

HOMEOPATHY *VERSUS* ALLOPATHIC TREATMENT IN CHILDREN WITH OTITIS AND COLDS

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Abstract

In recent years, alternative medicine has increasingly gained ground against traditional medicine, in Romania. Consequently, specialists have reported a growing number of cases of children who got ill because of inappropriate treatment, following their parents' decision with regard to the choice of non- allopathic treatment. Unfortunately, professionals who work with children cannot always count on collaborating with loving and cooperative parents, to the best interest of the children. Thus, parents are expected to make appropriate sacrifices for their children or give mental health professionals freedom of action and thought to carry out their work according to their best judgement.

This article aims to notify both the medical and the legal systems with regard to the legal therapeutic conduct in such cases of child illness, in order for their number to decrease.

To conclude, for any medical professional, it is ethical and extremely important to make the optimal choice between protecting the welfare of children and/or maintaining and ensuring respect for the rights of parents who are entitled to practise the religion of their choice but who are also expected to make essential and informed decisions for their children.

Key Words: *children, homeopathy, health, therapies*

JEL Classification: [K32].

1. Introduction

Many European citizens consult homeopathic doctors. Especially for children there is very little data available about the reason for which they consult. (Wassenhovem, Goossens, 2014:103, 257-263), (CAM-CANCER project funded by European Commission within the 5th Framework Programme “Quality of life” How are European patients safeguarded when using complementary and alternative medicine? Jurisdictions, supervision and reimbursement status in the EEA area and Switzerland)

However, in Romania most parents take their children to allopathic medical professionals, and it is their decision what it is the best for their children, if they

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respect the deontology code for treatment. Thus, this article presents two cases of wrong behaviour of parents with regard to their children's medical treatment.

Homeopathy was established and developed in Germany by Samuel Hahnemann in the last 18th century, and since then the theory and practice of homeopathy have developed outside the established health services. (Stub, Musial, 2016: 26, 146-163)

The action of homeopathic remedies is questioned as most remedies are diluted to such a high degree that there is only a theoretical probability that molecules of the original substance are present in the remedy. (Schabe, Karlsruhe, 1960), (Swayne, 2000), (Lockie, 2015) Accordingly, homeopathic remedies of high dilutions are pharmacologically inactive. On the other hand some homeopathic remedies are less dilutes meaning that these remedies could be pharmacologically active. However, research suggests that it is low direct risk connected to homeopathic remedies. (Dantas, Rampes, 2000: 35-38, 89)

Allopathic medicine is an expression commonly used in India to refer to modern systems of medicine. (Roy, 2015).

The practice of medicine in both Europe and North America during the early 19th century is sometimes referred to as heroic medicine because of the extreme measures (such as bloodletting) sometimes employed in an effort to treat diseases. (Simon, 2017) The term *allopath* was used by Hahnemann and other early homeopaths to highlight the difference they perceived between homeopathy and the medicine of that time.

With the term allopathy (meaning "other than the disease"), Hahnemann intended to point out how physicians with conventional training employed therapeutic approaches that, in his view, merely treated symptoms and failed to address the disharmony produced by the underlying disease. Homeopaths saw such treatments as "opposites treating opposites" and believed these conventional methods were harmful to patients. (Whorton, 2004: 18-52)

Practitioners of alternative medicine have used the term "allopathic medicine" to refer to the practice of conventional medicine in both Europe and the United States since the 19th century. The term allopathic was used throughout the 19th century as a derogatory term for the practitioners of heroic medicine (Bates, 2002: 12-28), (Cuellar, 2006: 4) a precursor to modern medicine that did not rely on evidence.

Infections of the upper respiratory system, by the most common cause of illness in infancy and childhood accounting for approximately 50 per cent of all lines in children younger than five years of age. (George, Huges, 1990:413) Young children develop on the average six to ten viral upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs). (Pless, 1982: 24) Changed lifestyle, food habits, which include a lot of preservatives, artificial colours, increasing pollution, compact living have all contributed to an increase in the rate of upper respiratory tract problems in children. Most often, viral respiratory tract infections spread when a child's hands come into contact whit nasal secretions from an infected person. (Ozkan, Dweik, 2004) For various reasons, nasal and respiratory secretions

from children with viral respiratory tract infections contain more viruses than those from infected adults.

Several homeopathic researchers have investigated the effect of homeopathic treatment for common URTI which are frequent in the general population, with often positive results. The unnecessary use of antibiotics in the initial treatment of URTI is currently being questioned. Homeopathy has been used historically to treat this illness, and it is interesting to determine if there are methodologically rigorous to support its effectiveness. (Bellavite, Pontarollo, 2006: 239-301)

Otitis media with effusion is the most common cause of paediatric hearing loss, and a drain on global healthcare resources. It is associated with frequent episodes of acute otitis media and upper respiratory tract infections and linked with environmental and social factors, including diet, smoking households, overcrowding and day care use. Current conventional treatment for otitis media with effusion is unsatisfactory, the area constitutes an “effectiveness gap”. Homeopathy is a relatively common and popular choice of complementary and alternative medicine treatment for childhood conditions, including otitis media. (Fixsen, 2013:102, 145-150)

A research study from Italy suggests that people who choose homeopathy have a relatively high level of education, prefer to participate in the management of their own health and have a lot of information at their disposal, both on conventional and unconventional medicine. (Du, Knopf, 2009: 370-379)

These parents perceive consultation with a homeopath as being more appropriate than consultation with a conventional physician (Rise, Steinsbekk, 2009: 91-96).

We may conclude that the physician did not take all the required measures, in keeping with the current state of knowledge, in order to avoid the unwanted consequences. On the contrary, they managed the medical data irresponsibly, carelessly, and even lacking thoroughness or attention to detail. (Perju – Dumbravă, 2015)

2. Materials and Methods

The study we carried out included two cases from our department in Cluj-Napoca during the last 2 years (2014-2016).

The first patient was a 4-year-old boy, who was suffering from repeated upper respiratory tract infections. The case was reported to us by the police, because the paediatrician had needed their support, as the child had been admitted to hospital, in a bad condition, for several times in the last 2 months. He presented with high fever (39 - 40 degrees centigrade), dehydration, cough, sore throat, sneezing and diarrhoea. During hospitalisation period, the condition of the child had improved. However, after discharge from hospital the symptoms worsened again and consequently, he presented again. What made the paediatrician suspicious, though, were the 2 bruises found on the child's arm, on examination.

As a consequence, the paediatrician called the police who considered calling the Medical Legal Services mandatory.

Following a long conversation with the child's mother, it became obvious that she had never respected the paediatrician's recommendations after the child's discharge from hospital. She has treated him with empirical remedies.

The second case was a social one, namely: 3-year-old girl who was brought to our department by the social services workers, after she lost her hearing in the left ear. Her history revealed repeated episodes of otitis media improperly treated by her mother, who had not taken her to a medical service unit; on the contrary she had chosen to treat her daughter personally with empirical remedies.

3. Conclusion and discussions

Following our research for this scientific article, we found that the use of homeopathic therapies which can be beneficial in the case of physiological imbalances that manifest themselves in the healthy person. However, in such cases certain homeopathic treatment can rebalance the human system, but this has to be only within physiological limits.

Thus, whenever a physiological imbalance exceeds the accepted limits, illness will occur. From this point of view, we consider that homeopathic treatments are inefficient, as their healing action is limited. In order to better understand the previous principle, in what follows we will refer to two merely didactic cases.

Case one regards a patient whose immunity dropped. This patient presented with adjacent symptoms such as fatigability, loss of energy, irritability etc. Before any disease became manifest (respiratory infections, integumentary infections etc.) the patient made use of homeopathic remedies. Very often in such cases, imbalances produced by the decrease in immunity can be rebalanced, but, importantly, only before any disease actually occurs. Practically, homeopathy can benefit only the healthy person in whom the disease did not occur.

Case two refers to a patient with a severe otitis, which is normally easy to diagnose with certainty, leaving no doubt about the diagnosis. In such a case no homeopathic treatment will ever re-establish the imbalance produced by the aforementioned disease. Consequently, the recommended therapy is strictly within the competencies of allopathic medicine. Hence, it is obvious that homeopathic therapies in diseases such as the one mentioned in Case two does not only seem useless, but can also cause aggravating effects in the patient.

Unfortunately, the homeopathic treatments are often associated with ignorant, credulous, manipulable people or with those who have pseudo-scientific affinities. They feel like they are different from their fellow humans, they also feel like having a special view about the treatment of any disease. Such parents will always turn to homeopathic treatments, which, as shown in the case presentation above, will induce side effects, thus, the condition of the patient worsening.

However, parents have to manage the therapies on their own and decide whether to use homeopathic or allopathic drugs, for example when the fever persists or a sore throat is too severe.

To conclude, attention must be drawn to such inappropriate and harmful treatments, in abused children because of their parents' ignorance in terms of health and medicine, highlighting this view to all medical practitioners and law specialists.

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