

HOMEOPATHY AND ALLIED THERAPIES: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Homeopathy is the basis of several forms of therapies that emerged later on throughout Europe. Homeopathy and these related therapies form part of Europe's traditional medical history. Several physicians followed Hahnemann's principles and applied them to their forms of therapies. Such therapies include anthroposophic medicine, gemmotherapy, lithotherapy, organotherapy, Bach's floral remedies, Schüssler's tissue salts. However, in the multicultural and modern Europe, there is still a long way for the official recognition and harmonisation of products within the European Union Member States. Due to popularity of these remedies with EU citizens, the European centralised body and individual Member States medicines authorities are obliged to safeguard the general public through the assessment of safety and quality of these medicinal products.

KEY WORDS Hoemopathy, Anthroposophic medicine, Gemmotherapy, Lithotherapy, Organotherapy, Bach's Floral Remedies, Schüssler's Tissue Salts

INTRODUCTION

Following Dr Hahnemann's evaluation and establishment of homeopathic medicine as an alternative medicine, several other physicians and healthcare professionals applied the principles of homeopathy to different extents in order to develop other forms of therapies, according to their understanding of homeopathy. Homeopathy and allied therapies evolved mainly in Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Belgium. Some of these therapies are not considered as purely homeopathic by the different countries. Such therapies include antroposophic medicine, gemmotherapy, lithotherapy, organotherapy, Bach's floral remedies and Schüssler's tissue salt therapies. Table 1 represents the different forms of therapies, their originators, the period of establishment and traditional origins.

Table 1: The different forms of therapies, their originators, period of invention and traditional origins.

Therapy	Originator	Period of Establishment	Traditional origins
Homeopathy	Dr Samuel Hahnemann	1792	Germany
Anthroposophic medicine	Dr Rudolph Steiner, Ita Wegman	1921	Austria and Switzerland
Gemmotherapy	Dr Pol Henry, Max Téttau, O.A. Julian	Late 1950's	Belgium and France
Lithotherapy	Dr Max Téttau, Dr Claude Begeret	1970's	Belgium and France
Organotherapy	Dr Frederick Banting, Charles Best, Dr Hans-Heinrich Reckeweg	Mid 1950's	Belgium, France and Germany
Bach's Floral Remedies	Dr Edward Bach	1920-1930	England
Schüssler's Tissue Salts	Dr Wilhelm Schüssler	1873	Germany

ALLIED THERAPIES TO HOMEOPATHY

ANTHROPOSOPHIC MEDICINE

The term 'anthroposophy' is derived from two Greek words, 'anthropos' meaning man and 'sophia' meaning wisdom. Therefore anthroposophy deals with the holistic approach of an individual and towards the knowledge of the self.¹ This means that the patient is in a position to understand health problems with the help of anthroposophic doctors. Although anthroposophic medicine and therapies form an integral part of Europe's traditional medicine, this therapy utilises the vast information and rigorous methodology of allopathic medicine. Anthroposophic medicine is mentioned alongside allopathic and homeopathic medicinal products within Council Directive 2001/83/EC.² Anthroposophic medicines prepared by a homeopathic method are to be treated, with regards to registration and marketing authorisation, in the same way as homeopathic medicinal products. This form of therapy does not solely involve remedies derived from natural sources, but integrates other forms of therapies that affect the moral and psychological components of an ill individual alongside the medical condition. The holistic or integrated image of the whole human being give a better understanding of illness and health. Today, anthroposophic medicine and therapy are practised throughout the world, so much so that there are anthroposophic hospitals dealing with this form of therapy only. In this form of therapy, the human body is compared to a plant and the physiological changes that occur within a plant are transferred to the physiological behaviour of human beings. Commonly used preparations include *Iris germanica* root extract for lymphostasis and oedema, Belladonna herb extract as a spasmolytic and an anti-inflammatory, *Echinacea angustifolia* to strengthen the immune system, *Corallium rubrum* to stimulate haemopoiesis, Cinnabar powder to relieve chronic catarrh.¹

GEMMOTHERAPY

The term 'Gemmotherapy' is derived from the Greek, 'gemma' meaning bud. Remedies used in this type of therapy, are made from the embryonic material of plants. Such plant parts include buds, rootlets, young shoots and seeds. This therapy has been claimed to flush toxins from the body by stimulating the normal elimination pathways. This therapy uses low homeopathic dilutions (1X) of glycerine macerates. At these potencies, some physicians argue that gemmotherapeutic remedies cannot be considered as homeopathic remedies, since they are simply diluted by a factor of ten only. This type of therapy originated in Belgium and France^{3,4,5} and has been recognised as an official form of therapy within the French Pharmacopoeia (CPP, 1965).⁶ The plants' raw material is collected in spring (in the case of seeds in autumn). This form of therapy has been used successfully in the field of rheumatology. Three main remedies are used in the treatment of osteoarthritis. *Pinus Montana*, *Ribes nigrum* and *Vitis vinifera* maintain articular cartilage, reduce inflammation and reduce articular deformations respectively. Other remedies include *Corylus avellana* and *Rosmarinus officinalis* that enhance liver metabolism while *Ficus carica* reduces gastritis by normalising gastric juice secretion.

LITHOTHERAPY

The term 'Lithotherapy' is derived from the Latin, 'lithios meaning stone. It is the use of homeopathic preparations (usually as 8X dilutions) of mineral rocks. The main activity of the rocks is detoxification at the cellular level. These toxins are removed from binding sites hence optimising mineral balance. Although lithotherapy has been used constantly for ages, it has been formalised as a therapy during the late 1970's. The Greeks used marble powder to cure stomach problems or red jasper as a fortifier. In the Middle-Ages, the doctrine of signatures was applied to cure certain diseases. A typical example is the use of emerald in the case of liver disease, as this stone is green resembling bile.⁷ This therapy forms part of the French and Belgian homeopathic tradition. Typical remedies include hematite (iron III oxide) which is used for anaemia, sulphur for arthritis and bursitis, and rhodonite (a manganese inosilicate) used for neurological disorders, amongst others.⁸

ORGANOTHERAPY

The term 'Organotherapy' is derived from the Greek, 'organon' meaning organ. Organotherapeutic remedies are made from homeopathic preparations of healthy tissue of animal origin (bovine cattle, sheep or swine). These remedies, made more potent are used to regulate the function of organs and glands hence normalising their activity. Organotherapy forms part of the French, Belgian and German homeopathic tradition. One of the earliest experiments with organotherapy was with the thyroid in 1912. Children suffering from cretinism and myxoedema were treated with animal thyroid cells. Dramatic improvement was noticed following organotherapy.⁹ Later, in 1922, Frederick Banting and his graduate student Charles Best focused on the pancreas.¹⁰ Banting discovered a range of homeopathic remedies from swine tissues. The remedies are sometimes referred to as suis-preparations and the treatment as homeotoxicology.¹¹

BACH'S FLORAL REMEDIES

Dr Edward Bach was a British homeopath, who like his homeopathic predecessors, was dissatisfied with conventional medicine. Before Dr Bach started experimenting with floral remedies, he developed seven bacterial nosodes.¹² Later, he developed 38 floral remedies, each prepared from the flowers of wild plants, trees and bushes. Initially, he started to collect the dew drops from the surface of flower petals. Later he replaced this method of collection, by taking flower petals and allowing their extraction in 'sun-lit' spring water.¹³ The water obtained was then mixed with an equal volume of brandy to obtain the mother tincture. This was further diluted before use.¹⁴ Although these floral remedies are described in the British Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia (1999)¹⁵, other EU member states argue that these are not prepared according to the common homeopathic manufacturing method. Typical floral remedies include larch for lack of confidence, star of Bethlehem for shock, wild rose for apathy and impatiens for impatience amongst others.¹⁶

SCHÜSSLER'S TISSUE SALTS

Dr Schüssler was a German physician who discovered that when the human cell is reduced to ashes, it exhibits twelve salts.¹⁷ He believed that biochemical imbalances within cells may lead to serial conditions. Restoring salts within cells will reverse or improve the health condition. He called these 'the twelve tissue salts'. Cell salts may be derived from inorganic sources or plants. These are prepared in 6X and 12X homeopathic potencies. Schüssler's salts can be used concurrently with homeopathic medicines, particularly to treat indigestion, recurrent rhinitis and various other conditions. Another twelve salts were added by Schüssler's pupils^{18,19}. These salts are prepared in the form of tablets that can be dissolved either on the tongue or in a glass of warm water. Apart from the tablet form proposed by Schüssler for oral use, his pupils extended their use for topical applications, incorporating these salts into an ointment base. The tissue salts are considered as safe and do not pose any significant side effects. The twelve salts are considered as safe and do not pose any significant side effects. The twelve salts include calcium phosphate as the elasticity salt, calcium fluoride as the nutrition tonic, calcium sulphate as the blood purifier, iron phosphate as the first aid salt, magnesium phosphate as the nerve relaxant, sodium chloride as the water distributor, sodium phosphate as the acid neutraliser, sodium sulphate as the water eliminator, potassium chloride as the blood conditioner, potassium phosphate as the nerve nutrient, potassium sulphate as the skin salt and silica as the toxic eliminator.²⁰

EU DIRECTIVE 2001/83/EC AND HOMEOPATHIC AND ALLIED MEDICINAL PRODUCTS

Due to the fact that these medicinal products contain very low concentrations of active principles and clinical trials are limited, the European Commission has introduced a simplified registration system for these homeopathic medicinal products. However, under such registration system, these products should be placed on the market without medical claims and in dosage forms that do not present a risk to the patient that is orally or externally. Patients are safeguarded by rigorous assessment of quality and safety before the product is placed on the market. Within Council Directive 2001/83, homeopathic medicinal products should be in line with the directive for safety as for allopathic medicines, while they are exempted from proof of efficacy. Therefore, all medicinal products should be assessed and be categorised as either homeopathic medicines, herbal medicines (if derived from plants) or allopathic medicines.

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