

# HOMEOPATHY: THE EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO ANTIBIOTICS

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We are all exposed to infections. To cull an example — all of us dread to see someone sneezing away to glory in a bus, or train, or at the shopping mall, or the theatre. As millions of viruses are sprayed into the air, you'd think you will catch the infection — may be, a 'bad' cold, because a cold is never 'good.'

Everyone has breathed in the sneeze, as it were. However, in reality, just one or two of us may become ill — not everyone who was around.

People, who have an innate 'susceptibility' towards catching infections, so to speak, tend to get affected, because the offending microorganism finds 'ideal' growing conditions, or 'soil,' in them. This may not be the case with others, who are optimally healthy, with a 'strong' immune system. They ward off infections almost with impunity — without even realising it.

The credo holds good for epidemic illnesses too — because, epidemics affect such people who have a latent predisposition, or vulnerability, towards the given infection or illness. They do not 'trouble' others who have a 'strong' immunity. They won't, likewise, affect your inner disposition to illness, if the 'condition' is treated suitably with homeopathic remedies, or when the illness is healed with their use. This is homeopathy's greatest advantage — homeopathic remedies, as we all understand, ensure prevention, much before the offending 'bug' gets into your system.

## 'Up' & 'down' of antibiotics

Take a look at the other end of the spectrum. When antibiotics are used to treat your child's tonsillitis — for instance — only the bacteria get 'killed.' Tonsils are evidently our first line of defense. The cycle now leads to a weak, or compromised, defense, as the 'two sacs' of lymphatic tissue, located at the back of the throat, are now more 'open' to bacterial incursions. The next time your child gets tonsillitis, s/he will need a larger dose of, or more powerful, high-end antibiotics. This may lead to 'resistance' to antibiotics; they may also stop working sooner than later. It is a vicious cycle — a major 'drawback' of conventional treatment. The sequel is predictable. When new incursions happen, or when such individuals are treated with more powerful, or higher, doses of antibiotics, most bacteria would die, but only on the 'surface.' Some may also go down, sneaking-in through the weak fortress, or defense. They could, in the process, affect the bronchus and the lungs.

Medical research accepts the fact that bacteria gradually become immune to antibiotics. The reason being they are extremely smart and also resilient folks — with great survival instincts. The plethora of



chronic diseases, and other invasions, we are exposed or witness to today, as homeopathy has always testified, is proof of this statement.

It goes without saying that the emergence of antibiotics, over 75 years ago, significantly reduced illness and death from many infectious diseases caused by bacteria — not viral illnesses. However this may be, several bacterial perpetrators, over the years, have become resistant, due to overuse, or abuse of powerful, broad-spectrum antibiotics to treat common infections. The list includes otitis media (ear infection), or inappropriately using antibiotics to treat everyday viral infections, like the common cold or fever, cough, or sore throat — as many people do, on their own, without their physician's knowledge.

Antibiotics were aptly and naturally hailed, therefore, as wonder drugs that could rid us of tuberculosis (TB), gonorrhea, pneumonia, meningitis and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), caused by bacteria. Today, they have all become difficult to treat with antibiotics, thanks to 'antibiotic resistance.' As a matter of fact, statistics shows that antibiotic-resistant 'superbugs' cause an estimated 40,000 deaths, each year, in the US alone. Its impact worldwide is, therefore, anybody's guess. This may also be one palpable reason why some conventional physicians themselves avoid the use of antibiotics, at the drop of a symptom.

Why has this spectacle emerged? Simple. When antibiotics first came to everyone's 'rescue,' one witnessed few illnesses around. How things have changed today! Just visit any educational institution, or school, in your locality. You will be able to see several children showing signs of some 'chronic' illness — right from allergies, chronic colds and bronchitis to allergic asthma and other recurrent illnesses.

## **Beyond the antibiotic 'surplus'**

Modern pharmacology can bring about miracles, even in hopeless cases, yes, but this comes at a price — a big price to pay at the cost of one's health. Antibiotics are sometimes indispensable, also life-saving, all right. But, they have a downside. One common side-effect of antibiotics is candidiasis (fungal infections).

Other side-effects include allergies, stomach upset and diarrhea — including vaginal yeast infection in women — not to speak of microbial resistance. Antibiotic 'surplus' also provides the perfect 'soil' for parasites and harmful ('bad') bacteria, no less, to play the spoilsport. The outcome is dysbiosis, or microbial imbalance, in the body. In addition, antibiotics are a major contributing cause of asthma. Studies suggest that children who received broad-spectrum antibiotics were about nine times more likely to suffer from asthma.

Our natural intestinal flora are composed of lactobacteria, the 'good' bacteria. Such 'good' bacteria not only help us to digest and absorb food, they also protect us against ingested harmful 'bad' bacteria. When you have a healthy intestinal flora, it takes millions of salmonella bacteria, for example, to cause infection. When you have dysbiosis, it takes just a handful of them to cause infection.

When dysbiosis becomes chronic, the outcome is anybody's guess — ulcers, appendicitis, malabsorption syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), Crohn's disease (an inflammatory disease of the intestines), food allergies, arthritis and autoimmune diseases, or weakened immune system.

It is reported too that 40-50 percent of antibiotics are consumed by food-producing animals, worldwide. 'Pumping' antibiotics and hormones, as preventative intervention with a commercial 'knot,' into dairy animals, such as cow, to boost their milk output, may present a major health risk by the transfer of

resistant pathogens, or genes, from animals to human beings, through the consumption of dairy milk and also 'tainted' food. This, in turn, has been evidenced to substantially reduce the effectiveness of antibiotics against 'resistant' bacteria.

### **'Farming' a Revolution**

The European Parliament has backed the phasing out of antibiotics on farm animals for disease prevention in order to ensure such treatments remain effective for humans. Some farmers are already using alternative treatments, such as homeopathy, to prevent the spread of disease among their flocks.

The Parliament's 'Resolution on the Public Health Threat of Antimicrobial Resistance' calls on the European Commission to phase out the prophylactic use of antibiotics in livestock farming, calling instead for disease prevention through good hygiene, housing and animal husbandry, as well as strict bio-security measures. It has recommended the use of antibiotics as a 'last resort' in exceptional, preferably individual, circumstances. This development follows (the fiscal decision) that the EU is investing €1.8 million in a pilot research project to examine the effectiveness of homeopathic treatments on farm animals. With antibiotic resistance becoming a growing concern among farmers, the research will look at how homeopathy may be able to reduce the use of antibiotics in treating livestock.

Speaking on behalf of the UK's Faculty of Homeopathy, homeopathic veterinarian Geoff Johnson spoke in favor of using homeopathic treatments on animals. "Homeopathy is an invaluable tool on the farm, used by many farmers in the UK together with conventional treatment to reduce reliance on antibiotics. I've seen first-hand how effective homeopathy has been in treating sick animals." Although (up till now) there has been relatively little research into veterinary homeopathy, a number of Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) in the homeopathic treatment of a range of animal diseases have produced positive results. Clinical outcome studies into the homeopathic treatment of animals have also been positive. These results (experts aver) clearly indicate (that) more research is needed in this area.

— Source: FarmingUK.com

### **A Case in Point**

A rigorous research study by the Biological Farming Systems Group at Wageningen University, in the Netherlands, reports that the homeopathic remedy, *Coli 30c*, is effective in preventing diarrhea caused by the bacterium *Escherichia coli* in piglets. This condition is of concern to commercial farmers as it leads to decreased body weight and increased mortality rates. As concern grows about the threat to human health from antibiotics in the food chain, such findings can be considered of particular importance for both animal and human welfare.

— Source: Camerlink I, Ellinger L, Bakker E J, Lantinga E A. "Homeopathy as Replacement to Antibiotics In the Case of *Escherichia coli* Diarrhoea in Neonatal Piglets." *Homeopathy*, 2010; 99; 57–62.

In addition, the bright side, till recently, was belligerent research and development (R&D) provided newer antibiotics to treat bacteria that became resistant to 'older' antibiotics. This is now history, thanks to a marked decrease in R&D. More importantly, in the wake of the growing prevalence of resistant bacteria, conventional physicians are also troubled by the outlook that efficient antibiotics may not be available to treat critically ill-patients any longer.<sup>1</sup>

There is also a flipside — the irony is the ‘assembly line’ of newer antibiotics is fast drying up. As a result, none of the major pharma groups are keen on investing their resources in the antibiotics market, since they may no longer be as profitable as new-generation drugs that ‘target’ chronic disease, or lifestyle issues, such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, stress, depression and cancer.

## Homeopathic perspective

Now, the big question — is the antibiotic ‘shortcoming’ not good enough or good reason for one to opt for homeopathic remedies and treatment, instead, to correct the ‘defective’ soil, or susceptibility — and, prevent acute, or short-term, illnesses from turning into chronic conditions? The principal conformity in favor of homeopathy is conventional antibiotics are no good for viral infections, or illnesses, and they offer, at best, nothing more than symptomatic relief, while the big downside is people treated with them tend to experience recurrent infections.

Homeopathy has over 200 years of evidence-based experience in treating millions of people affected by bacterial, viral and other infections, safely and effectively. Homeopathy is also evidenced to fortify, or boost, our immune system — without side-effects. This is more so in view of the fact that conventional research studies are focused primarily on the treatment of respiratory tract and middle ear infections (otitis media), sinusitis, and so on — which had ‘traditionally’ responded to antibiotics earlier, until things went out of hand, owing primarily to their excess use, misuse, and also side-effects.

Homeopathic remedies are not given on the type, or strain, of the micro-organism, *per se*, or the presentation of symptoms alone. This is because, no two persons, according to homeopathic tenets, present with the same set of symptoms, or response, although the micro-organism, or the illness, is the same by name. In conventional medicine, the use of antibiotics, on the contrary, is based, for example, on the premise there is a fight in progress in the body that must be resolved — and, that the body is not capable of succeeding without antibiotics.

Antibiotics ‘kill’ the microorganisms related to a given, or not given, illness, all right; they also hamper their duplication. The trouble is antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, antihistamines, and so on, do not produce immune-stimulating effects, like homeopathic remedies. Over time, they may lead to drug-dependence, or cause side-effects — some of them serious — including dysbiosis, or microbial imbalance, as already cited, in the body.

Homeopathy acquiesces that the body certainly needs support in fighting infection — bacterial, or viral — but, this should take place by way of holistic, natural therapeutic assistance. It also evidences that the real cause of infection is not merely the micro-organism, but a set of conditions in the body that provides the ‘favourable soil’ or ‘ground,’ in which bacteria, or viruses, can survive and replicate.

### From ‘Resistance’ to Cancer

The World Health Organization (WHO) issued a major warning, early last year, about the rapidly-advancing quandary of antibiotic resistance. In Norway, Iceland and the European Union, reports indicate that 25,000 people die from common resistant bacterial infections, each year. It is also estimated that the total cost of antibiotic resistance in the EU alone is approximately €1.5 billion.

While antibiotics have no influence in viral infections, clinicians also say that they should not be used too quickly in simple bacterial infections — such as ear, throat and sinus infections.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) also reports that infectious microorganisms have become increasingly resistant to existing antibiotics. Since replacements are hard to come by, governments and researchers across the world are searching for effective alternatives to antibiotics.

This is not all. A Finnish study, on three million people, has correlated a higher risk of developing prostate, breast, lung and colon cancer with multiple use of antibiotics.<sup>2</sup> Although studies, at present, are not sure as to whether antibiotics are, indeed, carcinogenic and/or directly cause cancer, or cancers develop as a result of their excess use, it is acknowledged that antibiotics often tend to damage and/or 'upset' the natural balance of the body's protective intestinal 'microbiotic' milieu.

What homeopathy does is it restores the natural ecosystem of the body, which was, or is, affected by the illness, so microorganisms no longer find it conducive for their existence. They will, in other words, no longer be able to 'trigger' the illness, or go on the rampage in the body.

Homeopathy works on the mind-body plane rather than against it. Illness, in homeopathic parlance, is energy imbalance which takes place first at the most fundamental level and reaches a deeper level. This underlying imbalance, according to homeopathic tenets, is also the cause of illness or disease. This presents itself, over time, in the body, as symptoms, while trying to correct the inequity. The foundation of homeopathic healing is, as a result, keyed to addressing symptoms that are unique to the individual — and, using them as a guide to the homeopathic medicinal substance that can be employed to complete the entire healing process.

## Clinical studies

In an outcome study, 30 practitioners in four European countries enrolled 456 consecutive patients with at least one of the following three complaints — upper respiratory tract disorders, including allergies; lower respiratory tract complaints, including allergies; or, ear complaints. Of 456 patients, 281 received homeopathy and 175 conventional treatment. The primary outcome criterion was response to treatment, defined as 'cured' or 'major improvement' after 14 days of treatment.

Results showed a response rate of 82.6 percent in the homeopathy group as compared to 67.3 percent in the group receiving conventional medicine. The authors concluded that homeopathy appeared to be at least as effective as conventional treatment of patients with the three conditions studied. In addition, people given a homeopathic remedy experienced more rapid relief (67.03 percent) than patients given conventional medicines (56.6 percent).<sup>3</sup>

In a French study published in *Disease Management and Health Outcomes* (2004; 12[6], 419-427), a group of 499 (18-months to 4-year-olds) children suffering from rhinopharyngitis were divided into two treatment groups. While 231 children were given conventional treatment, 268 children were treated by general practitioners (GPs), who used homeopathy, alongside conventional medications.

Results from the study indicated that the homeopathic GPs could successfully ‘initiate’ preventative treatment in 82.2 percent of their patients, compared to 43.3 percent of preventative treatment in the non-homeopathic group. The inference is consistent with the deduction that the homeopathic approach focuses on reducing vulnerability to illness and to preventing it from happening in the first place, rather than merely combating the illness, or disease, once it gets entrenched.

Another study involving children, suffering from acute middle ear infection (otitis media), reports of a positive treatment effect from homeopathy, when compared with placebo (dummy pill). There were fewer treatment failures in the group receiving homeopathy after 5 days, 2 weeks, and 6 weeks, with differences of 11.4, 18.4, and 19.9 percent, respectively, but these differences were not statistically significant. Diary scores showed a significant decrease in symptoms at 24 and 64 hours after treatment in favor of homeopathy.<sup>4</sup>

The study also highlighted that only 20.9 percent of the homeopathic group of children received antibiotics as part of their treatment, compared to a whopping 89.6 percent in the non-homeopathic group.

There are other clinical trials which illustrate that individuals receiving homeopathic treatment need to use antibiotics less often, while corroborating the outcome that people do not develop medication-related side-effects, or complications, as a result of their treatment with homeopathic remedies.

A study carried out at the Bristol Homeopathic Hospital, UK, revealed that more than 70 percent of patients with chronic diseases said homeopathy helped them feel better. The 6-year study involved 6,500 patients. 89 percent of patients under age 16, who had asthma said homeopathy helped them. 68 percent of atopic dermatitis (eczema) patients, in the same age group, said they felt better after homeopathic treatment. Other studies have also shown that homeopathic remedies significantly improved lung capacity, overall health and wellbeing.

Sinusitis and bronchitis, likewise, account for millions of missed workdays each year — while acute ear infection is the most common illness — for which ‘antibacterial’ agents are prescribed for children. It is apparent that homeopathy can play a decisive role in the two conditions.

The economic benefit, or cost-effectiveness, of homeopathic treatment was also demonstrated by M Trichard *et al* who compared homeopathic management versus antibiotic strategy used in routine medical practice by homeopathic and conventional general practitioners (GPs) in the management of recurrent acute rhinopharyngitis — in 499 children — as cited earlier. The GPs using homeopathy had significantly better results in terms of clinical effectiveness, complications, parents' quality of life (QoL) and time lost from work, with a lower cost to social security. GPs, who integrated homeopathy in their practice, also achieved better results at similar cost.<sup>5</sup>

## Conclusion

Homeopathic treatment of viral or bacterial infections, especially of the respiratory tract — for which antibiotics are often used, or overused — has proven to be clinically effective, and more importantly, free of side-effects, with no trepidation of microbial resistance. In addition, homeopathy, as studies evidence, encourages natural healing at the cellular level; it also, in the process, strengthens immune response and function. This bids fair to a new, exciting area for further homeopathic research and

clinical studies — to substantiate our present understanding and augment scientific protocols, including ‘integrated’ therapies, for improved therapeutic outcomes.

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