

NCH Press Release [National Center for Homeopathy]

August 25, 2005

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Prominent U.S. Research Scientists Counter Lancet Claims On Homeopathy

Alexandria, VA.:

Prominent U.S. scientists today strongly rejected findings on homeopathic medicine to be published in the [August 27, 2005 edition of the Lancet](#). The study in question was the work of Aijing Shang and colleagues from the University of Berne in Switzerland. The U.S. scientists rejecting the conclusions of the study are Dr. Rustum Roy Ph.D. (Penn State University), Dr. Iris Bell, M.D., Ph.D. (University of Arizona) and Dr. Joyce Frye D.O., M.B.A. (University of Pennsylvania).

"Shang et al. have successfully applied a methodological approach to the articles they reviewed that is highly suitable for drawing conclusions about conventional medicine but is incomplete in evaluating homeopathic medicine. They did not include criteria that would apply to high quality homeopathic research reflecting the nature of homeopathic practice. Such criteria include consideration of the quality of the homeopathy provided", said Iris Bell, M.D., Ph.D.

"Furthermore, a single remedy selection for a given conventionally-diagnosed condition is not homeopathy, yet there are numerous conventionally-judged high quality studies that were so designed. The analogy would be to test the effects of penicillin for all patients with symptoms of an apparent infection. The quality of the studies would otherwise be excellent in design. However, penicillin will not work for patients with viral infections or bacterial infections resistant to its effects or for persons with fevers from other non-infectious causes - and it thus might show benefit only for a subset of patients with symptoms of infections, i.e., the ones with true penicillin-sensitive infections. How would penicillin fare in a meta-analysis of studies designed to ignore the intrinsic nature of penicillin in benefiting patients?" said Bell.

Joyce Frye DO, MBA commented that the study's authors seemed to begin their work with a bias. "While their analysis clearly showed effects of homeopathic treatment - they found ways to disregard those. Out of the millions of trials in conventional medicine, their primary outcome relied on the comparison of ridiculously small numbers--8 trials of homeopathy and 6 trials of conventional medicine. They began their work with the assumption 'that the effects observed in placebo-controlled trials of homeopathy could be explained by a combination of methodological deficiencies and biased reporting'. Sound research is not conducted from this starting position."

Among other topics, the Lancet challenges the plausibility of homeopathic effects given that homeopathic remedies are often administered in dilutions in excess of Avogadro's number. Dr. Rustum Roy, Ph.D. distinguished material scientist from Penn State University commented that the chemistry argument made in this study and by conventional medicine in general is false science. "The underpinning of the editorial content of the Lancet as it relates to homeopathy relies on a quaint old idea from the nineteenth century that the ONLY way that the property of water can be affected or changed is by incorporating foreign molecules. This is the Avogadro-limit high-school level chemistry argument. To a materials scientist this notion is absurd, since the fundamental paradigm of materials-science is that the structure-property relationship is the basic determinant of everything. It is a fact that the structure of water and therefore the informational content of water can be altered in infinite ways".