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**Homeopathy Works: The Why and the How**

**by**

Robert Tondo

Under the supervision of: Hal Hultman

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Enter into the world of homeopathy; a place where the philosophy will bend one's mind and where medicine can achieve in one, true healing. In this world you will also encounter a rich up-and-down history of controversy and attacks that continue till this day and are fueling bigger and exciting issues - issues that penetrate deep into the laws of the scientific community. If out of this storm of controversy, homeopathy emerges the victor, then certain laws of science we hold dear will be changed forever and medicine will enter a new phase in its long history.

Homeopathy is a holistic form of healing that, compared to other holistic medicines around the world, appeared on the medical scene quite recently. Holistic medicine emphasizes the whole as greater than the sum of its parts, meaning the entire body should be looked at as one instead of looking only at one's bad heart or depressed mental state. The term holistic medicine has been used liberally as "a gigantic catch-all for alternative methods: liberal psychotherapists and doctors, chiropractors, nutritionists, acupuncturists, homeopaths, and many others" (Manning 242). While all of these forms of medicine have a holistic approach, "traditional Chinese medicine and homeopathy are two fine examples of holistic medicine" (Manning 243).

Homeopathy operates on the principle that one's life energy maintains one's health. When this life force becomes unbalanced, homeopathy tries to correct this balance and return the body to homeostasis.

The founder of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann (1775-1843) started his career as an allopathic doctor. He soon divorced himself from this form of medicine because he saw that his

practices, notably blood letting, purging, leeches, and metal ingestion, caused more harm than help to his patients. In fact, homeopathic physician and author Dana Ullman writes that “There is a general agreement among medical historians today that orthodox medicine of the 1700s and 1800s frequently caused more harm than good” (35). Having a large knowledge base in languages (“by the time he was 24, Hahnemann could read and write in seven languages”) (Ullman 34), he started translating books, and from this occupation emerged the first sparks of homeopathy.

For millennia, people have known of the Law of Similars - that “like cures like.” In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, Hippocrates, often credited as the founder of Western Medicine, observed this principle. Hahnemann noticed this law emerging in the works he translated; specifically in a book by physician William Cullen who claimed Peruvian bark (cinchona) was effective in treating malaria. Not agreeing with Cullen that the cinchona’s effectiveness was due to its bitterness, Hahnemann concluded that its effectiveness was due to the fact the cinchona caused malarial symptoms in himself when he took it. From this inference, Hahnemann deduced the Law of Similars - like cures like - “that substances that produce a certain set of symptoms in a healthy person can cure those same symptoms in someone who is sick” (Park par2). The cinchona that caused malaria symptoms in a healthy person can cure someone who really has malaria. It is upon this basic 2400 year old principle that homeopathy is built.

The very name homeopathy, is also built on this law. It comes from the Greek *homoios* meaning “similar” and *pathos* meaning “suffering.” In contrast, the name for Western medicine, allopathy, which Hahnemann also coined, *allo* means “different from.” This is logical since in allopathy, “Drugs are prescribed which produce effects that differ from those of the disease itself” (Manning 66).

The ideology of Western or allopathic medicine is based on the Scientific Revolution and a mechanical model of the universe (as opposed to a spiritual or transcendental). Currently, this ideology is beginning to experience change. For instance, Paul M. Insel and Walton T. Roth

explain in their book, Core Concepts of Health, an expanded view of health which concerns “optimal health and vitality, encompassing physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, interpersonal, social, and environmental well-being”. However, for the most part, allopathic medicine still focuses on each of these areas specifically without looking at the big picture.

From the start, Hahnemann and his fellow allopathic doctors were in tension, since from the beginning Hahnemann was the one who broke away from allopathy. The tension was to be expected, because as is only common with competitors, both were fighting for patients. The differences between homeopathy and allopathy fuel for controversies that are still burning to this day. A physician from a 1903 American Medical Association (AMA) meeting said “ ‘We must,’ he said, ‘admit that we never fought the homeopath on matters of principle; we fought him [the homeopath] because he came into the community and got the business’ ” (Ullman 37). The AMA, a formal American institution of allopathic medicine with the original goal of slowing the development of homeopathy, formed in 1846, two years after the American Institute of Homeopathy formed. “The AMA did everything possible to thwart the education of homeopaths” (Ullman 39), and they were extremely successful, especially in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1900, there were twenty-two homeopathic schools in the United States but by 1923 there were only two.

Today, homeopathy is experiencing a resurgence in the United States. Dana Ullman in Discovering Homeopathy writes:

“It is inevitable that interest in homeopathic medicine will grow in significant ways during the coming years. Its growth will probably outstrip the number of health professionals who presently practice homeopathy or who can get adequate training to use the medicines in a competent way”.

Only time will tell what will really happen in the medical field. If homeopathy emerges strong from its current controversies with allopathy and science, then we will see it as a major force in healing. If it falters, it may fall by the wayside as an alternative medicine; albeit one that works but is not widely accepted.

Currently, the major controversy concerns matters of principle, more than money. This is a big change from the past when the main issue was money. The first part of the quote at the 1903 AMA meeting stated earlier read, “we never fought the homeopath on matters of principle”. Today the attacks on homeopathy concern matters of principle, and the question asked by many is, “does homeopathy work or is it just a placebo?” and, “if it does work, why?” These questions seem very logical considering the two fundamental principles of homeopathy; the Law of Similars previously mentioned and the Law of Infinitesimal Doses, which says that a remedy becomes more powerful the more it is diluted.

This second fundamental principle, which Hahnemann discusses in his book the Organon, is the law of homeopathy most subject to controversy and disbelief. Indeed, at first sight, this principle seems outrageous. Why would a remedy become more powerful the more it is diluted? When looking at the extent to which these remedies are diluted, one can not help thinking that the less-is-more theory has been taken to an extreme. For instance, a common remedy dose, 30X, is one part remedy to 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 parts solvent ( $10^{30}$ ). Even more astounding is the dose 200C which is “one molecule of the active substance to every one hundred to the two hundredth power molecules of solvent, or 1 followed by 400 zeroes” (Park par9). Robert L. Park, the author of this last quote, writes for the Skeptical Inquirer and comments further that “the total number of atoms in the entire universe is estimated to be about one googol, which is one followed by a mere one hundred zeroes” (par9). These dilutions do not even come close to the dilution of more powerful doses such as 1M and 10M.

How did the Law of Infinitesimal Doses originate? What made Hahnemann dilute his remedies? One answer is that these remedies, in the pure form called “mother tincture,” have bad side effects. Hahnemann noted that when diluted, they cured without causing harm. Its obvious that Hahnemann diluted them because of their bad side effects and he acknowledged that the remedies became more powerful the more they were diluted. The question still remains as to

why he diluted them in the first place. The answer might again be found with Hippocrates and the origin of the Law of Infinitesimals., Manning writes in Bioenergetic Medicine East and West: Acupuncture and Homeopathy, that Hippocrates emphasized the reliance of “gentle methods before relying on heroic measures” and “that the physician is the servant of nature, and that he must use as little intervention as possible in restoring health” (241). The Law of Infinitesimals meets these requirements because it is gentle and not shocking to the body, and it works with nature. Perhaps Hippocrates’ words sparked in Hahnemann the idea of dilutions. Whatever brought about his discovery, that homeopathic remedies are more powerful the more they are diluted, more questions remain. Why do infinitesimal doses work? Why does a homeopathic remedy become more powerful the more it is diluted?

There are many skeptics to the Law of Infinitesimal Doses; some denying it on the basis of logic and other using physics to debunk it. One homeopathic antagonist, Dr. Timothy Gorski, M.D., jokes of the law, “I drank a homeopathic remedy. I urinated and flushed. Soon the remedy will spread throughout the world, becoming even more powerful as it becomes diluted” (Lee par15). This quote, capable of arousing a chuckle, underscores the widespread ignorance of homeopathy. Dilutions are carried out in extremely pure conditions. One of the leading homeopathic laboratories, Boiron, prepares the remedies in a controlled atmosphere with air purified to the highest defined standards. This purity is important because pollution in the common air can exist at concentrations greater than that of the concentration of the medicinal substance in the homeopathic remedies.

Another extremely important and less well known step in the process of preparing the remedies is called succussion, which is the shaking of the remedies. In this process of succussing, the remedy is “potentized,” in which, according to Manning, kinetic energy is added to the mixture, “thus releasing the therapeutic essence of the plant”.

Hahnemann writes that “it is the invisible energy of the crude substance released and freed to the highest possible extent.... Upon contact with living tissue, this medicinal force acts

dynamically on the whole organism in a specific way,... and it does so more and more powerfully as it becomes freer and less material through progressive dynamization”.

Hahnemann recognized the power that seemed to be awakened when the remedies were prepared with succussion. From observing natural phenomena such as the magnetization of a steel rod, he wondered if living substances could also be potentized. He potentized natural substances through this special process of making homeopathic remedies. Manning, in our present day, also recognizes this phenomena in much the same way that Hahnemann did. But he also gives more credit to the power of water as Hahnemann did but in an additional way. Hahnemann primarily thought of the water as an aid in preparation of the remedies. In paragraph 269 of the Organon he writes, “The nonmedicinal dilutant is only an *auxiliary, though indispensable, factor.*” Manning, on the other hand, presents theories that give a larger role to water. “All the life processes of the body,” he says, “depend on water”.

When one observes a glass of water, no pattern is seen. Unlike the structured pattern of crystals or a snowflake, the molecules of liquid water appear to be in disarray. Various scientists have theorized that water in homeopathic remedies has a structure. Two researchers in homeopathy, Barnard and Stephenson, propose that “possibly the action of dilution and succussion [potentization] induces an electromagnetic patterning of the water”. The original mother tincture, now potentized, releases “a preatomic dynamic patterning into the water”. The solute water now has a bioenergetic pattern that can influence the bioenergy of living things.

Bioenergy has been known of for millenia, but only recently has interest in it become strong in the West. In the Chinese system, the study of bioenergy has been developed to a sophisticated practice. One such practice is Qi Gong, which is centered around “Qi” or “vital force.” This energy can be thought of like the Force from Star Wars. Jedis were beings who had learned to use the Force. Like the Jedis, we today are learning how to manipulate this energy.

Hahnemann recognized this manipulation of bioenergy and even recognized certain individuals with special abilities, like the Jedi, who could manipulate it. Hahnemann calls the energy

“mesmerism” and writes that “ a well-intentioned man exerts his strong will over a patient with or without touching him, or even at some distance, in such a way that the vital force of the mesmerizer gifted with this power dynamically flows into the patient”. In an almost complete parallel, Dr. David Eisenberg who has studied Chinese medicine in China, writes that “Traditional Chinese medicine asserts that Qi Gong masters can emit Qi at will and use this energy as a treatment for common illnesses”. How amazing and awesome it seems that two medical systems on almost opposite sides of the world observed the same phenomenon! Though, it should not be too amazing since this energy has been with us since the dawn of life. It is only in our recent history that we have noticed and learned to manipulate it. What should surely spark the interest of readers, especially those who have dreamed of being Jedis, is the real possibility that we can harness this Force, this Qi, this vital energy, this bioenergy.

Hahnemann also noticed the controversy surrounding this power. There are many who would call it witchcraft or devilry. He says that, “this healing force, which has been frequently foolishly denied or reviled for a whole century, is a marvelous, priceless gift of God to man”. Today, many people would think their doctor a quack if he talked about bioenergy or mesmerism. Our world will need to undergo a paradigm shift in order to accept and utilize this relatively unknown energy. We are now on the path to this shift. Just as it took over a thousand years before the world believed Ptolemy’s assertion that the earth is round, it may take us a long time to accept bioenergy.

Consequently, since we have not made the paradigm shift, pro-homeopathy scientists are working to prove the principles of homeopathy and bioenergy through accepted scientific procedures. By proving the unaccepted using the accepted, science can help convince the scientific community.

The unaccepted being talked about here is that homeopathic remedies can cure people because of their medicinal power. “Sure,” some doctors say, “homeopathy can operate on the placebo effect and cure people through the placebo’s power, but it is not possible to cure them

medicinally with water” - which virtually is what the diluted remedies. Now, homeopathic doctors and scientists know that homeopathy works, and that the effect they see in their patients is more than a placebo. There have been many double-blind studies which prove homeopathy’s efficacy. What is still lacking is knowledge of how the remedies work.

One scientist, French biologist Dr. Jacques Benveniste in the 1980s, achieved extraordinary results in his experiments linked to homeopathy; albeit ones that “cost him his laboratories, his funding and ultimately his international scientific credibility”. He explained that homeopathy works because water has a memory; therefore giving it the ability to remember substances dissolved in it. This idea seemed preposterous to many scientists. One such scientist in the late 1990s, by the name of Professor Madeleine Ennis of Queen’s University Belfast, set out to prove Benveniste wrong. In a shocking set of results, she found that Benveniste might be right. What had been considered scientific heresy, she showed could be possible. If Benveniste and Ennis are correct, “the consequences for science could be earth shattering, requiring a complete reevaluation of how we understand the workings of chemistry, biochemistry, and pharmacology”. If they are right, their results will be hard to swallow for many. The fact that these remedies, whose medicinal substance has been diluted virtually out of existence, could cause healing, is an affront to the above mentioned sciences. We are seeing right now the same type of resistance Galileo felt when he made public his seemingly preposterous yet true convictions.

In their constant search for the truth, two other scientists Paolo Bellavite, MD and Andrea Signorini, MD, are researching the homeopathic phenomena. In their book, Homeopathy: A Frontier in Medical Science, they start with the premises that homeopathy works. They hypothesize that how homeopathy works will soon be discovered, and write that “the progress of biomedical research, on the one hand, and the evolution of homeopathy, on the other, are leading to an increasing degree of convergence of the two systems”. In the book, they describe the main tenet of this convergence - specifically ultramolecular dilutions as they relate to water. By researching the properties of water, they hope to describe why homeopathy works.

As said before, the homeopathic remedies are mostly water and in most cases devoid of medicinal substances. Knowing this, water must have intrinsic properties that enable homeopathy's effectiveness. Water is only two hydrogen atoms and an oxygen atom joined in a 104.5 degree angle and existing in one of three states: solid, liquid, and gas. Using only these facts, homeopathy can not be explained with water.

But, think deeper than these true yet simple facts about water. Many would think that water does not have other properties or a "mystery" about it. Remember, water is practically the only compound in which the solid state is lighter than the liquid one. Water is more detailed than previously thought. In fact, Bellavite and Signorini write that, "No anywhere near precise descriptions of the laws governing the arrangement of water molecules and thus of the phase changes of water has yet been produced". Now, if water has undiscovered properties, one can not easily say that for homeopathy to work it needs to break known laws of science. Perhaps it is ruled by laws that have yet to be discovered.

What are these new advances in the study of water and how can they help the pro-homeopathic scientists? One topic under investigation is vicinal water, defined as "water which is near to solid surfaces or macromolecules and is influenced by these". When a macromolecule is put in water, the structure of the water in the vicinity will change according to the properties of the molecule. These changes can extend from 5 to 200 molecular diameters from the macromolecule. Therefore, when talking about water and the effects a substance has on it, one must remember that the effect of vicinal water extends a far distance on the molecular level - a level where distances are quite hard to conceptualize.

After talking about vicinal water, Bellavite and Signorini discuss superradiance. Superradiance is a much too detailed and scientifically worded topic for discussion here. Summarized, though, it basically means that when water molecules (which are electric dipoles) interact through their electromagnetic field, the molecules move in an orderly way.

Bellavite and Signorini enter into much detail on other topics concerning water and homeopathy as it relates to physics and chemistry. Vicinal water and superradiance are two of many. One proposed topics concern the memory of water. If water can take on properties or become orderly, can it remember these properties or this order for a long period of time? The answer is yes. When water is treated to achieve the electromagnetic radiation phenomena known as superradiance, the superradiance “property persisted for months”.

Unfortunately, at this time, the question of why homeopathy works has not been answered. There are many theories as to how it works, such as Manning’s explanation of bioenergy and Bellavite, Signorini, and Benveniste’s position that water can have a memory. Hopefully, in the future the answers to our questions will be discovered, but when we answer them, will the world accept it? Our society is likely on the brink of a revolution in medicine and science. Could the answer to the current health industry crisis in our country be relatively simple? Homeopathic medicine costs a tiny fraction of today’s common prescription drugs. They have no side effects, strengthen our immune system, and will reduce our dependence on the health system. Impossible? That is what they said to Galileo.

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