

Homeopathy – that’s placebo, right?

Nick Thompson ponders the sceptics and recalls
some of his veterinary successes

I’ve just come across a really interesting piece of work by a French researcher called Montagnier¹. He and his co-workers found that some bacterial DNA sequences are able to induce electromagnetic waves at high aqueous dilutions. At ‘dilutions’ as high as 18x (10¹⁸), they found that there were recognisable signals detectable. Agitation of the preparations (succussion in homeopathic language) was found to be essential to the dilution process. The signals were obliterated by heating and freezing the solutions. Although homeopathy is not mentioned in the article, I thought this was pretty interesting research. Luc Montagnier is no backwater crackpot. He co-discovered a virus you may have heard of – HIV. And got a Nobel Prize for it in 2008.

This turned my mind to the incredible scepticism there is towards homeopathy. I often say to people that, in a way, I wish I’d never found it; my life would be so much simpler and I’d probably be a whole lot (monetarily) richer. But I did, and I’m incredibly grateful that I did. But I still have to deal, daily, with articles in the press, reports on the BBC, and jibes from conventional colleagues at conferences. So the Montagnier paper, among others published recently², may be the first chink of light in the orthodox armour. A way to silence the sceptics and to allow professional communications between conventional and homeopathic veterinary colleagues, for the benefit of our patients. I hope so.

But why be sceptical? Veterinary homeopathy is alive and well and producing incredible results. They may be individual cases, not large double blind placebo controlled trials, they may be ‘miraculous’ cures, without before and after data, but they are happening every single day throughout the world. I began

to reflect on some of the amazing cases I’ve seen over the years.

Pip, a 14 year-old new forest pony, was an early homeopathic miracle for me. He presented with what they call “sweet itch”, an allergy to midges. He’d had it all his life and would itch for ten months of the year. His grey, thickened, cracked skin, by June, would make him look like a rhino. No orthodox medicines seemed to work. Come to that, my first prescription of *Arsenicum album* and *Culicoides* (the midge in a nosode) didn’t touch him, either! I was gutted, as was the owner, Susan, who had put so much faith in the medicines.

I persuaded Susan to let me have another look. This time, on repertorisation, I concluded Sulphur. The change, when dosed daily with the *Culicoides* nosode, was almost instant. It was April, so he was itchy, without massive thickening yet. Within two weeks he was no longer itchy. Susan couldn’t believe it. To be honest, as a vet homeopath in training, nor could I. We continued dosing and managed to reduce to twice weekly dosing, but any less frequency would see break through scratching. Susan forgot to re-order his remedies when his first prescription ran out. He started itching immediately, but when, after a week, the new remedies came through, he stopped again, right in the midst of the midge season. He’s been fine ever since.

Another lovely example of homeopathy saving the day was with Anja, a nervous 18 month-old Vizsla bitch. She hadn’t had her first season, unlike her four other sisters and her mum who’d all come into season aged ten months or so. Since this sororal pheromone storm she’d been “not quite herself”, jumpy, hysterical and suspicious. Her vet had diagnosed “low progesterone”.

He’d spoken to a specialist at Bristol University who predicted she’d never come into season, therefore. Her owner was not to be so lightly discouraged and gave me a ring. Having had a few years prescribing by this time I knew that homeopathy is fantastic for any hormonal condition*. Cushing’s disease, hormonal alopecia and old age incontinence I’d seen all clear up beautifully, so I was keen to work on Anja.

We prescribed *Nat mur* as a constitutional for her in a 1M potency. I also used *Folliculinum* and *Progesterone* at a 30c potency for a more local, or pathological, prescription. I’ll often do this – treat the whole animal and support a particular organ or system at the same time. It seems to work for hormones, but also for liver, kidney or skin problems, to give just a few examples. Within two weeks, she became a little puffy around the vulva, a sure sign that something was happening. We thought this was it, but she calmed again.

What told me that we were definitely going in the right direction was that she was happier in her own skin; less jumpy with people entering the house and not sleeping in a tiny ball – content to lounge like a normal sleeping dog. She became clingier and began to worsen after her weekly *Nat mur* dose, so we switched to *Pulsatilla*. Within a month she had her first season, normalised her behaviour and melded with the pack again. That was in February 2007. She’s been fine since without any remedies.

A final example I have to tell you about is Zephyr. He’s a four year-old *Occicat* – looks a bit like a fawn tabby Burmese, if you like. He was being bullied by his brother – the other cat in the house. His response, being a rather passive and malleable sort of chap, was to internalise his frustration and resent-



Photo: istockphoto.com/Frans Rombout

ment and lick his back for comfort. This is quite common in some nervous cats when they can't express themselves. He eventually started licking dappled bald patches all over his rump, poor boy. When I saw him, it soon became apparent what was happening. Cats are really vicious to their own kind. They make children in a playground look like angels!

Staphysagria is the king of resentment remedies. I prescribed Staphysagria 200c twice daily for five days and asked to be rung in a month. Disaster! He was licking more! His symptoms and his behaviour were, though, exactly as before. I decided to be a little more aggressive with my dosing and we went for twice daily dosing for two weeks. This did the trick. A two week check showed his coat to be slightly less bristly (with all the licking) and his behaviour had mellowed. He was actually retali-

ating toward his brother for the first time in his life, too!

I increased the potency of the Staphysagria to 1M and advised dosing just when he needed a boost. He continued to improve, showing a normal coat within a few months. He needed dosing every few weeks, once with the 1M. Six months later, his owner rang me to say the remedy didn't seem to be working any more. I sent her Staphysagria 50M and said dose as before. All was well after this. Now he just needs a dose once in a blue moon.



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What is really interesting about this case, and his owner only told me this after we'd been consulting for a few months, is that she had been putting a drop of the liquid remedy on her finger to dose him every time and her sense of smell had returned. She'd lost it about 15 years previously when she was working in a very stressful office environment that she hated, or "resented" you could say...

There we go – another three cases to add to the mountain range of anecdotes of homeopathic miracles. No doubt the sceptics will sneer at these as well. Homeopathy *is* placebo, after all, isn't it?

*Specialist advice should always be sought from a vet trained in homeopathy in cases of chronic or complicated conditions.

References:

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