

Does homeopathy have any place in general practice?

In an article published in *Pulse*, the newspaper for GPs, *Dr Tim Robinson* answers the sceptics

There is definitely a place for homeopathy in general practice. Not only that, but I hope in future there will be increased opportunity for its provision. I have been offering homeopathy at my own GP practice for 12 years, with great effect. I audited my homeopathic consultations over a 12-month period and scored and analysed the outcomes. My study showed a wide variety of conditions were treated homeopathically and three-quarters of patients had a positive clinical response.

In order to defend homeopathy I want to start by sharing just three of the many cases I have treated successfully using it.

In one case, a nine-year-old girl presented with a three-year history of nightmares, causing her to wake four out of seven nights each week. Three doses of one homeopathic medicine brought relief lasting about three weeks. After a further three doses she was almost completely free of nightmares – as she was when reviewed three months later.

My second case involves a 41 year-old man with a two-year history of alopecia since his mother's death. I treated him with two homeopathic medicines and reviewed him two months later. His alopecia was clearing – one patch had disappeared and the other was shrinking significantly.

In the third case, a 33 year-old woman came to the surgery with a four-year history of persistent diarrhoea, rectal bleeding and IBS, following *Giardia* infection. She had been extensively investigated by a gastroenterologist, diagnosed with post-infectious IBS and prescribed anti-spasmodics that were ineffective. I prescribed a series of homeopathic medicines and reviewed her three times. She was delighted to find that her bleeding settled and her bowels returned to normal.

In each of these cases there had been no response to medical advice or treatment, and no sign of spontaneous improvement. Each was treated within a standard ten minute GP consultation. Each patient was offered the choice between conventional medicine and homeopathy. Each was told the mecha-



nism of homeopathy was not known.

The outcome of these cases was positive. The conditions were relieved and quality of life improved – which, after all the debating is done, is what we all hope to achieve.

Sceptics will remain unconvinced by my cases, and continue to claim “there's nothing in it”. But there are plenty of studies demonstrating it does work, supporting anecdotal reports of its effectiveness in babies, children, cats and dogs.

The sceptics will say patients improve because of regression to the norm. The cases I have chosen certainly don't support this – they were showing no sign of spontaneous healing.

Sceptics say patients improve because of long and repeated consultations, but all my homeopathic cases are seen within a ten minute consultation. Sceptics may even be as discourteous as to suggest I am deliberately misleading my patients, but I give them the choice between conventional medicine and homeopathy, and honestly state that we don't know how or why homeopathy should work.

Unfortunately homeopathy has been tarnished by fringe elements who use it inappropriately. There are examples where patients have been advised to stop conventional medicines and claims that it can be used as an alternative to vaccination. Medically trained homeopaths (members of the Faculty of Homeopathy) would not support these claims or advocate homeopathic treatment in these situations.

I believe there is a strong case for homeopathy in general practice. It saves the NHS valuable resources by reducing GP reattendances, hospital referrals and drug expenditure, relieving suffering and improving quality of life.

If only there were more medically trained homeopaths. If only the sceptics would stop being restrained by scientific dogma and see the wider picture.

This article is reproduced from a debate published in Pulse “Does homeopathy have any place in general practice?” A full version of the article can be read at: www.pulsetoday.co.uk

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