



# Call for Introspection and Awakening

## Lancet Article

We have our own set of arguments against the controversial article in *The Lancet* (August, 2005), which suggested that homeopathy equals placebo. I do not want to add my voice in defense of homeopathy but would like to share my thoughts on another perspective.

The recent debate calls for more introspection and a preventive plan of action, rather than remonstrations.

**1. Research:** Research-based documentation is the key means to establish the efficacy of homeopathy. Statistical studies, clinical research, trials, as well as documenting significant effects of medicines on the basis of laboratory findings, etc. should be a part of the practice of every institute as well as individuals. It must be admitted that there has been hardly any fundamental research in homeopathy in the last five decades.

**2. Scientific approach and a face-lift:** The approach to the application of homeopathic principles needs to be more scientific and less speculative. Some examples are given in this article. In the last two decades, homeopathy has become less scientific and is governed more by whims and fancy than by logic. Homeopathy has to grow as a scientific rather than a spiritual faculty. In short, homeopathy needs a facelift in its attitude.

**3. Medical education:** Adequate medical education is a necessity for scientific homeopathic practice. It is not possible to practise homeopathy without a thorough knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, immunology, internal medicine, surgery, gynaecology and obstetrics,

dermatology, psychiatry, among others. Appropriate special training courses should be conducted to upgrade lay practitioners to the accepted level of practice.

**4. Responsible teaching:** Some teachers at seminars are passing on half-baked, unscientific and untested ideas, especially to younger homeopaths, and in the process giving a distorted image of homeopathy.

Some unscientific and hence detrimental tendencies have penetrated the practice of homeopathy, justifying direct or indirect criticisms from the scientific community. In the light of the recent attack by *The Lancet*, it is important that we introspect and give some rational thoughts to our own shortcomings, without getting emotionally agitated. Here are some points to ponder:

### a) Extended dream-analysis and theorizing

There is the trend of making fanciful stories out of the dreams which patients report. Prescribing carried out on the basis of dream interpretations is likely to differ from person to person. The entire dream-based analytical teaching has no connection whatsoever with the fundamentals of homeopathy prescribing.

### b) Overstretched mentals

Mental attributes are undoubtedly important to homeopathy prescribing. They are often difficult to perceive correctly. Most homeopaths are not very confident in handling the mental symptoms. It is often observed that teachings at some seminars lead to putting too much emphasis on the mental expressions, which might sound interesting but is nonetheless based on individual perception.

### c) Kingdom prototype and extended doctrine of signature

This is yet another method that requires debate. Students of homeopathy are either amused or confused when, given the impression that on the basis of physical resemblance of the patient, the remedy prepared from the specific animal source can be prescribed.

### d) Tele-medication

A teacher proposed the prescribing of medicine to a patient which he claimed would also cure all those people living in the neighbourhood requiring the same medicine without being administered to them! Is this homeopathy?

### e) Prescribing on the basis of past life

A teacher published a case based on the experience derived from a regression session. Is this valid homeopathic information to prescribe upon?

### f) Potentising the spirit

We are already facing a great problem of defining our potentised drug substances. Now, real imponderables have been potentised: music, mantras, ragas, the Berlin Wall, vacuum, etc. With the introduction of such practices, homeopathy veers dangerously close to magic; such practices may even cause homeopathy to face legal action on the basis of spreading superstitious practices in the guise of medicine.



### **g) Paper remedies**

Writing names of the remedy on paper, putting the paper under a glass of water which is subsequently to be drunk.

### **h) Interpretational and delusion-based materia medica**

The drug proving in homeopathy shows a specific value to delusions, nothing more than mere altered perception, while some teachers have used this set of rubrics to mislead immature students. This practice has distorted the materia medica.

An interpretation-based understanding of the materia medica is likely to increase the number of subjective observations, putting homeopathy at risk of going closer to the arts and away from science, distorting the fine balance. Analysis based on subjective interpretation is at the mercy of individual perception.

### **i) Materia medica outside the drug proving**

Interpretational material in the materia medica, arising from sources such as mythology, combinations of chemical salts etc. without any scientific support of drug (or toxicological) proving is too hypothetical to enter the materia medica and repertory.

## **Danger from Within**

We tend to feel concerned about the damage caused by external influences such as the study by The Lancet. However, are we aware of the danger that lies within the fraternity? For a long time we classical homeopaths stood up against the unscrupulous practices of poly-pharmacy and random prescribing. Now, the time has come where in the name of classical homeopathy, the above-mentioned dubious practices are flourishing - practices which in my opinion are even more harmful than the practice of poly-pharmacy.

The greatest danger to homeopathy seems to be more from within.

It is unfortunate that the above-mentioned practices have been incorporated into the envelope of classical homeopathy and sold at seminars.

## **Action We Need to Take**

It is high time that the homeopathy fraternity woke up. More effort needs to go towards scientific research. Absurdity and unscientific teaching and publications should be strictly opposed. The international body should draw up a ten-year action plan to achieve a milestone, namely a level of universal acceptance.

We need to have a scientific outlook towards the future of homeopathy. This article is likely to provoke sharp responses, opposition and debate from within the fraternity. Is it not time for such turmoil?

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