



Press release

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS No. 7/2023

Effectiveness of homeopathy in irritable bowel syndrome

Berlin, 29 Sep 2023 – Homeopathy works beyond the placebo effect – numerous high-quality scientific studies demonstrate this. In our “Study Highlights series” we present examples of research which show the effectiveness of homeopathy beyond the placebo effect.

In this seventh issue, we present a 2023 study describing the effectiveness of individualised homeopathic treatment for irritable bowel syndrome.

Topic and lead author

“Effectiveness of individualised homeopathic medicines in irritable bowel syndrome” by Aakash Deep Das, Assistant Professor, Department of Repertory, JIMS Homeopathic Medical College & Hospital, Shamshabad, Telangana, India

What is the study about and what is the added value of homeopathic treatment?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is one of the most common gastrointestinal disorders, with an estimated worldwide prevalence of 10-20%¹. Clinical presentations range from chronic abdominal pain to altered bowel habits, without any detectable physical or structural disease within the gut. Severe IBS can greatly impact quality of life, disturb daily activities, and increase healthcare costs. Although numerous pharmacological treatment options exist for this condition, their results are unsatisfactory. Many patients suffering from IBS therefore turn to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) options such as homeopathy.

Research on homeopathy for IBS is limited and comprises a small number of low quality randomised controlled studies. To address this evidence gap, a high quality clinical trial with a placebo-controlled design was recently conducted.

How was the study conducted?

- 60 patients between 18 and 65 years, suffering from IBS were randomised to receive either individualised homeopathic medicines (IH) (n=30) or placebo (n=30).
- The main study objective was to assess the participants' quality of life using a questionnaire designed to measure the health-related quality of life in patients with IBS.
- Another objective was to clinically assess and compare IBS severity in both groups, using an IBS symptoms severity scale to generate an overall score based on pain, distension, bowel dysfunction and overall well-being.
- Patients were observed for 3 months and parameters were assessed monthly.

¹ Basseri RJ, Weitsman S, Barlow GM et al. Antibiotics for the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome. *Gastroenterol Hepatol* 2011;7(7):455-493.

What are the scientific results?

- At months 1, 2 and 3, there was a statistically significant difference in the IBS-related quality of life score in favor of the IH group² ($p < 0.001$ at all 3 time points).
- The IBS symptoms severity score was significantly lower in the IH group compared to the placebo group at all 3 time points³ (month 1, $p = 0.032$; months 2 and 3, $p < 0.001$)

Why are the results of this study important and what do they add to the scientific evidence?

The study results indicate a positive effect of individualised homeopathic treatment on quality of life and IBS symptom severity compared to placebo in patients with IBS. Given the disabling nature of IBS, plus the low level of satisfaction of patients with conventional treatment⁴, it is not surprising that about 50% of patients with IBS consider CAM treatment⁵. Considering the prevalence of IBS, these findings are important, suggesting that homeopathy could be a possible treatment option for such patients.

Until now, high-quality evidence of the effectiveness of homeopathy for IBS was lacking due to the low number of participants (small sample size) and short follow-up periods used in previous studies. In contrast, the current study uses the gold-standard double-blind placebo-controlled “RCT” (randomised-controlled trial) design, with an appropriate sample size and follow-up period, minimising biases and confounding factors which could distort the results. With its scientifically robust methodology, this study is a significant step in development of the evidence base for homeopathic treatment of IBS. The authors encourage further high-quality studies to be conducted.

Where were the results published?

Das AD, Ghosh S, Palanisamy C, Guha N, Mandal S, Maiti S et al. Efficacy of individualized homeopathic medicines in irritable bowel syndrome: A double-blind randomized, placebo-controlled trial. *Explore* 2023;19:519-527.

Press contact:

Homeopathy Research Institute, Berlin, Germany
Christoph Trapp
Phone +49 (0)170 9917 649
E-Mail presse@hri-research.org

About HRI

HRI is a UK-based charity dedicated to promoting high quality research in homeopathy at an international level. More information: www.hri-research.org

² Month 1: -14.4 ± 3.8 , month 2: -27.0 ± 4.8 , month 3: -29.4 ± 5.1

³ Month 1: -32.4 ± 14.7 , month 2: -68.0 ± 17.4 , month 3: -99.5 ± 19.5

⁴ Shen Y-H, Nahas R. Complementary and alternative medicine for treatment of irritable bowel syndrome. *Can Fam Physician* 2009;55: 143-148.

⁵ Kong SC, Hurlstone DP, Pocock CY, Walkington LA. The incidence of self prescribed oral complementary and alternative medicine use by patients with gastrointestinal diseases. *J Clin Gastroenterol* 2005;39:138-141.