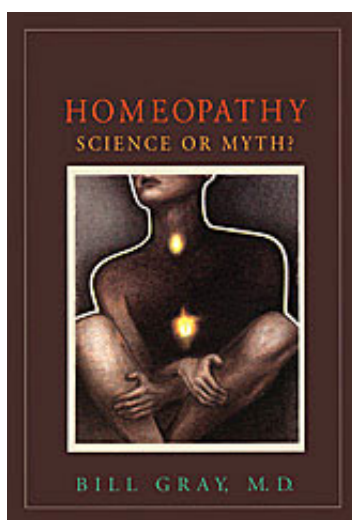


# Bill Gray

## Homeopathy: Science or Myth?

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## *Introduction*

The quest for optimal health has been with mankind since its inception. Theories arose and therapies spread by what worked. Pure empiricism reigned. Often, the functions of healer and spiritual priest were fused, and lore was passed verbally from generation to generation.

The profession of medicine evolved from before Hippocrates based on practical folklore. Eventually, the Rational era came into being. Instead of taking for granted that all things evolved as part of God's Will, early scientists began investigating the Universe to discover laws. Observations became systematized and classified. Basic theories evolved.

As part of the scientific process, the observer and the experiment were separated so as to eliminate subjective bias. What could be observed and documented objectively became the mode of operation. Anatomy, physiology, pathology and other specialties developed. Their evolution depended upon the types of instruments used. Anatomy became histology with the advent of the microscope, and molecular biology became the focus as electron microscopy and sophisticated biochemical techniques evolved.

One of the difficulties inherent in the "scientification" of medicine became reduction of the whole human patient into sub-realms of specialization. Doctors as a profession, who historically were skilled at clinical observation, became more reliant on "objective" laboratory tests. The patient became less of a human being and more of a "case" in the eyes of the profession.

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Treatment, too, became more specialized and dependent on technology. Drugs and surgery became more prevalent, while enhancement of health and the body's own mechanisms of healing became de-emphasized. For awhile, especially with the success of the germ theory and the era of antibiotics, the "scientification" of medicine seemed beneficial and rational.

By the 1950s, however, frustration with these trends in medicine began to be felt. In subsequent decades, outright public rebellion has grown. In the 1950s, Adelle Davis and later Paavo Airola introduced the concept that nutrition was scientific, rational, and even necessary for health. The public caught on quickly. Medical schools lagged by a few decades.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the value of exercise became more apparent, and fortunately the embrace of the public led to fitness clubs and the sight of joggers as integral to our lifestyle and culture.

Despite trends toward health, large portions of the population found themselves still suffering from chronic disease. Despite drastic dietary changes, exercise programs, meditation/visualization regimens, and even therapy to address subconscious issues, people still suffered from chronic disease. Granted, statistics improved along with improved health habits, but chronic disease remained stubborn.

It finally began to dawn on people that most so-called "holistic" techniques were certainly *nurturing* to natural body functioning. But what was needed were ways to significantly *stimulate* the body to heal more efficiently. At this point acupuncture became popular and set the stage for the concept that nontoxic therapies might be tried before more toxic therapies became necessary.

On the level of therapy, a plethora of "alternative" or "complementary"—now more appropriately called "integrative"—medicines have developed. Following the lead of the public, the National Institutes of Health and many medical schools, even some hospitals and HMOs, are turning to a variety of nontoxic yet nurturing and curative holistic treatments. The pendulum has swung back a bit from

strictly scientific medicine to more empirical "what works" medicine, with a renewed focus on the whole person.

It is in this atmosphere that homeopathy is experiencing a revitalization. Having been in existence for two centuries, the inexpensive, nontoxic, and holistic (individualistic) nature of homeopathic treatment holds great appeal. It is a system based on fundamental, verifiable principles of cure. It can be said to be the epitome of holistic treatment—after having an extensive interview covering all aspects of oneself on mental, emotional, and physical levels, one dose of one remedy in vanishingly small amount is given in order to stimulate the body to heal itself. What could be more holistic than that?

One of the impediments to the growth of homeopathy has been its difficulty in clarifying the mechanism of action of remedies—a problem which is answered directly and fully in this book. Another is the extreme precision, subtlety, and dedication required for homeopathic training—alluded to in Chapter 6.

### **Brief History of the Spread of Homeopathy**

Samuel Hahnemann developed the Principles of Similia and Potentization (described in Chapter 1) as well as many others during his productive lifetime of 88 years. Results in his practice caused patients to flock to him from long distances, especially including royalty of several countries. Most dramatic were his nearly infallible cure rates during epidemics of scarlet fever and cholera.

Homeopathy spread rapidly through Europe as a result of the epidemic outcomes, and soon its effectiveness in chronic disease became clear. Because of its inexpensiveness and lack of toxicity, it spread rapidly to India and South America as well. It was introduced to the United States in 1824.

In the United States, there was meager response on the part of MDs, but it spread explosively via lay people. Eventually many MDs adopted homeopathy wholeheartedly. As a matter of fact, the first

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national medical association (allopathic or homeopathic) was the American Institute of Homeopathy, founded in 1844. Ironically, the American Medical Association was founded two years later, in part "to stamp out the scourge of homeopathy." [Winston J, 1999]

A remarkable fact is that in 1890, 25% of American MDs were homeopathic MDs. [Winston J, 1999; Ullman D, 1994] The allopathic profession and the pharmaceutical industry were understandably panicked. The policies of the AMA and of most state medical associations were to actively shun any professional or personal contact with known homeopaths. As remedies are given in such small doses with such great effectiveness, the pharmaceutical Industry felt very threatened.

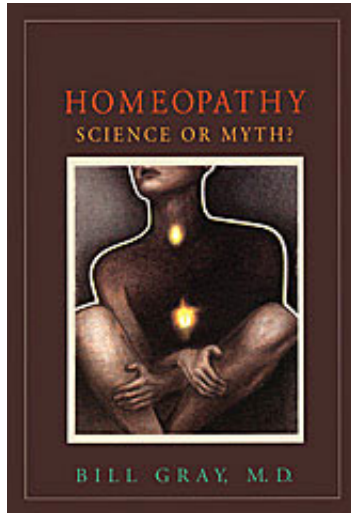
By 1911, an economic and political collusion between allopaths and pharmacists resulted in an official report to Congress—the Flexner report—which required all medical schools to have "scientific" laboratories and surgical suites [Winston J, 1999; Coulter H, 1982]. This caused closure of all homeopathic schools in the United States except three, which dwindled over the ensuing decade.

Thus, despite continued growth elsewhere in the world, homeopathy went into eclipse in the United States until the late 1970s. The quality of homeopathic training declined over several generations in the United States.

Regardless, a few heroic teachers carried the torch to a new generations of young doctors, who fueled the rejuvenation of homeopathy from the 1970s to the present.

Nevertheless, popularity with the public throughout the world has continued and expanded unabated. Public opinion surveys in Europe recently show that 32% of the French, 34% of the Dutch, and 16% of the British public have reported taking homeopathic remedies [Schulte and Endler (1998) p. 23.] In 1990, 1.8 million American adults had used homeopathy. [Update report, 1994], Largely, the resurgence of homeopathy rides the wave of public interest in alternative therapies in general. [Eisenberg DM *et al*, 1993; Chez AR and Jonas WB, 1997]

A corresponding interest is occurring at governmental levels in both the U.S. and Europe. Homeopathy has been included in the founding legislation for the Food and Drug Administration. Indeed, the FDA regularly oversees the activities of the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia Committee and manufacturing and sale of homeopathic remedies [See Chapter 1]. Funding for what is now known as the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine has been exponentially increased as part of the National Institutes of Health—enabling continued funding for homeopathic research.



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