

# Homeopathic Awareness Project for Year 4: The “blocks” to the popularity of Homeopathy By Charlotte Burroughs



***“Homeopathy is a scientific and natural system of medicine”***



Robert Davidson stated: *“Homeopathy is a system of restoring optimum levels of healthy function. The prescription is justified by the principle of cure and not by the allopathic theory of disease.”* Homeopathy is a system of natural healthcare that works on the patient’s individual uniqueness with a holistic approach of healing the mind, body and spirit of the patient. Homeopathic remedies are made from animal, vegetable or mineral sources and promote the body’s natural ability to heal, and can be used by anyone including pregnant women, babies, people of all ages and animals. Homeopathy was established by Dr Samuel Hahnemann the great German physician, scholar and chemist in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Appalled by the medical practices of his time such as bloodletting and leaches - that he believed did more harm than good, he sought a form of medicine which would be safe, gentle and effective. He believed that human beings have a capacity for healing themselves and that the symptoms of disease reflect the bodies struggle to overcome its illness. Subsequently the homeopath should investigate the cause of the trouble and aim to stimulate the body’s natural healing power.

Therefore a homeopath tries to find the root of the problem in the mind and body, and establish an effective route and plan to overcome the presenting symptoms, and to restore the body to balance. Why then are homeopaths fighting to convince people to take a leap of faith and try homeopathy. What may we

ask stops people from turning to an alternative form of medicine that is natural, safe and effective? What are the “blocks to the popularity of Homeopathy?”

Homeopaths work on the layers of the presenting complaints in the body, working within the hierarchy of symptoms dealing with the most important first which is usually emotionally based. Homeopathy is aimed at correcting the life animating part of the human organism – the Vital Force which is where the disturbance in the body is. Homeopaths then work with the body until the body can overcome the problems, and allow the body to heal naturally. It works differently from allopathic medicine; which is invested in treating purely the symptoms and prescribing medicine for the symptoms rather than the individual person. Ian Watson describes Homeopathy as *“energy healing and the doorway to self-responsibility.”* Therefore if people look for an alternative to the doctor and prescriptive allopathic medicine, they have chosen to take responsibility for their own health and made an informed decision to follow an alternative path. The society of Homeopathy describes Homeopathy as *“A system of medicine which involves treating the individual with highly diluted substances, given mainly in tablet form, with the aim of triggering the body’s natural system of healing. Based on their specific symptoms, a homeopath will match the most appropriate medicine to each patient.”*

Most people are brought up to think of the National Health Service (NHS), as the only available choice to deal with their health problems and issues. The NHS is funded by: *“general taxation, prescription charges, hospital car parking etc., at a cost in 2012/13 of £108.9 billion pounds per year in England and rising.”* Homeopathy is an un-comprehended word in the average household, and so the majority of people do not even know what it is. The general public is used to going to the doctor for free and then being given a prescription for medication. Children and elderly patients are exempt from payment for prescriptions, people on a low or supportive income are given an exemption certificate, and the other members of society pay £8.05 per prescriptive item. Therefore for most people their health care is provided for free by the doctor, and the medication is then provided for a small fee, or for free. People subsequently do not invest in their health care in most households.

The quality and longevity of this current service however is imminently under threat; because of the increasing number of people demanding this service and the NHS is under strain to continue to afford free health care for all. In a report in the Telegraph newspaper on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014 GPs are reported to imminently be voting on proposals to charge patients to visit their surgeries. *“If the vote is passed, GPs will lobby the government to introduce a ‘national charging system’ with fees ranging from £10-25.”*

In a report in Pulse Magazine (GP medical magazine) on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014 there is discussion about these proposed charges and apparently just over half of GP’s were in favour of charging a small fee for routine appointments: *“This would be launched as a possibility to try and overcome GP workload crisis.”* Apparently: *“ family doctors believe free care offered by the NHS is unsustainable and say a system of charges would deter patients from missing appointments, which currently costs the NHS £152 million per year.”* There are proposals to introduce a charge for a visit to the GP, for an out of hour’s house call, or for a doctor to visit someone in a care home where elderly people are beginning to be charged for their care. This is foreign to most households when the expectation is that health care should be for free, and is causing great unrest and resentment. However if people are going to have to start to pay for their healthcare and the ‘free’ NHS is no longer an option, it may open people up to considering an alternative route to their health and wellbeing and to look at Homeopathy as an option.

Private health care is chargeable where people invest in a “better quality service” where they are given a private room in a glorified hotel, and are given time and attention and are treated directly by a consultant. This enables them to be seen quicker and they are given more attention than average by a consultant in their chosen field. This is usually at a high cost unless people invest in private medical insurance to cover the cost of any necessary treatment. However this service does not deal with medical emergencies, and

doctors and consultants are not on the premises during the night – they carry out the necessary procedure or out-patient appointments and then vacate the hospital. There is also not room for mistakes or problems which usually cause inconvenience as the bulk of the staff are nursing staff and are trained in pre and post-operative care, and have to contact anaesthetists, surgeons and consultants if problems arise. However the question of paying for medical treatment is appealing if quality of care is provided. Homeopathy does not deal with surgical procedures but it does give its patients time, dedication and the peace of mind that their prescription does not contain side effects.

Prescriptive drugs from allopathic medicine may act quickly and deal with problems in an emergency situation very efficiently. In an emergency situation the care of the NHS can be life-saving and fantastic and there is nothing that can beat it. However when it comes to daily household problems people are provided with a choice of going to the doctor and being given some prescriptive medication or going down the alternative route and choosing Homeopathy. Allopathic medicine does come with a sheet inside the box containing information about the given drug with a list of contra-indications or side effects. There is therefore beginning to be unrest with this system as people are prescribed an increasing amount of medication and are not necessarily getting any better. People are also beginning to question the side effects or problems they experience with their medication. The block however to people turning to Homeopathy is that they do not know about it, or where to turn for an alternative supportive approach for their health.

Could it just be a lack of education or awareness; that is the “block” to people finding a Homeopath? Or is it deeper and more complex than that. Members of the general public read newspapers or watch the news and documentaries, and the majority of people are open to the power of suggestion and influence. If there is a lot of negativity surrounding a subject, then it prevents people from having the confidence to find out for themselves and try something. Homeopathy is surrounded by scepticism and negativity. There is a great deal of publicity in the negative category suggesting that Homeopathy is “*merely placebo*” or that “*it is about as potent as a drop in a swimming pool so how can it be effective.*” This stems from lack of understanding about the minimum dose – one of the basic principles of homeopathy. According to Margaret Roy: concerning the minimum dose: “*The role of the homeopathic remedy is similar to that of enzymes and hormones in controlling the homeostatic balance within the organism to maintain a functioning harmony between all parts. The homeopathic remedy changes the organism which then takes over...the remedy does not need to be present in order to create chemical changes.*” You do not need a high dose to enable the body to respond with the act of healing itself naturally. All the body needs is a catalyst to start the process and homeopathy is that very catalyst. The minimum dose is therefore enough because as Hahnemann taught: “*additional doses of the medicine ceased to be therapeutic, and the body has to take out valuable time and energy to remove the excess medicine from the system and therefore delays cure.*”

In an article in the publication Popular Science: Is Homeopathy Really as Implausible as it Sounds? “*It was written after a science writer with The Telegraph noted that he supports homeopathy, a branch of alternative medicine most health expert’s view as quackery.*” It then opens up a viewpoint about: “*just how quackish is it?*” The article reports: “*Homeopathy for two and a half centuries, has sustained a solid following. Accordingly over 100 million people worldwide use Homeopathic medicine.*” It argues that the principle of “like cures like” a homeopathic principle is not dis-similar to vaccinations as “*most vaccines consist of at least part of the thing they’re meant to vaccinate against.*” Therefore opens up the viewpoint that a minimum dose can indeed have a great and profound effect upon the body. In comments following the article a GP has written: “*Homeopathy is heralded as an extension of vitalistic medicine; which has been part of western medicine for centuries aka Paracelsus and an integral part of Asian medicine in chi or prana.*” His comments also report about the evidence of cure: “*Early homeopaths were awarded medals of honour from the Prussian government in the early 1800’s for their great successes in curing people during the cholera epidemic.*”

The writer also comments that *“science writers are spouting their beliefs or repeating the beliefs of others, and really haven’t evaluated ALL the evidence”*. He states that he can *“attest some amazing cured cases using homeopathic medicine that were applied via the proper application of homeopathic medicine and theory.”* He further comments that: *“What is being passed off as scientific journalism is hardly that, but really is just elementary school penmanship devoid of any real study of the scientific literature out there that supports Homeopathy.”* Subsequently Homeopathy is negated by people who know nothing about it and journalists report rumour, opinion and negativity, rather than doing a true investigation that is balanced and open minded to both sides of the argument.

It should be pointed out that in other parts of the world such as India South America and Africa, Homeopathy is in fact the main form of medicine, and is well thought of because of its effectiveness and affordability. *“Homeopathy is one of the two most widely used forms of medicine in the world – and is the main system of medicine in India and South America”* It is second to Chinese medicine and allopathic medicine is apparently ranking at third place currently. There are therefore no blocks to popularity in the third world countries; because hundreds of people are seen in villages and queue for hours for the possibility of seeing a homeopath. In Europe: Homeopathy is in fact now being used by over 30 million Europeans”. In a report in the publication Popular Science it states in the reactive comments: *“Recently Switzerland did a thorough scientific project on Homeopathy and determined that it worked and added it to the healthcare programme...there was no big money behind the study and the results were positive I suggest all the nay sayers do some serious thinking... with the negative history of pharmaceuticals and resulting deaths as well as debilitating reactions Homeopathy seems a no brainer in safety.”* Therefore it is a popular form of medicine. In fact if you visit a pharmacy in France you will usually be asked which form of medicine you require homeopathic or allopathic. They do not hide homeopathy and they view it as an effective form of medicine. They recognise that it is personal preference about which form of medicine is preferable to the patient. Is the block to the popularity just in this country?

Statistically Homeopathy is growing in popularity as more people are being informed about its effectiveness and lack of side effects. However it is very slowly but surely being thought about as an effective alternative to allopathic medicine. People are becoming more aware because of success stories that are reported through word of mouth, and from positive results publically. Obviously there is still an enormous amount of people who are blinkered and opinionated, that there is no scientific proof about Homeopathy and that nothing has been proved. However these old doctrines and viewpoints are being questioned, as more success about homeopathy is being documented through the societies surrounding Homeopathy – The Society of Homeopaths, The British Homeopathic Association, etc. So what prevents more people from turning to Homeopathy – what blocks their path?

Do people fear that if they consider homeopathy that they would be going against the “system” and have to choose between homeopathy and allopathy. Are they concerned about offending their doctor or of being outcast in some way? As Homeopaths we recognise that it is in the patient’s best interest to have a collaborative approach and work alongside allopathic doctors, consultants and surgeons. However historically the allopathic high street doctors have not been trained in Homeopathy, and may have received a short lecture or read a short paper about it. Therefore the benefits and effectiveness of Homeopathy have not been highlighted or recognized. Homeopathy therefore remains a mystery to most of the medical profession. Alternatively they may find it easier to discredit homeopathy than to make an effort to read about it and understand it. Accordingly they could then recommend it or at best suggest that a patient could try it.

We read reports of hospitals being overwhelmed by the amount of people needing help and advice about their health, with huge waiting lists for outpatient and surgical procedures. People are often dissatisfied with the service they are provided with and the options they are given. However, most people are unaware that there is an alternative option available. It would be great for doctors to be more open minded and make

suggestions for patients to try an alternative approach. However, the majority of doctors appear to remain intent on keeping all of their patients and not allowing people to seek an alternative path that may lead them to better health and wellbeing as a result. Doctors do not usually understand or choose to become informed, and therefore negate homeopathy as an effective form of treatment. The pharmaceutical companies invest a large amount of money in selling new drugs and medical reps reward doctors handsomely if their drugs are promoted. It has been rumoured that a doctor is rewarded with holidays or other perks including financial remuneration if they promote particular drugs. There was a recent documentary on Panorama highlighting this a few weeks ago.

The pharmaceutical industry is extremely lucrative and therefore appears to spend time and effort discrediting and negating Homeopathy at every corner. However through these actions Homeopathy is actually growing in popularity because any form of publicity is good. The negative publicity the pharmaceutical industry is giving homeopathy is still advertising it as a threat to the powers of pharmaceutical drugs. If Homeopathy is so dilute and ineffective why is it is such a threat to the pharmaceutical industry is therefore the burning question.

4 Million pounds in invested by the National Health Service (NHS) into Homeopathy to preserve people's freedom of choice about their health. There are currently 4 homeopathic hospitals and intermittently there are campaigns for their closure fuelled by Homeopathy being a waste of money as it is so ineffective. Each year numerous prescriptions are written for anti- depressants, sleeping tablets, as doctors struggle to support people with emotional problems and complaints. Are doctors therefore the main block to Homeopathy? It would seem however that the younger generation of doctors are aware of Homeopathy, and are beginning to consider it as a method that may support many patients when going through difficult times. It is a doctor's personal choice on what they believe as best for their patients.

When considering a form of treatment doctors have to consider how much time they have available for their patients. Most appointments with the GP are for approximately 5 minutes. This is mostly not adequate time to explore the problem or examine the patient and so most GPs are stressed and working under great pressure. In The Telegraph article GPs vote on charges for visits to surgery on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014: *"GPs are voting to bring British health care in line with successful systems in France, Germany and Scandinavia where payment for GP appointments is common and the fees are known as "responsibility payments."* Therefore if people are more open or forced to pay for their healthcare; better value for money could be gained by choosing Homeopathy. A Homeopathic appointment would be where a patient will be seen for on average an hour in the first consultation and at least half an hour in each follow up. This would alleviate the pressure of the NHS and also give people time and attention that they richly deserve.

Homeopathy is a safe, supportive, cost effective form of medicine that should be free from blocks and negativity. *"It is a form of medicine that is suitable for everyone, young and old. It focuses on you as an individual, concentrating on treating the patient's specific physical and emotional symptoms, to give long lasting benefits."* What have you got to loose why not find a Homeopath and book an appointment today?

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