopathy

It should be noted that in scientific research, no assumption is ever final. Real scientific research never yields final results. Based on the premises outlined above, an attitude of permanent dismissal has no solid scientific or logical grounds.

Despite this, the whole logical framework of the media reports from the last 20 years is based on the only negative meta-analysis (Shang-Egger) and on the above-mentioned Australian report (which by the way has never been published on any biomedical journal, as it was not a scientific study but a mere report). As rightly pointed out by prof. Robert Hahn, head of anesthesiology and Director of the Clinical Research Department of the Karolinska Institut in Stockholm: "To conclude that Homeopathy lacks any clinical effects, it was necessary to ignore more than 90% of all available studies." Based on these facts, how can we expect to erase from history more than two centuries of Homeopathy? And what about the work of hundreds of thousands of doctors, the healing of millions of humans and animals and the numerous favorable scientific studies?

The incidents of scientific falsifications and the related media campaign against Homeopathy were recently exposed in an extensive and flawless manner by Dr. Ciro D'Arpa in *Homeophobia - Analysis of documents that state that Homeopathy is only placebo*, Nuova Ipsa Editore - Palermo 2019.

The alleged final sentences that are issued regularly are clamorously at odds with the arguments proposed by the most authoritative exponents of modern medical science and epistemology, such as:

- Claude Bernard: "A fact can invalidate a theory, but a theory cannot deny a fact";
- Karl Popper: "It is irrational for scientists to support [or challenge, we'll add] a theory in spite of nature's 'objections' ";
- Paul Feyerabend: "The condition of consistency, which requires that new hypotheses are in line with accepted theories, is unreasonable, as it preserves the earlier theory, not the best one";
- Thomas Kuhn: "Science evolves only by continually overcoming the prevailing, traditional epistemological paradigms managed by conventional science, through scientific revolutions; the criterion based on which a paradigm is victorious over the others consists in its persuasive power and in the degree of consensus about it within the scientific community".

The verification of a hypothesis in the domain of reality always prevails over theories, albeit predominant and conventional.

- Imre Lakatos affirms that the history of natural sciences shows that many paradigms coexisted in a conflictual way for long periods of time without any of them becoming conventional science. This last assumption seems to be partially apt to describe the position of Homeopathy with respect to conventional medical science: Homeopathy is in fact a non-conventional medicine, born and developed for over two centuries in parallel with and outside the boundaries of official medicine, always opposed, but never extinguished, indeed embarked on a process of active and continuous evolution.
- Giuliano Preparata accurately defined the qualities of the scientist: "When the real scientist observes an actual fact and does not believe it, that means he does not have the tools to understand how it takes place; and instead of making a mockery of the observed fact, the real, curious scientist should strive to figure out what's missing in the conventionally accepted view so as to be able to bring the observed phenomena, once they have been reproduced without any doubts, into the realm of scientific rationality".

In our opinion, each of the two paradigms – the conventional one and the homeopathic one – has within itself a respective intrinsic validity that can be ascertained in the field of reality, and they should not be considered at all as alternative or competitive, but as equally respectable, parallel and certainly integratable, in science and conscience, within the clinical practice of the competent doctor.

8.0 – HYPOTHESIS ON THE LARGE-SCALE USE OF CLASSICAL HOMEOPATHY

We can now formulate a heuristic hypothesis by envisaging a socio-political situation in which classical Homeopathy may be used to the best of its possibilities.

Homeopathy, as already expressed above, has as its main goal to cure the individual patient as a specific individual in order to heal them, and it has no harmful side effects.

The doctor who is also a homeopath, in science and conscience, uses all the therapeutic means available to them, conventional or unconventional, exclusively for the patient, in a context based on integrated medicine.

The ideal position for the homeopathic doctor, if they were integrated into the conventional socio- sanitary fabric, would probably be first and foremost the role of a first filter in the transition phase between the state of health and the appearance of the first ailments of a patient.

In fact, especially in the initial pathological forms – which may not yet be identifiable as specific codified diseases – the concept of a "terrain", a "constitution", and the possibility of identifying a medicine based on visible symptoms, including merely functional ones, can enable the homeopathic doctor to quickly restore the patient to a state of health without making them slide towards illness.

Classical individualized homeopathic therapy could therefore be the first-choice therapy in many pathological situations – obviously without excluding conventional therapies a priori, especially in acute and/or severe conditions – or it could be suitable for combined therapies. The first therapeutic attempt should therefore be to stimulate the body's natural defenses, reserving conventional therapies for cases of insufficient reactivity on the part of the patient.

These therapeutic strategies cannot be the subject of precise protocols, and only a doctor trained in both disciplines can responsibly manage the various clinical events.

Pediatricians and general practitioners could also be trained in Homeopathy, or be assisted by homeopaths. This way, for many diseases, a decrease in the use of drugs could be achieved as well as a decrease in the chronicizing tendency of diseases.

The homeopathic doctor could obviously also have an important role in a specialist or hospital environment, not only as a specialist doctor per se or a ward doctor, but also above all as a personal, family homeopathic doctor who has known the patient for quite some time and who may also collaborate in treating serious diseases diagnosed by a specialist, or be called in to consult in the event of hospitalization.

Homeopathic medical journals from the 19th and 20th century and reliable historical data show us that Homeopathy was used in the past, in times when conventional medicine did not yet have valid therapeutic means, for very serious diseases, such as in the cholera outbreaks which hit Italy in the mid-19th century (statistics on 6,307 patients from that

time: 7.26% mortality rate among patients treated with Homeopathy, vs. 50-70% mortality rate for untreated patients) and in the Spanish flu which, from 1918 onwards, caused more deaths than the First World War (2.1-5% mortality rate for patients treated with Homeopathy vs. 40-60% mortality rate for untreated patients).

The homeopathic doctor can also play an important role in geriatrics, to lighten – as much as possible – the chemical-pharmacological load which is essential nowadays for the survival of the elderly.

An increased use of homeopathic therapy could also curb the phenomenon of antibiotic resistance, which has risen over time due to the excessive and indiscriminate use of antibiotics.

Another useful application of Homeopathy is the treatment of the side effects of conventional drugs which are the only options available for the treatment of serious diseases (antineoplastic drugs, etc.).

Finally, even non-homeopathic doctors could still resort, for mild and limited functional and/or acute syndromes, to prescribing homeopathic medicine complexes, whose prescriptions are based on the simple, not individualized disease of the patient (e.g. cough syrup, etc.).

The search for new homeopathic medicines, as stated above, would entail negligible costs and be risk-free. Conventional toxicology itself, using the law of Similars and the inversion of the toxic chemical effect in homeopathic therapy, could suggest many active ingredients that are unusable as conventional ponderal therapies because they are too toxic, but could indeed be used easily for homeopathic infinitesimal therapy, without any side effects. Medicines would have low production costs, could not be patented and would be immediately usable in clinical settings.

All this would make it possible to reduce hospitalizations and conventional therapies and, as stressed above, to save on healthcare expenses.

In 2016, the German government projected a collapse of the social welfare system within 20 years due to the growth in the number of the elderly relative to young people and the related increase in chronic diseases. Homeopathy could be very effective in helping to solve the problem.

Finally, the large-scale use of Homeopathy would also allow for a significant reduction of environmental pollution, due to industrial pharmaceutical production and to the metabolites excreted by patients into the environment.

9.0 – THE CONSENSUS ON HOMEOPATHY – THE FUTURE OF HOMEOPATHY – UNITARY MEDICINE

Beyond the heavy and repeated attacks to which it is subjected, and in the total absence of any media support, Homeopathy is growing for one reason only: because it works. Patients are referred to homeopathic doctors by acquaintances, friends and relatives who have been happy with homeopathic treatments.

Several non-homeopathic physicians also use homeopathic therapies for themselves, their families and several of their patients.

Several conventional doctors and veterinarians, dissatisfied with conventional therapeutic protocols, get professional training in Homeopathy.

Patients who treat themselves homeopathically say they are outraged by the discredit campaign against Homeopathy, the validity of which they witness firsthand every day.

It is therefore desirable to evolve towards an integrated, Unitary Medicine, including conventional medicine, Homeopathy and other traditional and complementary medicines, in which the competent doctor, in science and conscience, will use the best treatments in the exclusive interest of the patient, as also recommended in recent decades, in numerous documents, by the World Health Organization and synthetically advocated in 2014 by previous Director General Margaret Chan, so that every patient may receive the right therapy, from the right therapist, at the right time.

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