

What is homeopathy

Homeopathy is a 200 year old medical discipline based on the principle that like cures like. The medication used in treatment is chosen based on this principle by using the substance in very small doses that would cause the same symptoms in higher doses in a healthy person. This phenomenon has been observed since the time of Hypocrites but Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician practicing in the late 1700's, was the first to put it to extensive clinical trial and use. He and his colleagues tested 100's of different substances for their effects on healthy people. These were meticulously run double blind studies of each substance, called "provings". He used these provings as his basis for applying the first principle of like cures like.

Provings for new medicines are still being done today. Some of the old provings have been replicated with remarkable reproducibility. Using the information from these provings large data bases of symptoms and substances that have caused them have been compiled and these are called "repertories". A second set of data bases has also been compiled with detailed descriptions of the results of each of the provings and these are called "material medicas". Using these references we can find the medicine that most closely fits the symptom picture of the patient.

Over time Hahnemann slowly lowered the dose of medicine he was using and, surprisingly, found that lower doses worked as well as the higher doses without the side effects. He used a carefully controlled system of dilution followed by succussion to lower the doses. Over time, he found that very small doses of medicine would trigger a response when the symptom picture of the patient matched the symptom picture for that substance. This was the evolution of the minimum doses we use in homeopathic medicine today.

Included in this package is a very thorough clinical review article published in the British Medical Journal in 1999 that gives an expanded introduction to homeopathy as used in practice.

Use of Homeopathy in Animals

Homeopathy has been used in farm and companion animals almost as long as it has been used to treat humans. There are several good publications by respected veterinarians outlining the use of homeopathy in acute and chronic conditions in several different animal species. In Asia and India homeopathy is routinely used to treat elephants.

The practical advantages of this medicine in an animal as large as an elephant are obvious. First, administering the dose is accomplished by squirting a small volume (usually between 1 and 20 CC) into the trunk of the animal. The solution has the same affect as water on the mucous membranes of the trunk, so there is

no irritation to the trunk lining or reaction from the elephant. Since only very small doses are needed and only one medicine is used at a time, the medication is inexpensive. Homeopathic medicines are readily available through FDA approved pharmacies nationwide.

Applying Homeopathy to Chronic Conditions:

Homeopathy is applied to animals using the same basic principles as in human therapy. The homeopath takes a thorough history, and all of details of the current condition. This includes all medical records, diagnostic tests, and responses to previous therapies. We also use information about the animal's behaviors and preferences to complete the picture.

Expected response to treatment:

Homeopathy is not limited to the treatment of any particular type of disease or body system. It can be used to treat any problem from behavior all the way to serious pathological conditions like cancer. The success of the therapy depends on several factors. The main limitation is whether the body can heal itself from its present condition. In advanced chronic problems where there are marked pathological changes in the tissues there is usually only be limited repair of the tissue, but good palliation of pain and improved overall condition is still possible. Acute problems like injuries, foreign body abscesses, and post surgical complications respond very quickly to the right remedy. The longer a condition has been present the longer treatment takes. Although it takes time, homeopathy has shown encouraging results when used in long term inflammatory conditions. Chronic abscesses, chronic laminitis, asthma, inflammatory bowel disease, chronic dermatitis and chronic inflammatory arthritis are some examples of diseases homeopathy has successfully treated. It is worth considering when conventional options offer only palliative therapies. It is not a miracle medicine. In these long standing and immune system based problems it can take months or years to resolve.

The other challenge is finding the right medicine for the animal being treated. This requires a very thorough history as well as careful observation by the keepers of all of the behaviors and responses of the animal in its day to day life. It often takes several tries before a good response is seen to a remedy.

Treatment of Elephant Foot Problems with Homeopathy:

This is a very new and yet untested area of treatment. Conventional treatment for this condition often helps with pain and infection, bringing temporary relief of symptoms, but the degenerative changes continue to progress over time. Our very early experiences with homeopathy have been encouraging in 2 elephants in that they are doing as well as conventionally treated animals and are showing early overall improvement. With a long and progressive problem like this it will

take time to amass enough data to say irrevocably whether homeopathy can slow or stop the progress of this problem. Certainly, it is no substitute for good foot care, nutrition and hygiene but it may address the inflammatory and progressive nature of the problem more effectively than good management alone.

What does treatment look like:

In homeopathic treatment we are using the medicine to trigger a healing response by the body. The body has a complex and effective self healing mechanism, as can be seen when healing from an injury. A combination of the right homeopathic medicine, good nutrition and a healthy life style can trigger a similar healing response to chronic problems. The medicine is given and then the response over a period of time is observed for signs of healing. Sometimes there can be an aggravation of symptoms before the improvement starts. This is generally a good sign that the body is recruiting the necessary inflammatory components to the area that needs work. The medicine is only given as needed to keep the healing response active. We use regular follow up appointments that are paced as needed from a few days to several weeks apart. We assess the animal's response to treatment by evaluating changes in attitude, appetite, stools, thirst, the condition of the chief complaint as well as the interactions they are having with keepers and other animals.

The Scientific Basis for Homeopathy:

Clinical research into the response to homeopathy has been conducted since its beginnings. Hahnemann kept extensive record of his patients, their diagnoses and their progress during treatment. Double blind research is less common and one of the challenges of this kind of research is inherent in the way homeopathy is applied. In conventional medicine, patients are generally grouped according to their diagnosis and treated with the same or similar medications or therapies. In homeopathy, the conventional diagnosis is only one symptom and the treatment is based on all of the symptoms of the patient. In other words, the same diagnosis is very unlikely to call for the same treatment. In most research of this type the variable of interest is kept the same and compared to placebo, while in homeopathy, each patient would most likely get a different homeopathic medicine in different strengths and for different times depending on their symptom picture. This is an important fact to realize since often research done with homeopathy is invalid because the medicines are applied using only the symptoms of the chief complaint as indicators for which remedy to use. This is not homeopathy. In order for homeopathy to be effective over the long term course of treatment the medicines must be prescribed according to the totality of the patient's picture. In a 10 patient group it would be rare for even 2 patients to be given the same remedy. Results will also have to be measured over a much broader scale. On the time scale, in chronic conditions it can take months to years to see the full extent of the response. On the measurable symptom change

scale, every patient responds according to their individual patterns. Homeopathy is not directly affecting the symptoms and the range of positive response is as wide as the range of possible remedies. The existing scientific model for double blind randomized research is not the best model to objectively investigate the homeopathic response. New models are being developed that will help to quantify and qualify homeopathic treatments in a more objective and valid way. One proposed model is included in packet.

In spite of these intrinsic problems with research, there are valid studies in publication. A meta-analysis of carefully chosen, placebo controlled homeopathic trials does show a significant difference in homeopathically treated vs. placebo treated patients in the majority of the well run studies (The Lancet, Sept. 1997- included in packet)

To date the mechanism by which homeopathy triggers the healing response is unknown. It has been studied by physicists and physicians alike, again with mixed results. The theory of how ultra low doses can possibly affect the health of the patient falls in the realm of quantum physics. There are numerous publications in print on this subject. The most current theories revolve around the understanding that everything has a resonance or a vibration. A living body has a vibration that is the sum of all the substances in that body. When the vibration is pushed out of its natural resonance, symptoms occur. By using the substance that causes the same set of symptoms we have effectively chosen the vibration of the patient's system that is out of attunement. It is an understood principle in resonance physics that similar vibrations cancel each other out. We are just beginning to have equipment sensitive enough to measure resonance patterns of natural substances. This may finally allow us to measure the homeopathic effect. As with many useful discoveries, take fire for example, we notice a phenomenon, learn how to reproduce it and learn how to use it to great advantage long before we have the means or the intellect to understand the mechanism.

Included in this package:

There is a vast amount of information published about homeopathy since its formal beginning 200 years ago. I have attempted here to include some of this material that you may find useful without overwhelming you with 100's or 1000's of pages of information. If there is something that is not clear or that you would like to know more about, please ask!

Contents:

ABC of Complementary Medicine: Homeopathy by Vicker, Andrew (now practicing at the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City) and Zollman, Catherine (in general practice in London, England); British Medical Journal, Vol. 319; pp1115-1118

- This is a summary of Homeopathy written by medical practitioners for medical practitioners.

Are the clinical effects of homeopathy placebo effect? A meta-analysis of placebo controlled studies. Linde, Klaus; Clausius, Nicola; Ramirez, Gilbert; Melchart, Dieter; Eitel, Florian; Hedges, Larry; Jonas, Wayne. (this is a multinational group of medical doctors, researcher and statisticians); The Lancet; Vol 350; pp834-843.

- This meta-analysis retrospectively studies homeopathic research for statistically observable response.

Exploring the Concept of the Minimum Dose: Wildlife Rehabilitators Consider Homeopathy. Blackmer, Rachel; Facinelli, Janice; Casey, Shirley; Casey, Allen. (Facinelli and Blackmer are licensed veterinarians who have been using homeopathy in wild animal rehabilitation for several years, The Cases manage a reputable wild life rehab center, "Wild Again".)

- This article gives an overview of the wide range of application of homeopathy in wildlife gathered over years of experience.