

## Building up the scientific evidence base of Homoeopathy

Despite the growing popularity, widespread acceptance and evidence generated in clinical trials, Homoeopathy continues to face criticism from its counterpart.<sup>[1]</sup> Non-believers/conventionalists often argue that the reported clinical effects of such highly diluted remedies may only be 'placebo' or 'psychosomatic effects' as pharmacological effects of such high dilutions are not plausible.

Growing interest in homoeopathic experimentation by scientists of other disciplines such as physicists/biologists/pharmacologists has led to substantial experimentation at molecular, cellular and clinical levels.<sup>[2]</sup> Basic research in Homoeopathy seeks to explore the less explored field of homoeopathic pharmacology towards generating scientific plausibility of ultra-high dilutions and understanding their mechanism of action. In the past, a number of preclinical studies (*in vitro* and *in vivo*) have been conducted which aimed at evaluating the pharmacological activity and/or efficacy of some homoeopathic remedies under potentially reproducible conditions.

One of the earliest attempts, at explaining theoretically the potential effects of the high dilutions, hypothesised that an 'imprint' of homoeopathic 'information' from the molecules dissolved in the remedy is produced by the potentisation process, conserved, multiplied by further potentisation, and then communicated to the body and taken up as a biologic signal.<sup>[3-5]</sup>

The 1994 book 'Ultra High Dilution – Physiology and Physics' (Endler, Schulte, Eds) was the first multi-disciplinary work to address the how and why of the actions of ultra-high dilutions. The October 2015 issue of 'Homoeopathy' was dedicated to a special review of the status quo of research into ultra-high dilutions and is a comprehensive selection of some 20 papers by leading scientists on basic research in Homoeopathy between 1994 and 2015 ranging from immunological models, digital biology to studies conducted on highland amphibians.<sup>[6-9]</sup>

The most widespread hypothesis to explain the mechanism of action of homoeopathic dilutions has been the 'memory of water' effect. While standard physicochemical techniques,<sup>[10,11]</sup> thermoluminescence,<sup>[12]</sup> Raman and Ultraviolet-Visible spectroscopy and other methods<sup>[13]</sup> have shown that water displays large changes in its physicochemical properties, it remains yet to be proven if this account for effects of homoeopathic medicines *in vivo* as well or not.<sup>[14]</sup> A recent paper by Chikramane *et al.* have shown the biological perspective of extreme dilutions of metal-based homoeopathic medicines.<sup>[15]</sup> The team of scientists has demonstrated hormetic cellular activation using high-potency metal-based homoeopathic remedies at doses containing minuscule metal concentrations

of a few femtograms/millilitre (i.e., 10–15 g/ml) levels. Another team of scientists led by Anisur Rehman Khuda-Bukhsh in his review article on the work conducted at University of Kalyani talks about findings of their experiments to answer questions such as plausible mechanism and pathways of biological action including mysteries of 'like cured by likes'.<sup>[16]</sup>

The current issue features an interesting article which reviews the work done by these scientists in the past and suggests for the first time, a phenomenological nano- or microcluster-diseased cell (NAM-DC) interaction model, to demonstrate how hydrogen bonded NAMs, created in the diluted homoeopathic medicines, interact with the DC and ultimately cure the disease. The team brings forth that the homoeopathic healing process associated with proton tunnelling appears to be a quantum biological phenomenon.

The ultra-high dilutions form an essential part of another place of experimentation in Homoeopathy, the Human Pathogenetic Trials. Hahnemann's observation that substances ingested by volunteers, even when diluted, produce symptoms was the background for the first blinded experimental study in Homoeopathy, probably even in the history of pharmacology. It was a trial conducted by homoeopaths in Nuremberg in 1835.<sup>[17]</sup> There has been a shift in methodologies of conducting the proving, with some being conducted in a blinded fashion. Issues such as usefulness of such a methodology considering that homoeopathic epistemology here is circular have long been debated.

A scoping review for a topic that has not yet been extensively reviewed or is of a heterogeneous nature has become an increasingly popular approach for synthesising research evidence recently. These serve to function as a good means to map the existing literature in terms of the volume, nature and characteristics of the primary research.<sup>[18]</sup> Such a scoping review on homoeopathic drug proving research is being reported in this issue.

Another very relevant read in this era of rising lifestyle diseases is an article reporting the results of a single-blind, placebo-controlled, randomised controlled trial in Stage I hypertensive patients. The study shows positive results of individualised Homoeopathy in lifestyle medicine potencies when given along with lifestyle management (LSM) over placebo along with LSM in the said condition and adds to the evidence of effectiveness of individualised Homoeopathy in chronic diseases. Conditions such as hypertension which mostly are accompanied with other comorbidities can best be taken in a pragmatic clinical design.

Further contributing to the scientific evidence pool are the three clinical success stories in which Homoeopathy has

been the aid when no other treatment was useful/available. Such well-reported case studies aptly convey the strength of Homoeopathy and are of interest to every reader, be it a student/teacher/practitioner or researcher. Homoeopathic treatment alone or as an adjuvant has the ability to help patients with cancerous affections. The first case report clearly shows the same, where adjuvant Homoeopathy in a woman suffering from chronic myeloid leukaemia causes improvement not only in her particular complaints, but generally as well, thus causing a sense of well-being.

The second case is of a woman diagnosed with cholelithiasis, in whom homoeopathic treatment could not only relieve the symptoms such as pain, but could also dissolve the multiple gallstones and save her from undergoing surgery in a short span of 3 months. Such an outcome in a condition, where surgery is the indicated line of treatment in most of the cases, adds weight to the promising role of carefully selected homoeopathic similimum.

Diseases of unknown aetiology have always been a domain for a homoeopath, of course due to paucity of any established treatment. Such a case of prurigo nodularis showed a good response to homoeopathic treatment with no signs of recurrence over a period of 1 year. A book review on, '*An update on bowel nosodes with comparisons*' is also featured in this issue.

Remembering and paying our regards to a prominent figure in Indian Homoeopathy, a visionary educationist, a researcher, a compassionate practitioner, a technocrat, a philanthropist and a social reformer, Dr RP Patel, who left us in December 2019 for heavenly abode, we publish his obituary.

Hoping that our first issue of the year is an interesting read for all!

Wishing you all a great year ahead!

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