

## Veterinary Clinical Research Database for Homeopathy

In 2006, the Veterinary Clinical Research (VetCR) database for veterinary homeopathy ([www.carstens-stiftung.de/clinresvet/index.php](http://www.carstens-stiftung.de/clinresvet/index.php)) was launched by Dr. Achim Schütte. He was a veterinarian trying to integrate homeopathy and conventional medicine in the treatment of animals. The VetCR database was the first of its kind and comprised about 100 studies in 2006. It listed exclusively clinical research in veterinary homeopathy; no basic research experiments were included.

After Achim Schütte's death in November 2006, the database lay dormant until the beginning of 2009 (1). The database was restarted then and has been regularly updated half yearly since then. At the time of writing (October 2010), it contains 217 data entries and an additional 52 articles are queued, ready to be indexed. The number of publications included in the database is somewhat lower, because some publications contain more than one trial (e.g. publications reporting on the effectiveness of homeopathy in the treatment of pigs and cows) which are indexed separately in the database for the sake of clarity. The majority of listed studies are written in English (n=81) and German (n=109), followed by French (n=13), Italian (n=6), Portuguese (n=4), Spanish (n=2) and Dutch (n=2). Every data entry consists of a summary of the bibliographical data, the general conditions of the study, the intervention and the results. The oldest entry was published in 1938 (2).

The interface enables search by certain *authors*, *species*, the sub-*type* of the underlying medicinal system (e.g. classical homeopathy, isopathy, homotoxicology), the design of the *control* group (e.g. placebo controlled, untreated control), the date (*year*) of publication (or time range) and the *field* of research (e.g. dermatology, oncology). In addition, various *designs* of clinical trials (randomised controlled trials, non-randomised

clinical trials, observational studies, drug provings, case reports and case series) are listed in the database and are searchable. Finally, the database offers the possibility of searching for open or *blinded* trials, whereby no differentiation is made between single, double or triple blind at the search step. The interface is still open to modification and may change in the near future, providing more details and additional searchable terms.

The database includes articles published in peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed journals, theses, conference proceedings, Internet reports and text books. The quality of the published research varies greatly. Unfortunately, most of the studies are of low quality, lacking appropriate controls or any controls at all. In addition, many of the publications miss any kind of statistical evaluation or provide only an analysis of mean values and standard deviations, but no calculations of statistical power and significance. Many of the listed articles are very short; consequently, a lot of important information is missing in these publications (type of randomisation procedure, detailed descriptions of materials and methods, etc). Those studies with sound randomised study design plus positive results await independent replication. In this sense, the database may be a useful tool to find promising studies and to stimulate replications. The fact that most studies do not fulfil adequate quality criteria is not unique to veterinary homeopathy but can also be found in conventional veterinary medicine (3-5). Improvement of study design and reporting in future trials is mandatory.

Most veterinary studies were performed in the study of cattle (n=111), pigs (n=31) and poultry (n=13). It has to be noted that 13 of the total studies (n=217) did not, in fact, investigate the effectiveness of homeopathic medicine in treating a specific disease but evaluated its

potential to increase productivity of farm animals (*field*: nutrition).

With regard to cattle, clinical or subclinical mastitis was the condition most often investigated in 36 trials, followed by treatment of postpartum disorders (n=17) and fertility (n=19). The latter investigated either the improvement of fertility (e.g. the decrease of the calving-to-conception interval) or the therapy of infertility.

Veterinary research in pigs has focused on the treatment of mastitis-metritis-agalactia syndrome (n=5) and anoestrus (n=4). Six studies have investigated growth, weight gain and general status of healthy pigs fed with homeopathic remedies. Similarly, five studies investigated growth or weight gain in poultry after addition of homeopathic substances to food.

The VetCR database is far from complete. We encourage everybody to inform us about studies not listed in the database and any mistakes made during processing of articles.

In addition, we would like to notify readers about the HomBRex (Homeopathy Basic Research experiments) database, which contains about 1,500 experiments from all fields of basic research in homeopathy ([www.carstens-stiftung.de/eigene/db/index.php](http://www.carstens-stiftung.de/eigene/db/index.php))(6) but no clinical research. About 700 of these experiments have been performed in the study of animals or animal cell lines. Based on the HomBRex database, a review of the treatment of infections in animals has been published recently (7). Here, the interested reader can find additional information on the homeopathic treatment of infected animals.

Both database projects (VetCR and HomBRex) are supported by “Karl und Veronica Carstens-Stiftung”, the largest foundation in Europe to fund research in complementary and alternative medicine (human and veterinary). Access to both databases is free of charge; one has to register online to gain access to HomBRex.

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