

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HOMEOPATHY

Homeopathy was founded in the late 1700's by a medical doctor named Samuel Hahnemann. Disappointed in medicine at the time, he gave up his practice and became a medical translator. He was fluent in 7 languages.

In his studies as translator, he became curious about a certain a South American bark, Chincona (from which quinine was later made) that could cure malaria but also caused the same symptoms when taken in quantity by a healthy person. He then took an extract from the bark and experimented on himself...taking successive doses of the medicine until he developed symptoms – (chills, weakness, and sweats - similar to malaria). From this discovery and further experiments, he discovered the 'Law of Similars'.

Hahnemann was aware that Hippocrates, 460 bc to 370 bc, the father of modern medicine (Hippocratic Oath), had referred to two ways to cure, similars and opposites. Opposites is what we now know of as western, conventional medicine (i.e. ANTI-biotics).

But it was Hahnemann who fleshed out and proved Hippocrates' theory regarding similars. He began to dilute and energize each substance to a high level in order to stimulate healing without causing too strong a reaction. Since Hahnemann's time, nearly 3000 remedies have been created from tests called 'provings'. The proving process is one of giving a remedy to a group of healthy people to see what symptoms it can create. These are double blind placebo controlled studies. What symptoms the substance can create are also the symptoms it can cure (the Law of Similars). Hahnemann proved over 100 remedies on himself...living an extremely vital life until he was 88 (life expectancy was in the 40s at that time).

In the late 1800's there were more than 20 Homeopathic medical schools in America. Homeopathy stood along side conventional medicine and was equally accredited and accepted. In fact, three of the main medical schools in America, started out as Homeopathic medical schools: New York Medical School, Boston University School of Medicine, and Univ. of Michigan Medical School at Ann Arbor.

A statue of Samuel Hahnemann (the founder of Homeopathy) stands on the grounds of the White House in view of the president's window. In WW1 there was a homeopathic medical corp. But homeopathy slowly lost its footing in the last century, so as to almost disappear in the US until recently.

So what happened?

When the AMA was formed in the mid 1850s they aggressively squelched Homeopathy because they felt threatened by Homeopathy's therapeutic successes and also because Homeopathic ranks were filled with MD's who were abandoning conventional medicine for homeopathy. The AMA was so serious about this that MD's lost their licenses for consulting with homeopaths. One of these was consulting with his wife, who was a homeopath.

Because Homeopathy requires individualized treatment, each remedy selection tailored to the unique symptomatic profile of each patient, a physician could not just say "take this for that condition". So, though homeopathy was more effective, it was also a more arduous process and less financially profitable. The source for homeopathic medicines are simple and natural so not patentable....so... no money to be made there (consider the money made in prescription meds now). And since it is preventative medicine, if people did not deteriorate with chronic disease, there would be less money to make.

Homeopathy is beginning to return as a popular alternative to expensive conventional options. Because it is preventative medicine, promotes cure, and is relatively inexpensive, it is clearly one major option to the country's health care crisis.