

Derivation

The word 'homeopathy' is derived from the Greek words *homoios* meaning like or similar, and *pathos* meaning suffering

What is Homeopathy?

Homeopathy is a branch of therapeutics in which the ill person is exposed to something that stimulates healing. The stimulus is selected to 'mirror' the illness state. It is derived from a substance that would (under other circumstances) cause the same symptoms and reactions, as the illness that it is being used to treat.

Sometimes organisms do not self-heal after shock, injury or infection - even though all the mechanisms for healing are known to exist. This is because the integration of these mechanisms has been disrupted and they are not coordinated in time or space. Although living systems are self-equilibrating they can be pushed into chaotic function by shock, injury, drugs, infection and many other stressors. In these states the organism becomes extremely sensitive to any stimulus which 'mirrors' their functional disturbance (ie a homeopathic stimulus)

What are the special features of homeopathy?

Effective homeopathic treatment is critically dependent on two things

- the use of the correct homeopathic medicine (remedy)
- and
- the timing of its administration.

The strength and frequency of dosage (*posology*) are also important. The strength of the stimulus in homeopathy is not related to the physical dose of the active substance, but is related to the *potency* (roughly analogous to 'signal strength') we will discuss what we mean by potency at some length in section*. [[Check the section reference in the final Russian version]]

Selection of medicine

When we select a homeopathic remedy we consider:

- the **individual** signs and symptoms in that particular patient
- the specific context in which these symptoms have arisen
- the remedy which most accurately reflects the particular dynamics in that patient's *current state* (explained later)

Posology: potency, quantity, frequency of dosage

Because homeopathy facilitates self-healing - using a very 'state-specific' treatment - the rules of treatment are not the same as those that are applied in pharmacology. Pharmacology is dominated by the concepts of *agonistic* and *antagonistic* action ('*lock and key*' models)

Drugs exploit the functional features of organic compounds that have key roles in human biochemistry. Synthetic analogues of these compounds are used to either (1) block receptors and enzymes, or (2) to augment their activity. (In modern pharmacology, there are also new classes of drugs which modulate systems, particularly in relation to immunochemistry.) Nevertheless, all the treatment models in pharmacology are essentially materialistic and manipulatory in their conception.

The treatment models for pharmaceuticals must be contrasted with homeopathy - which is entirely *facilitatory* in its approach. In terms of homeopathic dosage and frequency, the basic rule in homeopathy is (1) to use the **minimum force** required to initiate the desired changes and (2) to give the organism every opportunity to **resolve its own 'systems-disturbances'**. (Which means that we do not intervene with further treatment, while the patient's signs and symptoms indicate that they are improving.)

An Introductory Note About Remedy Selection

Around two hundred years ago, the German physician, Samuel Hahnemann, wrote the following:

'The totality of symptoms and circumstances observed in each individual case, is the one and only indication that can guide us to the choice of the remedy.'

Hahnemann (1755 - 1843) *Organon*, 6th ed, Para 18, Trans Kunzli, Naude and Pendleton

This raises the question of what we understand by the '*totality of symptoms*'. The first thing to recognise, is that every response in a living organism has a context. Contexts include: specific trigger events, particular genetic predispositions and other complex factors which are poorly understood, including the influence of 'memory' ie. information previously 'coded' into the system (psychological memory, immune memory and genetic memory, for example)

Because the context for a condition is never exactly the same in any two people, it is obvious that no two individuals ever respond in an identical way to a trigger event. Every individual shows idiosyncrasies in their response. These idiosyncrasies also indicate how each individual adapts differently to disturbances in their equilibrium.

The pain of an inflamed joint might be improved by hot compresses in one patient and cold applications in another. This shows us that there are idiosyncrasies in the physiology of their inflammatory states. Even if these two patients have the same diagnosis, they still require entirely different homeopathic remedies: ie materials that properly mirror the different dynamic states in these two individual patients.

In order to identify the different homeopathic requirements of different patients, we need to pay special attention to each person's unique array of symptoms and reactions.

Integrating Homeopathy Into Medicine

It is important to remember that we:

1. are a physician, first and foremost, and we
2. continue to identify, as far as is possible, the:
 - diagnosis
 - illness aetiology
 - patient's compensations and adaptations to illness
 - likely prognosis
 - patient's perception and understanding of their condition

In the process of broadening your treatment skills, you must never abandon your diagnostic skills. Accurate diagnosis saves lives and prevents suffering. However the diagnostic label can also be part of a holistic synthesis that provides the basis for homeopathic healing.

Refined Patient Information

In Unit 2 [[Insert section details once the Russian version structure is established]] we will look carefully at special modifications to our accustomed history taking. These modifications will help us to identify well-indicated homeopathic treatments. In addition to the systematic medical history that we are already familiar with, the following information is gathered to the highest level of precision and detail:

- details of personality and intellect - *mind symptoms*
- systemic reactions - *generals* (defined later)
- organic symptoms - *particulars* (defined later)
- *modalities* (changes in signs or symptoms in response to environmental factors such as time, weather, food, etc.)
- *individualising information* of all kinds: including the particular chronology of the disease
- the triggers, treatments, environments and circumstances which have influenced the evolution of the illness.

Influence of Environment

To the modern reader Hahnemann's turn of phrase may seem quaint, but he was revolutionary in his awareness of environmental factors in health and disease:

'Disease engendered by prolonged exposure to avoidable noxious influences will include diseases brought about by: harmful food and drink; unhealthy places, especially swampy regions; dwelling only in cellars, damp work places; physical or mental overexertion; continuing emotional stress.'

Hahnemann (1755-1843) *Organon*, 6th Ed, Para 77, Trans Kunzli

This awareness of environment as a factor in illness, was revolutionary in Hahnemann's time and remains relevant to our strategies for healing to this day. It is interesting to consider how frequently drugs are applied in orthodox medicine today, to control symptoms, but with no attempt to address the causes and maintaining factors that generated the condition in the first place.

ACTIVITY: now follow the introductory lecture which is provided on DVD1.

[[Reference to the video or sound recording of the Russian language introduction to homeopathy]]

Further reading:

Now look at pages *-* in your companion reader, before checking your understanding with the questions below.

[[Reference to the introductory pages of the course reader in Russian]]

Self Assessment Questions (SAQ 1)

Try to answer the following questions. If you are unclear on any of the points below, please refer to the previous section and read the relevant passages of your companion textbook, before progressing to the next section.

1. What is the derivation of the word homeopathy?
2. What was the name of the physician who elucidated the main principles for this branch of medicine?
3. What did he say was the main prerequisite for the selection of a homeopathic remedy?
4. What factors are important for a successful response to a homeopathic stimulus?
5. Does every patient with the same diagnosis receive the same homeopathic treatment? Explain.
6. What is the main difference in the treatment models for pharmacological versus homeopathic medicines?
7. Should a homeopathic doctor think diagnostically? If so, why?
8. What kind of information is emphasised in the history taking process, for patients who require homeopathic treatment?

That concludes section* Take a break and progress to section * when you are ready.