

HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE

Introduction...

Homeopathy is a system of medicine that stimulates the body to heal itself. It does so by addressing imbalances in the body which can lead an individual to their diseased state. The word "homeopathy" itself was coined by the founder of Homeopathic Medicine, Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843)... a 17th century German medical doctor, chemist and medical translator. Homeopathy is derived from two Greek words: "homoios" which means *similar* and "pathos" which means *suffering*. So in a literal sense, homeopathy means *similar suffering*.

A Brief History...

Homeopathy has a very rich history stemming back to the 17th century when Samuel Hahnemann (in 1796) put into practice the notion that in the treatment of disease, one must consider the concept of *like curing like*. The idea of like curing like (also known as the Law of Similars) dates back over 5000 years to the ancient medical texts from both China and India. Hippocrates (the founder of modern medicine) and Paracelsus (a renowned medieval physician) also stated that in healing, one must consider like to cure like.

Hahnemann was at a point in his own medical practice where he was beginning to question the true therapeutic value of the traditional, harsh and often dangerous medical practices of his time, including *blood letting* to rid the body of disease from which he lost one of his own children.

He decided to leave his practice in search for a more humane type of medicine that he could better identify with. In the mean time, he decided to do translations of medical journals. He was very gifted in knowing 12 languages at that point in his life. In his work as a translator, he came across a journal written by a Scottish Doctor (Dr. William Cullen), describing the successful treatment of Malaria in Africa with Peruvian Bark (also known as Cinchona Bark or China Officinalis). It wasn't known at that point what actual therapeutic agent resided in this bark that might act in a curative manner to heal a patient suffering from Malaria. It is now known that the actual medicinal agent residing in the bark was *Quinine*. They only knew at that time that the bark was very bitter to the taste and that the bark had to be consumed over a period of time for its therapeutic effect, in terms of relieving someone of symptoms associated with Malaria, to occur.

Stemming from Hahnemann's own intense curiosity and the realization that there are many agents that are bitter to the taste that aren't necessarily going to cure someone of Malaria, he decided to investigate this phenomenon more closely. In his analysis, he came to realize that if he actually consumed this bark, he repeatedly began to develop symptoms to that of Malaria and when he stopped taking this bark, these same symptoms disappeared?! He had

other individuals try this bark in a like manner and they obtained similar results. Reflecting on what Hippocrates had said; more specifically that in the treatment of disease one must consider like to cure like, it became evident to him that what he was observing with this Peruvian Bark was exactly that! Peruvian Bark was acting as an *artificial disease*, in that when it was consumed, it elicited very specific symptoms (paralleling symptoms of Malaria) which then quickly subsided when he stopped consuming the bark. The very substance used in Africa to treat Malaria also gave healthy individuals similar symptoms, all be they temporary in nature. Hence the beginning of a new era in medicine (in Homeopathy), that based it's foundations of healing on this principle of like to cure like.

Hahnemann then focussed his attention on other substances, that if consumed either by accident or otherwise, elicited a unique and readily identifiable and definable *symptom picture*. Continuing with what he had already observed with Peruvian Bark and its use in the treatment of Malaria, he then began matching symptoms as elicited by patients, with remedies that were able to produce a similar symptom picture. Hahnemann discovered upwards of 100 natural remedies, mostly plant and mineral derivatives, over his life time. Now there are 2-3000 known homeopathic remedies, each with their own unique therapeutic effect!

Understanding Homeopathy...

In homeopathic terms, all *signs* (as noted in the patient by the physician) and all *symptoms* (as reported by the patient themselves) represent both the body out of balance and as well the body's attempt at cure.

For example: Someone sits down for a fish dinner and perhaps unknown to them the fish is some *tainted*. Shortly afterwards, the patient starts to feel feverish, nauseated with associated abdominal cramping leading to either vomiting and/or diarrhea. This *bad fish* has put the individual out of balance and their body is now responding to this imbalance by initiating it's own response (in terms of nausea, vomiting and /or diarrhea) to ride itself of this fish. Hence the individual's response to this occurrence speaks of two important things; first that the body is out of balance and secondly, how the body in it's own innate wisdom has decided to cleanse itself of this offending agent.

Realizing the two roles symptoms play in one's body, Hahnemann then recognized that the only true way to heal was to first acknowledge and understand in what specific way the body was out of balance (in terms of any and all signs and symptoms as elicited by the patient). Only then could he initiate healing by stimulating the body in a way *similar* to the way the body had already initiated healing.

Just as Hahnemann had observed that Peruvian Bark could both treat an individual suffering from Malaria and artificially induce symptoms of Malaria in healthy individuals, he then applied this discovery to patients and their various conditions. He thus honoured the body's own innate wisdom; first acknowledging that the body innately knows how to best heal itself and secondly, to only step in with the appropriate homeopathic remedy when necessary, to gently further what the body has already started in terms of healing.

Similar to someone who might initially look at a random series of dots on a page and fail to see any specific define picture or image, if they then carefully joins these dots together, a picture or image begins to then emerge. So too a homeopath who carefully observes any and all signs and symptoms as elicited by a patient, which on their own fail to define an imbalance in the body, but if they are carefully connected, the patient's true imbalance is then evident.

Since symptoms represent both the body out of balance and the body's attempt at cure, by introducing a homeopathic remedy that is capable of producing a similar symptom picture to what the patient themselves is enduring, the body's initial response to healing is then enhanced and further encouraged.

The **House With A Cracked Foundation** Analogy...

If someone stepped into a house, only to see that the doors and windows were askew, one might conclude that perhaps "something" has caused the foundation to shift (ex. an earthquake).

One option (as seen in traditional "western" or Allopathic medicine who's focus is to suppress symptoms) would be to use a wood sander and sand down the doors and windows and *make* them shut once again.

The homeopathic answer however would differ. A homeopath would go down to the basement and if possible realign the footings of the house and once again make the foundation level. When he once again returned to the main floor, the doors and windows would once again be able to close, without ever having to plain them down with a wood sander. The homeopath would recognize that there was nothing wrong with the doors or the windows; they were only signs of an imbalance somewhere else in the house.

So too when a homeopath sees a patient with numerous issues; these concerns (be they mental, emotional and/or physical issues) are seen to be symbolic of a fundamental imbalance that must be addressed before these overt signs are truly rectified. One can try and mask signs and symptoms (hence the world of suppressive medicine as seen in cough suppressants, antiperspirants etc.) but if the imbalance still remains, it will continue to further its presence in the individual, often resulting in a continued weakening of the person.

Homeopathy - A Case In Point...

A patient comes to a homeopath in search of a natural treatment for their *insomnia*. In the initial assessment it is determined that the cause to their insomnia is anxiety, in particular their tendency to worry. It is also determined that their eczema and their Irritable Bowel Syndrome also worsens in phases of acute worry and anxiety. One might then ascertain that the underlying issue (or causative factor) to all of their signs and symptoms lies in her propensity to worry.

Now if the homeopath were to administer a natural remedy to just help them sleep, without ever addressing the underlying issue relating to anxiety and worry that seems to be the precipitating cause, this patient might be back the following month to report that their sleep is perhaps a bit better, but that more importantly they now have a new symptom... an ulcer (for example).

At this point, it would be obvious in the true treatment of a patient homeopathically that this patient, even though they might be sleeping better, has not truly been healed at all! In fact, the imbalance that caused their initial set of symptoms (their propensity to worry) has now caused their imbalance to further itself, hence now the ulcer.

The true homeopathic approach to this case would be to first centre one's focus on resolving the patient's propensity to worry. With the appropriate homeopathic stimulus to ease their tendency to worry, all of their other related symptoms; including their insomnia, eczema, Irritable Bowel Syndrome and now their ulcer would resolve themselves.

Traditional "Western" (Allopathic) Medicine vs. Homeopathic Medicine

Traditional "western" medicine is a *symptom* based medicine. It's aim is to alleviate or suppress symptom(s), with the belief that if they can rid the patient of what ails them, that they have then healed them. Homeopathic medicine on the other hand is a *causative* based medicine. It's approach is to first address the cause to the patient's imbalance; thus allowing the symptoms to subside naturally as the body heals itself.

Sometimes the suppression of acute symptoms is necessary; as in with run away fevers, excessive swelling, strep throats, heart attacks etc. There are times when the body is clearly out of balance and unable to on its own regulate proper function. This is when you need to suppress the symptom(s) in order to survive! Traditional western medicine works wonderfully well to this end.

Where homeopathy tends to shine is in chronic health issues that are not healing on their own and more than just the suppression of symptoms is necessary for the body to truly heal. Coupled with this issue are often the lingering side-effects associated with many of the suppressive therapies associated with allopathic medicine.