

NHS Research Roundup on Homeopathy - more please!

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The NHS Evidence service, launched last year, provides a valuable portal to a vast range of medical research. This user-friendly resource includes a comprehensive CAM section.

Overviews of the latest research in each medical category are provided as Annual Update evidence summaries. For homeopathy, Peter Fisher of the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital provides a round-up of recent papers. To super-condense this synopsis: "further research is required".

The Update is necessarily limited by strict inclusion criteria. Nine international reviews, trials and studies are summarised individually. The selection highlights a key issue of homeopathy research: as a term 'homeopathy' remains undefined. One trial included here features the individualised prescribing of classical homeopathy. As a pilot, its promising results necessarily remain 'statistically insignificant'. Other papers consider therapeutic prescriptions for specific conditions, with inconclusive outcomes. Meta analyses presented likewise mix and match prescribing approaches and study types, so clear conclusions are difficult to draw. The most interesting of those is a revisiting of the infamous Shang et al metastudy of 2005 which says more about methodologies and bias than about homeopathy.

This review demonstrates that tighter definitions and larger trials would enhance validity of homeopathic research.