



The Research Evidence Base for Homeopathy

Systematic reviews of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) of homeopathy

- Four of five major comprehensive reviews of RCTs in homeopathy have reached broadly positive conclusions.¹⁻⁴ Based on a smaller selection of trials, a fifth review came to a negative conclusion about homeopathy.⁵
- Two major reviews of RCTs of *individualised homeopathy* have reached broadly positive conclusions.^{6,7}
- Positive conclusions have been reported in 9 of 35 reviews of RCTs in specific categories of medical condition (the other 26 are largely inconclusive):
 - allergies and upper respiratory tract infections^{8,9}
 - childhood diarrhoea¹⁰
 - post-operative ileus¹¹
 - rheumatic diseases¹²
 - seasonal allergic rhinitis¹³⁻¹⁵
 - vertigo¹⁶

Placebo-controlled RCTs of homeopathy - the original data

- Up to the end of 2014, the peer-reviewed literature included 153 papers reporting placebo-controlled RCTs, of which 104 have data eligible for our analysis: 43 positive; 5 negative; 56 not statistically conclusive. In addition to the medical conditions above, there is a positive balance of evidence in the following, for example:
 - influenza^{17,18}
 - insomnia¹⁹⁻²¹
 - sinusitis^{22,23}
- There is evidence from singleton placebo-controlled RCTs in favour of homeopathy for a number of other conditions including: bronchitis,²⁴ chronic fatigue syndrome,²⁵ fibromyalgia,²⁶ premenstrual syndrome.²⁷

Cost effectiveness of homeopathy

- Integration of homeopathy with conventional treatment is associated with better clinical outcomes for similar or lower costs.²⁸⁻³⁰

Clinical observational studies

- 70.7% of 6,554 follow-up patients, treated at Bristol Homeopathic Hospital for a wide range of chronic medical complaints, reported positive health changes.³¹
- Many patients who attended the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital were able to reduce or stop conventional medication following homeopathic treatment.³²

Basic Science

- Laboratory research has obtained evidence that water may retain information about homeopathically-prepared solutes.³³⁻³⁵
- Additional laboratory studies have shown that homeopathic dilutions can exert biological effects^{e.g. 36-38}

REFERENCES

1. Kleijnen J, Knipschild P, ter Riet G. Clinical trials of homeopathy. *Br Med J* 1991; 302: 316–23.
2. Linde K, Clausius N, Ramirez G, et al. Are the clinical effects of homeopathy placebo effects? A meta-analysis of placebo-controlled trials. *Lancet* 1997; 350: 834–43.
3. Linde K, Scholz M, Ramirez G, et al. Impact of study quality on outcome in placebo controlled trials of homeopathy. *J Clin Epidemiol* 1999; 52: 631–6.
4. Cucherat M, Haugh MC, Gooch M, Boissel JP. Evidence of clinical efficacy of homeopathy – A meta-analysis of clinical trials. *Eur J Clin Pharmacol* 2000; 56: 27–33.
5. Shang A, Huwiler-Muntener K, Nartey L, et al. Are the clinical effects of homeopathy placebo effects? Comparative study of placebo-controlled trials of homeopathy and allopathy. *Lancet* 2005; 366: 726–32.
6. Linde K, Melchart D. Randomized controlled trials of individualized homeopathy: a state-of-the-art review. *J Altern Complement Med* 1998; 4: 371–388.
7. Mathie RT, Lloyd SM, Legg LA, et al. Randomised placebo-controlled trials of individualised homeopathic treatment: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Syst Rev* 2014; 3: 142.
8. Bornhöft G, Wolf U, Ammon K, et al. Effectiveness, safety and cost-effectiveness of homeopathy in general practice – summarized health technology assessment. *Forsch Komplementärmed* 2006; 13 Suppl 2: 19–29.
9. Bellavite P, Ortolani R, Pontarollo F, et al. Immunology and homeopathy. 4. Clinical studies – Part 1. Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative Medicine; eCAM, 2006; 3:293-301
10. Jacobs J, Jonas WB, Jimenez-Perez M, Crothers D. Homeopathy for childhood diarrhea: combined results and metaanalysis from three randomized, controlled clinical trials. *Pediatr Infect Dis J* 2003; 22: 229–34.
11. Barnes J, Resch K-L, Ernst E. Homeopathy for postoperative ileus? A meta-analysis. *J Clin Gastroenterol* 1997; 25: 628–33.
12. Jonas WB, Linde K, Ramirez G. Homeopathy and rheumatic disease – Complementary and alternative therapies for rheumatic diseases II. *Rheum Dis Clin North Am* 2000; 26: 117–23.
13. Wiesenauer M, Lütke R. A meta-analysis of the homeopathic treatment of pollinosis with *Galphimia glauca*. *Forsch Komplementärmed Klass Naturheilkd* 1996; 3: 230–6.
14. Taylor MA, Reilly D, Llewellyn-Jones RH, et al. Randomised controlled trials of homeopathy versus placebo in perennial allergic rhinitis with overview of four trial series. *Br Med J* 2000; 321: 471–6.
15. Bellavite P, Ortolani R, Pontarollo F, et al. Immunology and homeopathy. 4. Clinical studies – Part 2. eCAM 2006; 3:397-409.
16. Schneider B, Klein P, Weiser M. Treatment of vertigo with a homeopathic complex remedy compared with usual treatments: a meta-analysis of clinical trials. *Arzneimittelforschung* 2005;55: 23–9.
17. Ferley JP, Zmirou D, D'Adhemar D, Balducci F. A controlled evaluation of a homeopathic preparation in the treatment of influenza like syndromes. *Br J Clin Pharmacol* 1989; 27: 329–335.
18. Papp R, Schuback G, Beck E, et al. Oscillocoquinum® in patients with influenza-like syndromes: a placebo-controlled double-blind evaluation. *Br Homeopath J* 1998; 87: 69–76
19. Kolia-Adam N, Solomon E, Bond J, Deroukakis M. The efficacy of *Coffea cruda* on insomnia: a double blind trial. *Simillimum* 2008; 21: 91–99.
20. Naudé DF, Couchman IMS, Maharaj A. Chronic primary insomnia: efficacy of homeopathic *simillimum*. *Homeopathy* 2010; 99: 63–68.
21. Harrison CC, Solomon EM, Pellow J. The effect of a homeopathic complex on psychophysiological onset insomnia in males: a randomized pilot study. *Altern Ther Health Med* 2013;19: 38-43.
22. Friese K-H, Zabalotnyi DI. Homeopathy in acute rhinosinusitis. A double-blind, placebo controlled study shows the effectiveness and tolerability of a homeopathic combination remedy. *HNO* 2007; 55: 271–7.
23. Zabolotnyi DI, Kneis KC, Richardson A, et al. Efficacy of a complex homeopathic medication (*Sinfrontal*) in patients with acute maxillary sinusitis: a prospective, randomized, doubleblind, placebo-controlled, multicenter clinical trial. *Explore (NY)* 2007; 3: 98–109.
24. Diefenbach M, Schilken J, Steiner G, Becker HJ. Homeopathic therapy in respiratory tract diseases. Evaluation of a clinical study in 258 patients. *Z Allgemeinmed* 1997; 73: 308–14.
25. Weatherley-Jones E, Nicholl JP, Thomas KJ, et al. A randomized, controlled, triple-blind trial of the efficacy of homeopathic treatment for chronic fatigue syndrome. *J Psychosom Res* 2004; 56: 189–97.
26. Bell I, Lewis D, Brooks A, et al. Improved clinical status in fibromyalgia patients treated with individualized homeopathic remedies versus placebo. *Rheumatology* 2004; 43: 577–582.
27. Yakir M, Kreitler S, Brzezinski A, et al. Effects of homeopathic treatment in women with premenstrual syndrome: a pilot study. *Br Homeopath J* 2001; 90: 148–53.
28. Witt C, Keil T, Selim D, et al. Outcome and costs of homeopathic and conventional treatment strategies: a comparative cohort study in patients with chronic disorders. *Complement Ther Med* 2005; 13: 79–86.
29. Witt CM, Lütke R, Baur R, Willich SN. Homeopathic medical practice: long-term results of a cohort study with 3,981 patients. *BMC Public Health* 2005; 5: 115.
30. Trichard M, Chauferin G, Nicoloyannis N. Pharmacoeconomic comparison between homeopathic and antibiotic treatment strategies in recurrent acute rhinopharyngitis in children. *Homeopathy* 2005; 94: 3–9.
31. Spence D, Thompson E, Barron S. Homeopathic treatment for chronic disease: a 6-year university hospital based outpatient observational study. *J Altern Complement Med* 2005; 5: 793–8.
32. Sharples F, van Haselen R, Fisher P. NHS patients' perspective on complementary medicine. *Complement Ther Med* 2003; 11: 243–8.
33. Rey L. Thermoluminescence of ultra-high dilutions of lithium chloride and sodium chloride. *Physica (A)* 2003; 323: 67–74.
34. Bell IR, Lewis DA, Brooks AJ, et al. Gas discharge visualisation evaluation of ultramolecular doses of homeopathic medicines under blinded, controlled conditions. *J Altern Complement Med* 2003; 9: 25–38.
35. Elia V, Niccoli M. Thermodynamics of extremely diluted aqueous solutions. *Ann N Y Acad Sci* 1999; 879: 241–8.
36. Linde K, Jonas WB, Melchart D, et al. Critical review and meta-analysis of serial agitated dilutions in experimental toxicology. *Hum Exp Toxicol* 1994; 13: 481–92.
37. Belon P, Cumps J, Ennis M, et al. Histamine dilutions modulate basophil activation. *Inflamm Res* 2004; 53: 181–8.
38. Witt CM, Bluth M, Albrecht H, et al. The in vitro evidence for an effect of high homeopathic potencies – A systematic review of the literature. *Complement Ther Med* 2007; 15: 128–38.