

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO HOMEOPATHY

Dr. Richard Ezgur, founder of The Chicago Homeopathy Study Group, specializes in the practice of pure/classical homeopathy as practiced by Hahnemann. Whether used in conjunction with conventional medicine, or as a natural alternative, homeopathy is often the treatment of choice to recover one's health most safely, efficiently, completely, and permanently. Dr. Ezgur has seen excellent results, and often cure, in the homeopathic treatment of patients with a wide variety of health problems including: chronic pain, infections, allergies and asthma, skin conditions, arthritis, headaches, disc herniations, sciatica, back pain, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, infertility, anxiety, depression, heartburn, and irritable bowel. It is becoming increasingly popular as more people are discovering homeopathy's far-reaching effects, and looking for true alternatives to conventional medicine. Homeopathic remedies are natural, safe, completely non-toxic, and free of harmful side effects. Homeopathic medicine works by triggering a reaction of the body to heal itself. It optimizes the body's ability to heal, so that a complete cure is often achieved (even in the most serious acute and chronic diseases) and further treatment becomes no longer necessary. Because of its great success, homeopathy is gaining increased popularity in Chicago and other major cities throughout the world.

What homeopathy is not

Because homeopathy is so poorly understood, before explaining what homeopathy is, it is useful to explain what it is not.

While homeopathy is a natural form of treatment and may be used along with nutritional therapies, it does not specifically involve the use of vitamins, minerals, and herbal therapies. Rather than using many different (and often expensive) vitamins and herbs, homeopaths typically prescribe only one single carefully chosen homeopathic remedy to address all of the patient's symptoms. Exactly what a homeopathic remedy is will be discussed in a later section.

In homeopathy, we do not treat the disease or suppress symptoms. Instead, we treat the patient directly, so that the body is able to overcome the disease naturally, safely, and permanently. An underlying philosophy of homeopathy is that, under the proper conditions, the body has the ability to heal itself, even in diseases that may otherwise seem hopeless.

Homeopathy's success does not rely on the placebo effect. While the placebo effect has been widely studied and understood to often exert a powerful influence on human health, homeopathy works in a much different way. For example, the placebo effect has been demonstrated to act quickly, at the beginning of treatment, but then to diminish over time. This is typically the exact opposite of how a patient responds to a homeopathic remedy. In other words, most patients under homeopathic care will feel better the longer they are under treatment, until complete cure is achieved. At that point, the remedy can be discontinued, but the improved state of health remains. The placebo effect, and how it differs from the effects of homeopathy, will be discussed in greater detail in a later section.

Homeopathy is not an unproven science. Despite many obstacles to research, including the lack of a multi-billion dollar industry to fund it, many studies have been conducted in reputable medical journals, including double-blind, randomized controlled trials, which demonstrate the effectiveness of homeopathy. This will be discussed in detail in a later section.

What is homeopathy?

Developed by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician who lived between 1755 and 1843, homeopathy is a scientific method of treatment that is based on the application of the law of similars, which states that "a substance that causes, in a healthy person, symptoms similar to those of a disease state, can cure a sick person in that similar disease state." The Latin phrase *Similia similibus curentur* ("let likes be cured by likes") defines the guiding principle of homeopathy.

This law of similars is based on years of observation and a number of discoveries and reflections found throughout the history of medicine, long before Hahnemann's time. Even Hippocrates, the "Father of Medicine," had stated that cure could be achieved through the action of "similars." Hahnemann first experienced the law of similars while translating a textbook of medicine in which it was reported that cinchona bark was used to cure malaria. He decided to test Hippocrates' theory by taking some cinchona bark himself, and found that as a healthy person, he actually developed symptoms very similar to those of malaria. This led Hahnemann to develop a hypothesis that cinchona appears to cure malaria because it produces the symptoms of malaria in healthy people. After testing many other substances in this same way, Hahnemann began to treat people utilizing substances found in nature that would create the same pattern of symptoms for which they were seeking treatment. He met with such great success that his hypothesis became an indisputable fact: **if a substance can cause a pattern of symptoms in a healthy person that is similar to the pattern of symptoms of the patient, then that substance will be an effective treatment for that patient.** Thus, the main goal of the homeopathic physician is to identify the one substance found in nature (the homeopathic remedy) that produces a pattern of symptoms most similar to those that the patient is suffering from.

Another example of the application of the law of similars would be this: if you're chopping onions, your eyes may water, itch, and burn. You may also develop a runny nose with sneezing. If you had this similar pattern of symptoms during a cold or hayfever, then a highly diluted homeopathic remedy made from red onion (*Allium cepa*) might be an effective homeopathic treatment of this condition. Yet one more example would be the use of the homeopathic remedy of *coffea*, prepared from coffee, which is often used to treat the same type of insomnia that too much coffee can cause.

Because the application of the law of similars is so useful in treatment of patients with a variety of diseases Hahnemann came up with the term homeopathy, from the Greek "homoios" (similar) and "pathos" (suffering).

Many people have compared the way homeopathy works to that of allergy shots and vaccinations. This can be a useful analogy, since all three treatments involve utilizing a diluted substance that triggers a therapeutic reaction from the body itself. None of these treatments offer an immediate chemical suppression of symptoms in the way that most conventional drugs do. Neither the homeopathic remedy, allergy shot, or vaccination instantly cure the patient (although in many acute conditions, a homeopathic remedy can trigger a healing reaction that may bring about significant symptom reduction within hours or minutes). Instead, all 3 of these treatments rely on a period of time in which the body needs to react, thereby leading to future improvement. Allergy shots trigger various immune system responses which ultimately can lead to a decreased allergic response to various allergens (dust, pollen, animal dander, etc.) Vaccinations trigger the body to manufacture its own antibodies which can ultimately help the body to fight off future infection. Because a homeopathic remedy is prescribed holistically, and based upon ALL of the unique symptoms of the individual (including mental & emotional factors, body temperature, food cravings, and physical symptoms of the entire body) it triggers a more GLOBAL healing reaction. So, instead of just triggering an immune system response (as in allergy shots and vaccinations), the homeopathic remedy triggers a deeper, wide-reaching comprehensive healing reaction, that allows the patient to fully regain their health, on all levels (mental, emotional, physical, etc.) The other advantage of the homeopathic remedy is that it is much more diluted than allergy shots or vaccinations and contains no harmful toxins, so that it is free of side-effects, chemical toxicity, or adverse interactions with other drugs or food supplements.

How does homeopathy work?

To answer this question, we must first understand the basic causes of disease. In general, one can assert that disease is a state of imbalance resulting from the combination of several factors. These factors include external influences such as lifestyle (diet, exercise, and mental hygiene), environmental exposures, microbes (bacteria and viruses), as well as physical and emotional trauma. However, in order for these external factors to actually cause a disease, the individual must also possess some internal, intrinsic, constitutional susceptibility to certain types of illness, often determined largely by heredity. This susceptibility or sensitivity represents a disturbance or imbalance in an individual's general state of health. If the person's overall state of health is weak and/or imbalanced, he or she is more susceptible to many of these external factors and diseases, and generally does a poor job of healing.

For example, consider a group of passengers flying on an airplane in the middle of the cold and flu season. Obviously, there is a very high concentration of bacteria and viruses circulating through the air, to which all of the passengers are exposed. Over the next several days, some of the passengers will develop a cold, flu, or bacterial infection, but many will not. Why is it that we can observe this phenomena in nature to be true? The answer lies in the individual's unique, intrinsic, constitutional predisposition, as well as the overall strength and balance of the individual's state of health at that time. Some people are simply more susceptible to developing colds than others. Other people may be prone to developing a cold but only when "off-balance" (under extreme stress, during a period of inadequate sleep, etc). Careful observation reveals that these factors of susceptibility and state of health seem to be more important than the mere exposure to a germ, in determining who will actually get sick.

This concept of constitutional susceptibility and state of health also explains why it is so that when some people are exposed to physical or emotional stressors they feel fine or recover easily, while others will, for example, develop a headache. Yet still others exposed to the same stressors will develop a completely different pattern of symptoms or a disease that they are more uniquely susceptible to, including, for example: asthma, hay fever, insomnia, depression and anxiety, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic pain, fatigue, etc.

Symptoms of disease are evidence that the body is trying to overcome the disease but that it is not fully able to do so on its own. As described above, this inability to overcome disease is due primarily to the individual's inherent predispositions and imbalanced state of health. Homeopathy works by triggering a reaction of the body to correct the imbalance (the disease state), enabling the organism to rebalance itself globally so that the susceptibility to sickness is greatly decreased and the body's ability to heal is dramatically enhanced, allowing for a true cure. This healing reaction is triggered by the homeopathic remedy, according to the law of similars. This law of similars asserts that bringing together similar patterns – the disease pattern of the patient and the disease pattern of a similar remedy – will result in the destruction of the patient's disease pattern.

Precisely how the homeopathic remedy actually propels the body's healing forces into action is still not entirely understood. However, this does not in any way diminish the extraordinary results that homeopaths and their patients have experienced for over two hundred years. In fact, the precise mechanism of action of many conventional medications used today are still largely unknown. For example, how aspirin worked had not been discovered even after decades of use. Unfortunately, there has always been a tendency of scientists to reject new observations if they contradicted a previously accepted viewpoint. This, however, represents a very biased and unscientific way of looking at the world. It is precisely this type of belief system that rejected the idea that the earth was spherical, when everyone at the time "knew" that the earth was flat.

Despite a proven mechanism of action of homeopathic remedies, several theories have been developed to explain the well-documented results that modern scientific research has confirmed. In general, these theories rely on an underlying philosophy that the body has the ability to heal itself. Homeopathy's conception of the body's healing energy is called the *vital force*, which is similar to the Chinese medicine/acupuncture concept of *qi* (pronounced "chee"), the Indian medicine/yoga concept of *prana*, and the chiropractic concept of the body's *innate intelligence*. Clearly, under optimal circumstances, the body does indeed have the ability to heal itself, as evidenced by the healing of a cut or wound on the skin, or the body's ability to fight off or resist infections. Because of this ability, homeopathy focuses on treating the patient, rather than the disease. In this way, the vital force can be triggered to react to the disease, so that the body is better able to fight off the disease on its own.

The leading theory that explains how homeopathy works relies upon the phenomenon of *homeostasis*. Homeostasis is defined as "the state of equilibrium (balance) in the body with respect to various functions and to the fluids and tissues, and the processes through which such bodily equilibrium is maintained." In other words, the body will typically react to outside influences or stressors in an attempt to restore the balance of health, or homeostasis. If the vital force is strong and balanced, it will be able to recover quickly from these outside stressors. However, if it is weak and unbalanced, symptoms will develop as a sign that the body is having trouble overcoming the disease, and a chronic disease may develop.

Homeopathy works by giving the body that is no longer successfully reacting to the disease the help it needs to react in a more complete and balanced way, in order to overcome the disease on its own. When the homeopathic remedy is given, it acts as a new outside influence or stress. The body will, in turn, react to this stressor in an attempt to restore homeostasis. And if the remedy was carefully chosen so that its pattern of symptoms are the most similar (ie, the most homeopathic) to the individual's pattern of symptoms, then the remedy "gains the attention" of the vital force and encourages it to react to the remedy. In reacting to the remedy, the body's vital force is "tricked" in a sense into actually reacting against the disease at the same time, because the symptoms of the remedy and the disease are so similar. With the help of the remedy, the body's reaction to the disease is optimized, leading to an eventual cure.

Another way of looking at how the body's healing reaction may be triggered is to compare one's state of health to that of a pendulum. A healthy state of homeostasis is one in which the pendulum is hanging at its lowest center point, perfectly balanced. As the pendulum reacts to different stressors, it will swing back and forth but eventually will come to rest, balanced at its lowest center point again, assuming that body is operating efficiently, in a state of equilibrium or homeostasis. If not, and the body is in a diseased state, the body could, for example, overreact to an otherwise harmless substance, as is the case with an allergic or inflammatory reaction. The pendulum could swing wildly out of proportion to the stressor, and get stuck, for example, off to the right. The conventional medical approach would be to try to force the pendulum back to the left, in the same way that antidepressants would be used to force the brain out of its depressed state, or anti-inflammatory medications used to suppress inflammation. The homeopathic approach would be to use a remedy to gently nudge the pendulum a bit further to the right, in the same direction as the pendulum's already distorted position.

By introducing a stimulus which is similar to the existing pattern of disease or distortion, the pendulum becomes unstuck and then the body's vital force, or homeostatic mechanisms, are able to react to this further state of imbalance, bringing it back toward homeostasis.

In contrast, conventional medications are generally given for their *chemical effects* on the organism, which are *opposite* to the state of disease. For example, an anti-inflammatory is given to suppress symptoms of inflammation. Conversely, in homeopathy, a remedy is given to provoke a *reaction* of the organism. This reaction is the healing reaction, not a direct chemical effect. **Since only the living organism can truly heal itself, the homeopathic remedy does not do the healing; it is merely an influence used to provoke a reaction of the vital force to bring about recovery.** The greater the degree of similarity between the pattern of symptoms that are provoked by the remedy on a healthy person and the pattern of symptoms displayed by the person who is sick, the greater will be the recovery.

Thus, the patient overcomes the disease because of the restoration of the vital force. **When the vital force is normalized, the individual's susceptibility to disease decreases over time.** In one of our prior examples, the patient becomes less and less susceptible to colds and infections in general. Similarly, under homeopathic treatment, chronic pain, headaches, allergies, and asthma tend to become less frequent and weaker over time, until they eventually just go away. This decreased sensitivity or susceptibility is a common scenario observed during the course of homeopathic treatment of virtually all disease because homeopathy, instead of merely suppressing the symptoms, actually addresses the fundamental cause of the disease. The ultimate result of homeopathic treatment is a true cure, which the body accomplishes naturally. **The total health of the individual is fully restored, and the remedy and/or other medications are often no longer needed.**

What is a homeopathic remedy?

Homeopathic remedies are prepared from one single natural substance, as found in the animal, plant and mineral kingdoms. One example of a homeopathic remedy is called Apis mellifica. This is a highly diluted remedy prepared from the venom of a honey bee, commonly used to treat bee stings, certain types of sore throats, and many other conditions. Instead of utilizing the original or "crude" substance (as in vitamin and herbal therapies), homeopathy's remedies are prepared by a process involving thousands of painstakingly repetitive dilutions and vigorous shaking, called "succussion". This process of dilution and succussion is called "potentization", because it imparts potency to the homeopathic remedies. The science of Particle Collision Theory plays a role in explaining how this potentization process, which involves thousands of repetitions of particle collisions of the molecules, imparts the tremendous potential of these remedies to trigger the profound healing reactions that are observed in clinical practice. **Although extremely dilute, the potentization process makes each remedy extremely effective yet devoid of all potential allergic or toxic effects, allowing for safe effective healing.**

A very interesting research paper discusses the roles that potentization, particle collision, and nanoparticle science play in the production of homeopathic remedies: <http://www.iberhome.es/boletin/docs/extdilu.pdf>

This paper conclusively demonstrates that even at very high dilutions, the homeopathic remedies still retain some nanoparticles of the original natural crude substance from which they were prepared.

Homeopathic remedies are prepared in laboratories by homeopathic pharmaceutical firms, according to the guidelines of the *Homeopathic Pharmacopeia of the United States (HPUS)*, which was written into law in the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act in 1938. Homeopathic remedies are regulated in the same manner as nonprescription, over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ensures that homeopathic remedies meet stringent legal standards for strength, purity, and packaging. Because of the extremely high dilutions of the remedies, they are extremely safe and completely devoid of all chemical toxicity. Thus, unlike even many herbal preparations, they are extremely safe and effective to use even with pregnant women and infants. In fact, the FDA has publicly stated: "Homeopathic medicines in high dilutions, taken under the supervision of trained professionals, are considered safe and unlikely to cause adverse reactions."

Homeopathic remedies are first scientifically "proven" by testing small amounts of the natural substances on healthy individuals and meticulously recording all of the symptoms experienced by these individuals. After the symptoms from a "proving" disappear, the experiment continues, and the individuals receive yet another dose to confirm the original findings of the first proving. This is done several times and, in many cases, with many individuals to ensure consistent, accurate, and reliable information. Next, this information is combined with information from clinical trials to confirm that the remedy does indeed cure individuals suffering from a pattern of symptoms similar to the pattern of symptoms of the remedy. **Unlike drugs used in conventional medicine, which may only be tested for a few years and typically used without full knowledge of long-term side effects, the homeopathic remedies most commonly prescribed have been used safely and effectively for decades.**

The reason the remedies are so safe is the same reason that makes it so difficult for most people to comprehend how these remedies could possibly work - the remedies are so highly diluted that only a molecule or less of the original substance is chemically present in the remedy. Only some of the original nanoparticles (as confirmed by the scientific paper cited above) which may convey some information from the original crude natural substance remains. This fact has made it easy for skeptics to argue that homeopathy can't possibly work because there can't be any significant chemical effect of a remedy that may not even contain a single molecule of what it was originally prepared from. The funny thing is that these skeptics are correct. As you may recall from the previous section, we already know that the action of the remedy is not a chemical one; it merely triggers a healing reaction of the vital force. One way of thinking about the remedy is that, instead of exerting a chemical influence on the body, it may actually work by communicating information to the body about the pattern of symptoms that the original undiluted substance causes. It is perhaps this information contained in the remedy, not the chemical composition of the remedy, that the vital force may be reacting to.

This concept of a non-chemical healing reaction does not fit the conventional medical model. In fact, the entire concept of homeopathy is so utterly counter-intuitive to the way we have been conditioned to think, that most of us including "scientists" simply dismiss this powerful branch of medicine, as ancient society dismissed Galileo's theory that the earth was not flat, but round. It was "common sense" at the time that the earth was flat, and so Galileo was sent to the Spanish Inquisition for suggesting a "counter-intuitive" idea. The problem with this is that the very nature of true scientific thought relies on being open-minded and dedicated to discovering the truth instead of relying on prejudices, biases, and pre-conceived notions. The data exists, as we will see in the next section, that scientific research has confirmed the safety and effectiveness of homeopathy again and again. But ultimately it will be individuals' positive experiences with homeopathy, open-mindedness, and the continued scientific pursuit of the truth that will sway scientific and public opinion to accept the principles of homeopathy.

One final note on homeopathic remedies: they are relatively inexpensive, especially when compared to other over-the-counter medication, prescription drugs, and even vitamin supplements and herbal preparations. A typical 1 to 2 month supply of one single remedy usually costs around \$10 to \$15. Since only one single remedy is prescribed at any one time, even for a multitude of symptoms, taking the remedy is very simple and inexpensive.

Is there any research that shows homeopathy to be effective?

Yes, there is a growing body of scientific evidence that documents homeopathy to be safe and effective. These 2 links point to a substantial number of scientific studies which demonstrate the safety and effectiveness of homeopathy: <http://www.britishhomeopathic.org/research/> <http://www.homeopathic.org/articles-research>

A major review of dozens of clinical trials of homeopathy concluded that the scientific evidence is strong enough "for establishing homeopathy as a regular treatment for certain indications." (*British Medical Journal*, 1991; 302:316-323). Other research showed the response to homeopathic remedies to be 2.5 to 3 times greater than placebo. (*Lancet*, 1997; 350:834-843).

While we're on the topic of placebo, there are two other points besides the one made in the beginning of this paper which illustrate how the effects of homeopathy are not due to placebo. For instance, homeopathy has been widely practiced with excellent results on animals, infants, and comatose patients, none of whom could possibly respond to a placebo effect. Also, it has been observed that when a patient is given a homeopathic remedy that is not accurately prescribed, there will typically be no response to that remedy. For example, consider the case where the homeopath, although trying to find the right remedy for the patient, fails on their first attempt. In cases like this, both the doctor and the patient believe (or at least hope) that the first remedy prescribed will help the patient. But after the remedy is given, the patient does not improve. After further reviewing the case, the correct remedy is chosen, and then the patient begins to improve. If the results were due to placebo, why did the patient respond to the second remedy, but not the first? The obvious conclusion from these cases is that the effects of homeopathy are clearly not due to the placebo effect. Many other research studies confirm this fact, and just a small few are summarized below.

A randomized controlled trial proved homeopathy to be successful in treating acute childhood diarrhea, especially when virus and/or bacteria were present. Jacobs, Jennifer, L. Margarita Jimenez, Stephen S. Gloyd, James L. Gale, and Dean Crothers, "Treatment of Acute Childhood Diarrhea with Homeopathic Medicine: A Randomized Clinical Trial in Nicaragua", *Pediatrics*, Volume 93, Number 5, pp. 719-725 (May 1994). In fact, the results from this study were successfully replicated later. Jacobs, J., et al. "Homeopathic Treatment of Acute Childhood Diarrhea: Results from a Clinical Trial in Nepal", *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, Volume 6, pp. 131-139 (2000).

Another study showed that homeopathy was far superior to prophylactic doses of antibiotics in preventing respiratory disease in pigs on pig farms. Albrecht, H., et al., "Homeopathy Versus Antibiotics in Metaphylaxis of Infectious Diseases", *Alternative Therapies*, Volume 5, Number 5, pp. 64-68 (September, 1999).

Homeopathy was also shown to be effective in treating rheumatoid arthritis. Gibson et al., *Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, 9, p. 453 (1980).

Allergies were shown to improve with homeopathic treatment. Reilly, D., et al., "Randomized Controlled Trial of Homeopathy Versus Placebo in Perennial Allergic Rhinitis with Overview of Four Trial Series," *British Medical Journal*, 321, p., 471-476, (August 19, 2000)

Faster recovery from the flu with homeopathic treatment was shown. Ferley, J. P., et al., "A Controlled Evaluation of a Homeopathic Preparation in the Treatment of influenza-Like Syndromes," *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, 27, pp. 329-335 (1989).

Homeopathy improved post-operative pain and agitation in children. Alibeu, J. P., et al., "Aconit en Dilution homeopathique et agitation post-operative de l'enfant," *Pediatric* (Bucur), 45:7-8, pp. 465-466 (1980).

Less relapse of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts undergoing homeopathic treatment was shown. Garcia-Swain, Susan, "A Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Trial Applying Homeopathy to Chemical Dependency," Hahnemann College of Homeopathy, Albany, California (June, 1993).

Faster recovery and less treatment failures with homeopathic treatment of otitis media (ear infections) in children. Jacobs, J., et al., "Homeopathic Treatment of Acute Otitis Media in Children: A Preliminary Randomized Placebo-Controlled Trial," *Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal*, 20,, 2, pp. 177-183 (February 2001)

Finally, we are currently awaiting the release of a several thousand-page book: *The Weight of Evidence: Homeopathy in Times of Epidemics and other Statistics*, by Andre' Saine, N.D. In it, Dr. Saine reviews the literature from the past two hundred years regarding the homeopathic treatment of over 15 of the major epidemics afflicting humankind including measles, malaria, pneumonia, and influenza, cholera, typhus, and many others. Many readers will be quite astonished to find that not only has the track record of homeopathy been excellent in the treatment of these diseases, but it has actually been shown to be universally superior to that of conventional medical treatment, which includes the use antibiotics.

What happens during the initial visit to a homeopathic physician?

During the first visit to our Chicago homeopathy practice, you will be asked to describe all of your symptoms in great detail, as well as a complete description of everything that characterizes you as a unique individual, including: emotions, moods, habits, dreams, thoughts, fears, likes, dislikes, sensations, sensitivities, energy level, body temperature, sleep, appetite, food cravings, digestion, and more. Dr. Ezgur will complete this study with a physical examination. This thorough interview requires approximately two to three hours. The better Dr. Ezgur understands you and your unique conditions & patterns of symptoms, the easier it will be for him to reliably identify the most specific and most similar remedy to solve your health problems.

The person who is afflicted with an acute or chronic disease, whether it is due to an infection, a physical or emotional trauma, or some other factor, is in a state of imbalance that is unique to that person. It is important to understand that there is no such thing in homeopathy as one single remedy that is specifically indicated for a particular disease or diagnosis. Remember that the patient, not the disease, is being treated. Therefore, there is no one single "low back pain remedy", or "arthritis remedy". The fact of the matter is that there are typically dozens or even hundreds of remedies that may be indicated to treat a patient with any single disease or diagnosis. This is because the experience of one individual suffering with low back pain, for instance, may be very different from another's. For example, one person may feel more pain in the morning, from sitting, and during cold weather, but better from walking, and have a strong craving for salty food. Another person may feel better during any type of rest, only has pain while walking, and perspires every night during sleep. These two people would be prescribed very different remedies even if they both had disc herniations causing severe right-sided back pain which radiates down the leg to the knee. Another example would be in the case of asthma. Two patients may experience the same type of chest pain and difficulty breathing, but one may be a timid person, worse in cold, dry weather and want icy cold drinks, while the other may be an extrovert, worse in the summer, and thirstless and anxious during an attack. So, the role of the homeopathic physician is to fully understand the totality of all the unique symptoms in the context of the general physical & mental/emotional state of the patient, in order to find the remedy that will be the most specific for this individual in this particular state.

Unlike conventional medicine where one drug is typically prescribed for each symptom or disease, in homeopathy only one specific remedy (prepared from one single substance) will be prescribed to address the totality of the patient's symptoms. This remedy is often administered in a single dose, only once, until the next follow-up visit. Sometimes, however, the patient will be instructed to take the remedy daily for a period of a few weeks. During the follow-up visit, which generally takes place two to three weeks after the original consultation for chronic cases (earlier in acute cases), the homeopathic physician will review all the changes that have occurred since the initial homeopathic remedy was taken. A follow-up visit lasts 20 to 30 minutes on average, but it can last up to 60 minutes in some cases.

If the patient does not see a significant change within the first 3-6 weeks, Dr. Ezgur will usually prescribe a different remedy, and again assess the patient's response during the next follow up visit. Sometimes, 2-3 remedies need to be tried before the best remedy is found, but it is a very rare and complicated case in which more than 4-5 remedies would need to be tried before finding the best one for the patient. But true cure, compared to symptom relief or suppression, takes time. For these reasons, it is recommended that a patient considering homeopathy should be willing to give Dr. Ezgur at least 6 months to find the right remedy that will best trigger the healing reaction.

In our Chicago office, most patients do receive the right remedy (the most similar, or most homeopathic) on the first visit. Assuming this is the case, it is typical to experience a significant (25-50%) improvement within the first 3 to 6 weeks.

Depending upon the patient's reaction, Dr. Ezgur will determine during the follow-up visit how often the patient should continue to take the remedy, and when the next follow-up visit should be scheduled. The patient will usually continue to schedule follow-up visits (either in the office or over the telephone) every 1 to 3 months, depending on their response to the remedy. These follow-up visits are very important, because as the patient's pattern of symptoms improve, they also typically change in many different ways. These changes need to be periodically monitored and evaluated in order to achieve continued improvement and eventual cure. Often, the doctor will need to make changes to the remedy's potency and frequency of use. Also, it is not uncommon for a patient to require several different remedies over a period of time before they are completely cured. Depending on the specifics of the condition including how long the problem has persisted, cure is often seen within hours or days in acute cases, and within weeks to months in chronic cases. A very general rule of thumb is often fairly accurate: in order to reach cure, it takes one month of treatment for every year that the symptoms had been present.

Can I continue taking my prescription drugs while under homeopathic treatment?

Yes. Unlike some drugs, vitamins, minerals, and herbal preparations, homeopathic remedies will not adversely interact with any conventional medications. During the beginning of homeopathic treatment, most patients will continue to take their prescription medication. It is very common for homeopathic treatment to be used in conjunction with other conventional and complementary therapies. A main role of the homeopath is to help coordinate these various therapies in the most appropriate way for each individual patient. Once significant improvement is made, it is common for most patients to work with their prescribing physicians to gradually wean themselves off these drugs, as they become no longer needed.

Which diseases can be treated with homeopathy?

In our Chicago homeopathy practice, we do not treat diseases; we treat the person with the disease. Whether a person has a chronic or an acute disease, all of the symptoms represent a state of imbalance very specific to this individual. When the imbalance is treated with a well-chosen remedy, the healing reaction can be triggered, regardless of the diagnosis. Certain diseases and circumstances in particular individuals may present unique obstacles to healing, but many people have experienced excellent results with very stubborn, severe, and chronic conditions including, but not limited to: chronic pain, infections of all kinds including influenza, common colds, and even pneumonia; allergies and asthma, hay fever, eczema, psoriasis, many types of arthritis including rheumatoid arthritis, tension and migraine headaches, disc herniations and sciatica, back pain, serious injuries, carpal tunnel syndrome, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, infertility, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, ADHD, reflux disease, heartburn, colitis, irritable bowel, and cancer.

Many patients are surprised to learn that cure can result from homeopathic treatment, even in cases involving structural problems where surgery has been recommended. For example, consider the case of a disc bulge or herniation which causes "sciatica" (an often severe pain and/or numbness and weakness, radiating along the course of the sciatic nerve – from the lower back, extending down the leg). How can homeopathy affect a structural lesion like a bulging disc, which may be compressing a spinal nerve? The answer to this question can only be understood if we understand what is truly causing the patient's symptoms in the first place. A bulging disc will often compress a spinal nerve, but research has shown that one third of people with no sciatica symptoms whatsoever happen to have bulging discs. Why don't all of these people with disc bulges experience sciatica? The answer was already explained in a prior section: in order for patients to experience symptoms or disease, two factors must be present. One is the external influence (the compressed nerve, in this case), but the other is the individual's sensitivity or susceptibility to the influence. In other words, if the individual's vital force is strong and balanced, their body can deal with even a moderate degree of nerve compression without a reaction of pain and inflammation. However, if that person is constitutionally sensitive to nerve compression because of a lack of balance in their overall state of health, then even the slightest degree of nerve compression may cause a violent inflammatory response and debilitating pain. So, it is the body's inflammatory *response* to the lesion, not the lesion itself, which often causes the symptoms in an individual. A properly chosen homeopathic remedy can help by triggering the healing reaction that restores a balanced state of health. As a result, the pain is eliminated and the patient's function is fully restored. The same reasoning explains why homeopathy also works in patients with other potentially surgical lesions including tears in tendons like the rotator cuff, and also torn cartilage, as in a torn meniscus of the knee.

Can pregnant women and newborn babies benefit from homeopathy?

Yes. Since homeopathic remedies are devoid of all chemical toxicity, homeopathy is the ideal system of medicine for people of all ages, even the most sensitive like an expectant mother or a newborn baby. Difficulties during pregnancy and delivery, or its aftermath, as well as all the problems experienced by the newborn, can be dealt with safely and efficiently with homeopathy.

How does homeopathy deal with patients affected with problems resulting from emotional trauma, severe grief or the consequence of mood disorders such as anger, depression or anxiety?

Most emotional problems typically normalize with the application of the homeopathic remedy that is the most similar to the state of the patient. Patients who are already under psychotherapy typically discover that they recover far more rapidly, and are ultimately able to be weaned off their medications, after they begin homeopathic treatment.

How does homeopathy address patients with infectious diseases?

Homeopathic treatment is the ideal treatment to optimize the body's natural defenses against microbes. With the appropriate homeopathic treatment, people recover from even the most serious infectious diseases, gently and rapidly. During the past great epidemics such as diphtheria, scarlet fever, typhoid, cholera, yellow fever, malaria, homeopathy decreased mortality by 10 to 30 times versus conventional medicine. During the infamous Spanish flu epidemic of 1918-19, it has been estimated that 25 to 50 million people died world wide under conventional medical treatment. In the United States alone, 550,000 died, approximately 10% of the people afflicted with the flu. Homeopathic physicians at that time, including many in Chicago, documented more than 62,000 patients treated with homeopathy resulting in a mortality of 0.7%. For people who were sick enough to be hospitalized, conventional medicine had a mortality of 30%, while with 27,000 documented hospital cases, homeopathy was reporting a mortality of 1.05% (Journal of the American Institute of Homeopathy, 1921; 13:1028-1043).

Which conditions are outside the scope of homeopathy?

If a patient has a problem that necessitates a referral to a medical specialist or surgeon, the homeopathic physician will make a prompt, appropriate referral. In the case of surgery, which is a significant shock to the organism, homeopathic treatment will be ideal to prepare the patient for the surgery and help him or her recover from the operation. Of course, cases with dislocation or fracture will be dealt with by an orthopedic doctor. For less serious mechanical physical problems, chiropractic manipulation and therapeutic exercises will often be recommended. Generally, people afflicted with genetic, congenital or fixed metabolic diseases or with very advanced degeneration cannot always expect full recovery, but more often a palliative relief with homeopathy, free of the side effects usually expected when palliation is done with modern drugs.

Homeopathy: past, present, and future:

Although homeopathy has been practiced for more than two hundred years, it is still in its early period of growth. By the turn of the 20th century, 8% of all American medical practitioners were homeopaths, and there were 20 homeopathic medical colleges (many of them in Chicago) and more than 100 homeopathic hospitals in the U.S. Despite its excellent results, however, homeopathy struggled to gain greater recognition. In 1847, the AMA (American Medical Association) was formed, partially in response to the threat that "the new school" (homeopathy) represented to the "old school" of (conventional) medicine. The AMA specifically discouraged its members to work with, or refer to homeopaths. (Incidentally, this was a very similar stance that the AMA took against chiropractors, resulting in the chiropractic profession winning an antitrust lawsuit against the AMA in the 1970's). In the early part of the 20th century, other political and social changes caused homeopathy to fall further out of fashion. One reason for this is that homeopathy is a very difficult medical discipline to master, because it involves extremely time-consuming and meticulous attention to detail, combined with in-depth, objective analysis. In a society becoming more focused on "quick-fixes", it became easier for a doctor to prescribe a pain medication for a headache, or antibiotics for an infection, rather than conduct a detailed interview with a patient to choose a specific homeopathic remedy. As we have learned, however, these "quick-fixes" often come at a high cost such as drug-resistant infections and rebound headache syndrome, for example.

Along with the growth of other forms of natural medicine, homeopathy began to see a resurgence in the 1970's, which continues today. In some countries, homeopathy is taught at universities and is recognized as official medicine. In France, 32% of all family physicians use homeopathy in their practices, and at least 40% of the British population receives a homeopathic prescription every year. In Germany, by a mandate of the government, all medical students must now learn the basics of homeopathy. In almost all pharmacies in Europe and Quebec, one can find a homeopathic department. In 1994, the World Health Organization noted that homeopathy has been integrated into the national health care systems of numerous countries, including Germany, the United Kingdom, India, and Mexico. Groups, such as Dr. Ezgur's Chicago Homeopathy Study Group, have begun to spring up around the country. Famous people who have used homeopathy include John D. Rockefeller (who lived 99 years), three American presidents, Mahatma Gandhi, Mark Twain, Samuel Morse, and European royalty (the family physician of the British royal family is a homeopath).

Today, as people are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the limits and/or side effects of conventional medicine, homeopathy is beginning to bloom again and spread throughout the world. People find in homeopathy a system of common-sense medicine that respects the importance of treating the whole person and does so efficiently, without harmful side effects. With the advent of modern communication, the teaching of homeopathy has improved, and a better comprehension and practice of homeopathy has been observed in certain circles.

With careful application of the law of similars, homeopathy grows and evolves as yesterday's limits are continually pushed further back. Homeopathy makes the most of the organism's capacity to heal itself. The limits of homeopathy are only those of the organism to heal itself, which are in fact extraordinary when put to work. Choosing homeopathy for ourselves or our families should not be a question of belief, but a decision based on knowledge acquired through experience. One does not need to believe in homeopathy; one only needs to try it to experience its phenomenal results.

To learn more, you can view Dr. Ezgur's videos of his [Chicago Homeopathy Study Group](#).