

Homeopaths treat  
people, not  
diagnoses.

# WHAT IN THE WORLD IS HOMEOPATHY?

Homeopathy uses natural substances that can *cause* symptoms in a healthy person to *cure* similar symptoms in a person who is ill. Can you remember the last time you were stung by a bee? The stinging, burning pain, swelling, heat, and redness are probably etched in your memory. These are the symptoms that you experience when an angry bee injects its venom into your healthy body. How can a poisonous substance like bee venom (*Apis mellifica*) be used as a medicine? It is precisely the fact that it *causes* symptoms that makes it useful as a medicine. Bee venom, when used as a homeopathic medicine, can relieve the pain and discomfort of bee stings as well as other illnesses that have similar symptoms. People suffering from conjunctivitis (pink eye), who complain of stinging or burning pain, redness and swelling of the eyelids, often benefit from *Apis*. The type of arthritis that is hot, red, and swollen with stinging pains may also be cured or helped by a dose of homeopathic bee venom.

If you think about the law of similars, you may realize how different it is from the philosophy of conventional medicine. Most of us in Western society have been taught to believe that the only way to eliminate a bacterial infection is with antibiotics. “Anti” means against. The use of antibiotics is based on the belief that there is a battle being waged in the body which must be won, and that the body is unable to win it without the antibiotics. Antibiotics tend to kill microorganisms that are associated with disease or interfere with their reproduction. This may allow the body to recover from the illness.

A homeopath might also say that the body needs help in fighting the infection, but homeopathy gives that assistance in a different way. When a homeopathic remedy is given, the symptom pattern of the remedy matches the symptoms of the disease and

strengthens the body's own ability to fight the infection and restore balance. Homeopathic theory says that the real cause of an infection is not the microorganism, but the set of conditions in a person's body that provides an environment in which the viruses or bacteria can survive and multiply. If you can restore the natural ecology of the body with homeopathy, the microorganisms will no longer be able to create disease.

In the conventional medical approach, if the stomach is producing too much hydrochloric acid, a drug is given which reduces the stomach's ability to secrete acid. A person suffering from allergies is given an antihistamine, which prevents the release of histamine, the chemical secreted by the mucous membranes in response to an allergen. Steroids, such as hydrocortisone, are used to suppress inflammatory responses.

It may sound like a good idea to fight *against* invading organisms or processes that cause damage to the body. Antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, antacids, antifungals, and antihistamines do produce effects and on the surface relieve illness. Over time, however, these medications may produce mild to severe side effects. The result may be only temporary or superficial healing. These drugs may ultimately cause more serious problems than they cure. Homeopathy, on the other hand, works *with* the body rather than *against* it.

### ***Illness, Balance and Health***

To a homeopath, illness is an energy imbalance that occurs first at the most fundamental levels of the person. This underlying imbalance is the cause of disease and shows itself eventually in the body as symptoms, which are created by the body in the process of trying to correct the imbalance. It is the imbalance itself that homeopathy addresses, using the symptoms as a guide to the natural substance that can be of assistance in the process.

If you are in perfect balance, which is unusual, you will not develop any symptoms. If you are totally healthy, you are free of pain and physical symptoms, have plenty of energy, think clearly, experience happiness and a passion for life, and genuinely care about others. You are free to be yourself and to express your creativity.

Homeopathy attempts to bring each individual to the highest level of health possible on the physical, mental, and emotional levels. Samuel Hahnemann affirmed, “The highest ideal of cure is to restore health rapidly, gently, permanently... in the shortest, surest, least harmful way according to clearly comprehensible principles...”<sup>1</sup>

You may have felt healthier, happier, and more energetic at some earlier time in your life. You may believe that you’re just getting old and that good health is no longer possible for you. Homeopathy can often restore your health and vitality beyond your expectations.

### *The Vital Force and the Defense Mechanism*

The dynamic balance of all the functions of your body within the narrow range that maintains life and health is known as homeostasis. Homeostasis means keeping things static or constant. Imagine that your body is a gyroscope. As long as the gyroscope is spinning vigorously, it will stay in balance, even though outside forces may try to topple it. If you push it to one side, it will return to its upright position naturally.

Homeostatic and self-regulatory mechanisms constantly maintain the physiology of the body. Numerous feedback loops in the body stimulate necessary adjustments in your physiology. When the carbon dioxide content of your blood begins to rise, you breathe more deeply or you begin to yawn. When you drink too much coffee or beer, urination is increased to decrease the liquid volume in your body. When your immune system recognizes a protein that is foreign to your system, antibodies are produced to take the protein out of circulation before it can do any damage.

These self-regulatory mechanisms operate in an organized fashion, but the organizing principle that causes them to function is difficult to observe directly. Physiologists assume that there is an underlying principle because the body continues to live, think, eat, digest, reproduce, and move. When the body fails to do these things, we consider a person to be dead. So what is the difference between being alive and being dead?

Homeopaths believe that, as long as you are alive, there exists within you a living, intelligent energy that is responsible for healing

and maintaining balance in your body, mind, and emotions. This energy is called the *vital force*. The idea has been shared by many cultures throughout the world, using names such as *ki*, *prana*, *mana*, and *life force*. Although the vital force is intangible, its effects are readily apparent.

The *defense mechanism* is the aspect of the vital force that is responsible for preventing illness and bringing all of your systems back into equilibrium. It helps your body repel invading organisms and keeps all of your internal biological functions running smoothly.

The *immune system* is the physical aspect of the defense mechanism. It uses specialized cells and tissues to neutralize, destroy, or immobilize any foreign cells or tissues.

The defense mechanism is not just physical; there are also mental and emotional aspects of the defense mechanism. It is just as responsible for healing the grief from a death in the family, or the confusion and delusions of the schizophrenic mind, as it is for healing a bruised toe, a cold, or an ulcer. It helps you to release anger, grief, and sadness; to forgive those who have hurt you; and to restore your emotional balance. It can also help you regain mental concentration, clarity of thought, and good memory.

You can help strengthen your defense mechanism and prevent minor health problems from becoming more serious if you pay attention to the messages your body is communicating to you. When your defense mechanism cannot prevent a situation, you begin to notice warning signals. You may get a slight sore throat, then a runny nose, then aches and pains, and then a fever. These are signs from the defense mechanism prompting you to pay attention and restore your health. It is your responsibility to take over. You can get more rest, eat lightly, take Vitamin C, and reduce the stress in your life. Suppose that in the process of defending you, however, the body keeps generating more symptoms that become increasingly severe, and do not go away. This is when homeopathy can help.

### ***The Importance of Symptoms***

Common symptoms such as pain, inflammation, fever, swelling, and changes in perspiration, urination, sleep, hunger, and thirst,

often point to an imbalance in the body. Without symptoms, you would never know that you were ill and your homeopath could not assist you in getting better.

Your homeopath takes a careful case history and performs a physical examination when necessary. She observes you, listens to all of your symptoms, then uses them to select a homeopathic remedy. The more peculiar and unusual your symptoms are, the easier it is to find a medicine that uniquely matches them.

Local illnesses without symptoms, such as a brain tumor, rectal polyps, breast lumps, or cancer of the cervix often go undetected for a long time, unless discovered on routine physical examination. Your defense mechanism may not yet have found a way to bring the problem to your attention or to correct it. Sometimes the body generates other symptoms, along with the hidden illness, which you *can* notice. These symptoms often lead your homeopath to discover the illness and to prescribe a remedy which will cure it.

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### *Joan*

32, complained of a skin rash on her face. As part of her routine physical exam, a Pap smear, which was several years overdue, was recommended. The Pap smear results indicated significant precancerous cell changes in her cervix (cervical dysplasia). Although the cervical dysplasia was asymptomatic, the rash led her to seek treatment. Through homeopathy and other natural therapies, both the rash and the cervical dysplasia were cured.

### *The Simillimum*

Homeopaths prescribe only one remedy at a time. This remedy, which best matches your symptoms, is called the *simillimum*. There may be other homeopathic remedies that will have an effect on your symptoms, but there is no other remedy that will work as well. The simillimum is the remedy that will cure your symptoms, based on the principle of like cures like.

At another time, your body might produce a different set of symptoms and require another remedy. This new remedy would be the simillimum *at that time*. In some cases, one remedy is all a

person ever needs to remain healthy. Generally, during treatment for chronic illness, which is called *constitutional treatment*, more than one remedy may be needed over time to help you stay healthy. If the pattern of your symptoms changes enough to fall outside the scope of the original remedy, a new remedy is needed.

### *Individualization of Treatment*

Homeopaths treat people, not diagnoses. When you are ill, your illness has its own unique pattern of symptoms. You will tend to get those illnesses that result from the particular pattern of imbalance that is unique to your personal heredity and environmental influences. If you have a weakness in the urinary system, you may develop symptoms of bladder infections or kidney disease. If your skin is the problem, you may be prone to rashes, herpes or warts. If the digestive system is the focus, you may suffer from ulcers, constipation or hemorrhoids. Patterns of certain illnesses may run in your family and be passed on from generation to generation.

People with the same diagnosis will *not* all need the same homeopathic remedy. There is no one homeopathic treatment, for instance, for flu. Your homeopath needs to know *whose* flu is being treated. *Your* flu requires a homeopathic medicine that matches *your* particular pattern of symptoms. Someone else's flu will respond to an entirely different homeopathic remedy.

You may have a flu that comes on right after exposure to a cold, dry wind. Suddenly, you develop a high fever. You notice, to your surprise, that one cheek is pale and the other red. You sneeze violently, your nose runs like a faucet, and you have a nagging, dry, croupy cough. You feel uncharacteristically restless. You have a strong fear that you might get worse, even die, because your symptoms have come on so suddenly and violently. Your mouth is bone dry and you can't drink enough water. You feel chilled to the core. You need the homeopathic remedy *Aconitum napellus*, which will rapidly restore your health.

Suppose your neighbor gets a flu which comes on gradually, over a few days. Just before she became sick, she was very nervous about giving a speech in front of five hundred people. She feels great exhaustion and can hardly keep her eyes open, or even move. She

experiences icy chills up and down her spine. Her mouth feels like cotton, but she's not thirsty. Her body aches all over, like she's been carrying a fifty pound backpack. Her arms and legs feel terribly heavy. Her limbs tremble. She feels dizzy, drowsy, droopy and dull. Although your neighbor's diagnosis would also be influenza, she needs a different homeopathic medicine. *Gelsemium sempervirens* will not only cure her flu, but may help her stage fright as well.

The following three cases of patients with hay fever show how each individual set of symptoms, even with the same diagnosis, can lead a homeopath to prescribe very different homeopathic medicines.

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### ***Prabha***

Prabha was a 30 year old East Indian woman who was led to homeopathy because of hay fever. Her bouts normally lasted all spring until mid or late summer. She awoke in the morning with a dry cough, congestion in the upper lungs, and slight wheezing. During the day she complained of terrible itching in the ears, Eustachian tubes, and some itching in the throat, nose, and eyes. She had occasional sneezing, runny nose, and dry eyes. The symptoms lasted throughout the day and were better when she was indoors. We gave Prabha *Nux vomica* because of the dry cough with wheezing on waking, combined with the sneezing and itching inside the nose. She received the remedy in the spring, with great benefit. She continued to take it occasionally, as needed, during the summer. When she returned to us the following spring, with the same symptoms, she was again given *Nux vomica*.

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### ***Erik***

Erik, a young Norwegian man, had been bothered by hay fever since the age of five. It was usually worse in the summer, but a severe attack in late March prompted him to see a homeopath for the first time. His main problem was frequent, violent, fitful sneezing, which occurred every so often. He had a watery, runny nose, causing him to "run around with a handkerchief all the time." The skin

under his nose became red and sore. His eyes were itchy, dry, and irritated. His nose was stuffy, whether he was indoors or out. His forehead itched. Erik found himself lethargic with the hay fever and he had slept ten hours the night before. This was extremely unusual for him since he was generally a very high energy person. Since the hay fever began, he was irritable and felt victimized by this acute illness. Erik was given *Sabadilla*, a remedy made from a Mexican grass, which is helpful for spasmodic sneezing, nasal congestion, itching inside the nose, and profuse watery nasal discharge. The sneezing and itching were relieved completely within two days. He briefly experienced a swelling of the nasal passages, which passed.

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### *Todd*

Todd, a 26 year old computer programmer, lamented, "I'm allergic to everything that's not food during hay fever season!" His nose ran all the time. He was using half a box of tissue a day. His eyes were itchy, puffy, and watery. He suffered from a post-nasal drip which made his throat sore. His sinuses sometimes swelled with the hay fever, causing a pressing headache. His symptoms were definitely worse outdoors. He was generally tired and wiped out with the hay fever. In the past it had lasted on and off for four months. This time he saw his homeopath after only a few days since this was his worst bout ever. He reported that he had "tried everything" orthodox medicine had to offer him. Todd received *Allium cepa* (onion). (Think about what happens to you when you slice an onion, and you'll know just the kind of hay fever which needs *Allium cepa*. It works for a hay fever, or a cold, that runs like a faucet, with itchy, watery eyes and lots of sneezing.) Todd called three days later to say his nose was no longer running. The first day after starting the remedy, he experienced lots of sneezing, which passed quickly. Then he had a few mild headaches and pressure behind his eyes. By the time he called, all of the symptoms had gone away.

### *Treating the Underlying Cause of Illness*

Homeopaths find that the root of illness, even if the symptoms are only physical, often begins from a mental or emotional trauma. The

homeopath searches for the *state* of each individual that allows that person to be susceptible to particular symptoms. This state gives rise to a vulnerability that can subsequently result in disease. The state occurs on a mental/emotional level, however the repercussions can occur on any level.

Each homeopathic medicine is characterized by a particular state of mind. Each person, at any given point in time, also experiences a particular state. This state reflects that individual's response to the world around him and permeates how that person acts, talks, thinks, and feels. Imagine that a young boy goes on a rafting trip with his father and older brother. The rapids become very swift, the raft overturns, and his brother is thrown off the raft into the swirling water. The older brother screams at him to reach out to him, but he is frozen in terror. The brother is carried by the current and drowns. The young man feels an overpowering sense of helplessness and guilt. His recurrent thoughts about his brother become an obsession. He replays the event over and over in his mind, wondering if he could have saved his brother. He dreams again and again of the drowning scene. His parents and friends reassure him that he did all he could, but he doesn't believe them. He begins to feel that he is being punished by God for having failed to save his brother. This belief that he deserves punishment extends to each area of his life. His relationships and business ventures fail. Nothing brings him happiness. He may even carry this belief to his grave. This particular state is represented by the homeopathic medicine *Kali bromatum* (potassium bromate). It can alleviate this deep-seated belief that one deserves divine wrath. If this medicine were given to this man, his desperate state could be alleviated and he would come to understand and believe that he had done all he could to help his brother.

In the same way, there is a homeopathic medicine for every state that a person might experience. Each of us experiences some state which is limiting to us in some way. These states, if untreated, are often passed on from one generation to another. The homeopathic medicine, *Aurum metallicum* (gold) can be helpful for people who are deeply depressed with self-destructive tendencies, such as chronic alcoholics. Such a state may predispose not only to profound depressive states, but also to a number of physical complaints

such as sinus problems, bone pain, and sensitivity to light. By understanding the state of the person, homeopaths are able to treat body, mind, and emotions simultaneously.

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### *Casey*

A mother brought in her 10 year old son Casey for help with his excessive worrying, particularly about the family finances. He was also afraid that something bad would happen to his mother and she might die. This fear had begun right after he got his neck caught in the window of the car for a minute as his mother was rolling it up. It was the panic which Casey experienced so briefly that triggered a prolonged state of fear and anxiety. This child was given homeopathic *Aconitum napellus*, and his fear was relieved.

### *Dynamic Healing Through Homeopathy*

The simillimum catalyzes a dynamic process of healing. In acute illnesses, your symptoms may disappear within minutes or hours. For example, a boy awakens screaming in pain in the middle of the night with a fever of 103 degrees, complaining of terrible pain in his right ear. The parents desperately want to relieve their son's discomfort. If the rest of his symptoms fit the homeopathic remedy, *Belladonna* (deadly nightshade), he will usually fall right asleep and wake up the next morning as if nothing had happened. The parents are often surprised at how rapidly the healing occurs.

In chronic illnesses, the recovery may take longer. A patient with longstanding migraines may find that her headaches become less frequent and milder within a week or two of beginning homeopathic treatment, but they may not go away completely for one or more months. Patients suffering from severe arthritis or multiple sclerosis may find some relief very quickly, but the healing will continue to occur over months or years until their symptoms and overall well-being are stabilized and significantly improved.

Homeopathy can also produce dynamic changes on the mental and emotional levels. A woman who has held in her anger and humiliation from being a victim of incest as a child may find, with homeopathic treatment, that she is finally able to express her

rage in a healthy way. A man who has experienced panic attacks so severe that he cannot shop in the supermarket, can, with homeopathy, often regain his peace of mind and once again lead a normal life. Even deep mental and emotional imbalances such as depression, attention deficit disorder, extreme jealousy, and compulsive handwashing, frequently respond very well to homeopathy.

If the simillimum is found, cure will result even if your symptoms have persisted for a number of years. Homeopathy taps the inherent power of the vital force within each person to bring about healing and lasting change. Discovering the correct remedy is like finding just the right key for a lock. Even if the door has been closed for years, once the key is found, it opens. Patients and homeopaths alike are continually amazed at the power of homeopathic medicines.

### *Suppression Versus Cure*

*Suppression* occurs when a treatment apparently removes symptoms on one level, but causes them to appear at a different, often deeper, level. If the body is prevented from expressing symptoms on a more superficial level, it may have no other recourse than to generate symptoms at a deeper one. Many common treatments in orthodox medicine, such as hydrocortisone cream for eczema, laser treatment for venereal warts, or antihistamines for allergy-induced nasal discharge, are potentially suppressive. Some people can receive these conventional medications and interventions without experiencing suppression. For others, the treatment will make the person even sicker.

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### *Helen*

Helen, age 53, developed an acute skin condition called erythema nodosum at age 30. A large, red, irritated area appeared on one of her legs. She was hospitalized and given intravenous antibiotics and corticosteroids. Shortly after she was discharged from the hospital, she began to feel pain in her joints. This pain, diagnosed as arthritis, plagued her for more than twenty years. It was only when she sought homeopathic care that her arthritis was considerably relieved. As her

joint pains improved, Helen briefly re-experienced a rash similar to erythema nodosum on her face and hands. The rash went away and so did her joint pains.

The phenomenon of suppression has been observed by homeopaths since the time of Hahnemann and has become much more prevalent due to the increasing strength of pharmaceuticals and widespread self-treatment with topical hydrocortisone preparations. Whether or not a treatment will be suppressive depends on your state of health, the strength of your resistance to disease, and the intensity and duration of the treatment.

Another common way that suppression occurs is through the use of products such as antiperspirants and antihistamines. Discharges are the body's way to vent waste and the products of disease. In certain susceptible individuals, suppressing a discharge will lead to more serious health problems.

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### *Jamie*

Jamie, age 9, was brought to us by his parents because of left hip pain which caused him to limp. He had received conventional care, even hip surgery, without relief. He was a sensitive and delicate child and fit the picture of the homeopathic medicine, *Silica* (flint). Soon after receiving the medicine, the hip pain quickly resolved. We did not see Jamie again for two years. At that time, his parents brought him back for another visit. His hip pain had been completely gone until the previous few weeks, then suddenly returned for no apparent reason. When we questioned Jamie thoroughly, he told us that he had begun to have body odor recently and that his mother had bought him an antiperspirant. Soon after he started using it, his hip pain returned. Patients needing *Silica* are particularly susceptible to illness from suppressed perspiration. He stopped using the antiperspirant, we repeated the *Silica*, and his hip pain again went away quickly.

Your body, in its attempt to keep your symptoms at the most superficial level possible, frequently develops skin eruptions as its

first defense. Infants may develop eczema, either at birth or when they are first introduced to cow's milk or formula. If the cow's milk is removed or the child is treated homeopathically, the eczema will usually resolve readily. If the child's eczema is treated with hydrocortisone cream, the eruption and itch disappear, but the allergic tendency remains. Homeopaths have observed that infants treated in this way may go on to develop asthma, a more serious allergic condition. Although the eczema is gone, the child is much less healthy. If suppression continues, with more hydrocortisone being given to suppress the asthma, then a deeper mental and emotional problem, such as severe depression, may eventually occur.

The body has a reason for generating particular symptoms as part of its attempt to cure the illness. Some medical doctors are beginning to recognize this phenomenon of suppression in childhood asthma. In a study published in the medical journal *Pediatrics* in 1991, the authors speculated that a type of paralysis in asthmatic children may in fact be due to suppression by asthma medications such as steroids.<sup>2</sup>

### *Hering's Law of Cure*

One of the guiding principles in homeopathy is *Hering's law of cure*, named after Constantine Hering, an early American homeopath of German origin. Hering's law states that cure proceeds from top to bottom, from inside out, from most important organs to least important organs, and from most recent to oldest symptoms. Although every case does not follow this order, many cases do, and these principles are often useful in determining whether the remedy is working properly. The idea behind Hering's Law is that your body is always trying to keep symptoms at the most superficial level possible and to promote your overall health, function, and freedom of action. Your defense mechanism will attempt to heal and balance first those structures and functions that have the greatest impact on your health and well-being.

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### *Mary*

Mary suffered from eczema during most of her life. For years she had used topical hydrocortisone to control the itching, burning rash that covered her face, neck, torso and arms. The eczema was worse

in the bends of her joints and the creases in her skin. Her skin was aggravated by bathing and perspiration. Mary stopped the hydrocortisone before taking her homeopathic medicine. In response to the remedy and discontinuing the hydrocortisone, Mary's eczema came out fiercely. The outbreak lasted for ten days. Mary was given a mild moisturizing cream made from marigold flowers to soothe, but not suppress, the eruption.

Then the rash started to clear from the top down. It left her face and moved down to her neck. Then it began to clear from her torso and became worse on her arms. As the rash on her arms became much worse, the symptoms on the neck and trunk began to clear up. The eczema finally moved down the arms to the hands. As her hands became worse, her arms started to become less itchy. Slowly, over six months, the eczema finished clearing from her body and did not return.

Often mental and emotional symptoms, which occur at a deeper level than physical symptoms, will be alleviated first. In fact, the physical symptoms, such as a skin eruption or a nasal or vaginal discharge may temporarily become worse. When this occurs, it is important to be patient instead of attempting to eliminate the physical problem.

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### *Susan*

Susan responded very well to the remedy *Lachesis* for a left ovarian cyst. She did not need the surgery that had been recommended prior to homeopathic treatment. Several months after her cyst disappeared, a rash developed on her face and on the skin just over both ovaries. Despite her discomfort from itching and swelling, she resisted her friend's advice to consult with a dermatologist. Her intuition told her that it was important that she not suppress the rash. She understood that suppressing the rash could result in the return of her cyst. Her homeopath confirmed her intuition and told her that it was best to wait, and that the rash would disappear in time, which it did.

### *How Is Homeopathy Different From Conventional Medicine?*

Homeopathic medicine is based on entirely different concepts than conventional Western medicine. Conventional medicine uses syn-

thetic drugs. Homeopathy uses only natural medicines based on the law of similars.

Conventional medicine aims to destroy bacteria and viruses, control physiological processes, and maintain body functions within the range necessary to sustain life. Homeopathy believes that all these goals can be accomplished by strengthening the individual's resistance and healing abilities. Conventional medicine specializes in understanding the functions and illnesses of discrete parts of the body. Homeopathy specializes in treating the whole person.

Conventional physicians often give many different medicines at one time, each to control a different organ or physiologic process. Homeopaths give only one medicine at a time. *Allopathic* (non-homeopathic) drugs may have serious side effects. Homeopathic medicines may produce additional symptoms during the course of treatment, but these are rarely serious or harmful. Conventional medicine evaluates its rate of success based on whether the immediate condition resolves. Homeopathy attempts to eliminate not only the immediate condition, but also the underlying susceptibility, and to promote long-term health.

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### *Notes*

- <sup>1</sup> Hahnemann S., *Organon of Medicine*. Sixth Edition, Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1982, pg. 10.
- <sup>2</sup> Shahar, E, Hwang, P, Niesen, C, Murphy, E, "Poliomyelitis-like Paralysis During Recovery from Acute Bronchial Asthma: Possible Etiology and Risk Factors." *Ped* 1991; 88: 276-279.