

Press Release

Immediate Release

May 2011

Innovative institute argues more research into homeopathy still needed

On Tuesday 17th May, the Homeopathy Research Institute (HRI), an organisation created to promote homeopathy research, will host a reception at the House of Commons in London. Sponsored by David Tredinnick MP, the event will focus on placing homeopathy research on the national agenda as a credible scientific field of inquiry.

Whilst there is no doubt in the minds of many patients that homeopathy works, the effectiveness of homeopathy needs to be assessed using rigorous scientific methods to see whether science backs up patient experience.

The Institute wishes to utilise this event to launch a fundraising appeal to support vital research into whether homeopathy works for specific conditions, and if so, HOW and WHY homeopathy works. The purpose is to resolve, once and for all, the long running debate between homeopathy's detractors and supporters.

The most controversial aspect of homeopathy is the use of highly diluted medicines. Although some experiments have reported measurable effects of such 'ultra-high dilutions' in the laboratory¹, until we reproduce these experiments and potentially clarify HOW homeopathic medicines work, the argument that homeopathy is purely a placebo effect will persist.

Dr Alexander Tournier PhD, HRI Chairman, says, "Recent statements in the media have argued that further research in homeopathy is not justified, however this is far from the case, as many important questions remain unanswered. Homeopathy is a complex subject, which we are only just starting to unravel.

The role of the HRI is not to promote the practice of homeopathy itself, but to promote and facilitate scientific research in homeopathy. Our aim is to provide reliable, objective information about this field to those who wish to know more and make up their own minds."

In the UK, the practice of homeopathy has been part of the National Health Service (NHS) since its inception and since that time homeopathic medicines have been prescribable to patients.

Academics, scientists, members of Parliament and peers as well as representatives from across the homeopathic industry and conventional healthcare providers from the NHS will be attending the reception.

To attend the event or for more information please contact Maria Jose Ovalle on 020 7993 3190 or email mariao@oneismore.com

Homeopathy Research Institute <http://homeoinst.org/>

Ends

Notes to Editors

The Homeopathy Research Institute is an innovative charity, based in the UK, working to facilitate scientific research in the field of homeopathy. In order to achieve this we have gathered some of the world's experts in Homeopathy and Complementary and Alternative Medicine research to form our Scientific Advisory Committee. From this strong scientific foundation we are able to confidently channel your donations to the best research projects submitted to us.

The *Homeopathy Research Institute* promotes research in the field of homeopathy by:

- Facilitating research projects within international academic institutions
- Providing a peer review process for research proposals submitted to our Scientific Advisory Committee.

We aim to facilitate research which explores different aspects of homeopathy, such as the effectiveness of homeopathy in daily practice, efficacy in treating key pathologies and the physico-chemical properties of homeopathic preparations.

We also aim to inform health professionals and the general public about research in homeopathy through the provision of:

- An online homeopathy research database
- A free quarterly newsletter covering various homeopathy research topics.

What is Homeopathy?

Homeopathy is a system of medicine which involves treating the individual with highly diluted substances, with the aim of triggering the body's natural system of healing. Based on their individual symptoms, a homeopath will match the most appropriate medicine to each patient. This medical system was developed by a German doctor, Samuel Hahnemann, in 1796 and has been used world-wide ever since. Homeopathy is based on the principle that 'like cures like' i.e. a substance which causes symptoms when taken in large doses, can be used in small amounts to treat similar symptoms. Homeopathic treatment has an excellent safety record².

Popularity of homeopathy in UK and Worldwide

- In Britain, the market for homeopathy is growing at around 20% per year. In 2007, it was estimated to be worth £38m, and is projected to reach £46m in 2012.³
- 10% of people in the UK use homeopathy⁴ – an estimated 6 million people.
- 100 million EU citizens, some 29% of the EU's population, use homeopathic medicines in their day-to-day healthcare.⁵
- India leads in terms of number of people using homeopathy, with 100 million people depending solely on homeopathy for their medical care.⁶
- Worldwide, over 200 million people use homeopathy on a regular basis.

Overall position of the homeopathic profession in UK

- Homeopathy has been available within the National Health Service (NHS) since its inception in 1948. The 'Faculty of Homeopathy Act' passed in 1950 incorporated Homeopathic Hospitals into the NHS, and Nye Bevan himself, in a parliamentary reply, confirmed that homeopathy would be continue to be part of the NHS so long as there were patients demanding it and doctors willing to provide it.
- In the NHS over 55,000 patients a year are seen through the homeopathic hospitals.⁷ There were originally 5 homeopathic hospitals (Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Bristol and Tunbridge Wells). Tunbridge Wells closed in 2007 and earlier this year the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital changed its name to the Royal London Hospital for Integrated Medicine.

- There are ~ 600 doctors in the UK that use homeopathy⁷, regulated by the Faculty of Homeopathy and promoted by the British Homeopathic Association.
- There are ~1,500 professional homeopaths (non-medically qualified homeopaths) in the UK⁸, regulated by the Society of Homeopaths (65%), Alliance of Registered Homeopaths and Homeopathic Medical Association. They largely operate in private practice outside the NHS.

Homeopathy and Parliament

- In 2000, a House of Lords Select Committee report on Complementary and Alternative Medicine listed homeopathy as a “group one” therapy, along with osteopathy, chiropractic, acupuncture and herbal medicine. Group one therapies are recognised as having their own diagnostic approach and treatment methods.⁹
- Many MPs support homeopathy. In 2007, 206 MPs signed an Early Day Motion welcoming the contribution of homeopathy to NHS healthcare.¹⁰
- In November 2009 the Science and Technology Select Committee of the UK Parliament carried out an “evidence check” into homeopathy.¹¹ A general media announcement in October 2009 invited written submissions and requests could be made to give oral evidence during two hearings. This process was highly controversial, with concerns being raised about flaws in the ‘Evidence check’ process, including bias against homeopathy.¹²

References

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