

Homeopathic Remedies Produce Specific Symptoms Different from Placebo

By Suse Moebius

Synopsis of '**Homeopathic Pathogenetic Trials Produce Specific Symptoms Different from Placebo**'. Heribert Möllinger, Rainer Schneider, Harald Walach. *Forsch Komplementmed* 2009;16:105-110

Statistically significant differences between the effects of homeopathic medicines and placebo were found in this study. Double-blind, randomised trial (RCT) methodology was applied to a homeopathic pathogenetic trial (commonly referred to as a proving), which showed that "homeopathic remedies produce different symptoms than placebo".

In this three-armed study, twenty-five healthy volunteers (medical doctors in homeopathic training) were randomly assigned placebo or one of two homeopathic medicines randomly chosen from a pre-determined list of 20 well documented remedies. Ten participants received Natrum Muriaticum, eight Arsenicum Album, with seven participants on placebo. Using a protocol established by the German Association of Homeopathic Physicians (DZVhÄ, 2002), volunteers kept qualitative records of symptoms experienced over four days.

Symptoms were assessed by an independent expert in homeopathic materia medica. The expert was given only the collated list of all the symptoms recorded, which did not enable him to attribute symptoms to groups or individuals. Use of a standard homeopathic repertory software programme facilitated identification of symptoms characteristic of each remedy.

In the verum groups, symptoms characteristic for the respective remedy were frequent. The placebo group produced approximately double the symptoms but these were unspecific. Neither verum group recorded symptoms characteristic of the other remedy in the trial.

Statistical differences between groups were found to be highly significant ($p=0.0002$); other measures also showed significant confidence intervals. An omnibus statistical test showed that the likelihood of the study results being obtained by chance is 2:10 000. The authors conclude that the data suggest homeopathic remedies have specific effects beyond placebo and call for further investigations.