

## HRI Online 2022 - Key collaborations in homeopathy research

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### Abstract

Since 2013, the Homeopathy Research Institute (HRI) has hosted an International Homeopathy Research Conference every two years, bringing together researchers from ~30 countries to share their latest findings and foster further international collaboration. However, with the next in-person HRI Conference postponed until 2023 due to the pandemic, on 25 June 2022, HRI was proud to host our first online conference, ensuring that dissemination of high quality research continued during these challenging times.

### Introduction

'HRI Online 2022', a one day event with the theme 'Key Collaborations in Homeopathy Research', welcomed 450 registered participants from 35 countries. The opening session began with introductory presentations from five leading organisations dedicated to scientific research in homeopathy:

- **HRI** – Homeopathy Research Institute, UK (Dr Alexander Tournier)
- **IKIM** – Institute of Complementary and Integrative Medicine of the University of Bern Switzerland (Dr Stephan Baumgartner)
- **CCRH** – Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy, India (Dr Anil Khurana)
- **GIRI** – Groupe International de Recherche sur l'Infinitésimal (Prof Leoni Bonamin)
- **WissHom** – German Scientific Society for Homeopathy (Prof Michael Frass).

This session illustrated the complimentary roles played by these unique organisations in progressing and disseminating homeopathy research.

### Clinical research

The Keynote presentation by **Drs Anil Khurana** and **Anupriya Chaudhary** of CCRH (India) and **Dr Menachem Oberbaum**, former director of the Center of Integrated Complementary Medicine at Shaare Zedek Medical Center (Israel), shared the outcomes from a joint Indian-Israeli research initiative. Striking results were presented, from a clinical trial in which 108 healthy new-born children were randomly assigned to receive either conventional or homeopathic medical care. The study showed that after 2 years, the children who received homeopathic medical care suffered significantly fewer episodes of acute respiratory illness, diarrhoea, general febrile episodes and skin infections. In total, 187 episodes occurred in the conventional group versus 97 in the homeopathic group. Moreover, in the conventional group, 44 children received antibiotics for 158 different episodes, while in the homeopathic group only 9 children received antibiotics for 14 events. This trial also showed the positive effect of homeopathic treatment on an economic basis, as the costs related to treatment were significantly lower in this group compared to those in the placebo group.

**Dr Esther van der Werf**, HRI's Clinical Research Lead, summarised the various clinical research designs and their respective quality of evidence before addressing the fascinating question of how these conventional designs can be used in research on homeopathy. She successfully demonstrated that (contrary to some people's expectations) it is possible to conduct rigorous randomised controlled trials whilst also

### HRI Online 2022 - Key facts

- Over 450 registered attendees from 35 countries
- One-day lineup featuring 12 keynote level presenters
- Diverse programme covering the spectrum of homeopathy research



HRI Online keynote presenters, Dr Anil Khurana, Dr Anupriya Chaudhary and Dr Menachem Oberbaum answer questions during Q&A session chaired by Prof Ashley Ross

preserving the integrity of homeopathic prescribing. Examples of several recently published studies were presented, showing different ways to ensure that the homeopathic approach was not compromised during the trials, even when individualised homeopathic treatment was under investigation.

Dr van der Werf highlighted the advantages of the 'symptom cluster approach' in which patients will only be included in the study if their symptoms match the clinical picture of pre-selected homeopathic medicines. This methodology facilitates replication of the study and may also reduce the risk of prescribing errors by physicians. She also emphasised the value of real-world evidence data, as a complement to evidence from RCTs, in order to strengthen the homeopathy evidence base.

Finally, Dr van der Werf presented the results of a collaborative retrospective study based on NHS England data which showed that in primary care surgeries with a GP additionally trained in CAM (including homeopathy) 22% fewer antibiotics were prescribed in patients with respiratory and urinary tract infections compared to conventional GP surgeries. She used this specific example to stress the crucial importance of collaboration between researchers in and outside the homeopathy sector to achieve the highest research impact possible. When asked where she would concentrate research efforts in homeopathy, she replied that it would be in public health.

**Dr Alexander Tournier** highlighted the importance of clinical case collection as a cornerstone of homeopathic clinical research and described the re-emergence of the CLIFICOL online platform in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. CLIFICOL collected data on 1,715 Covid-19 cases in which symptoms were managed using homeopathy as adjunctive treatment. Cases were submitted by homeopaths in many different countries – predominantly China, India, USA and Europe. During the past two years, many homeopaths have asked the important question, "Is there a 'Genus Epidemicus' for Covid-19?" i.e. an identifiable group of symptoms common to most patients with this disease, which matches the 'remedy picture' of a specific homeopathic medicine, indicating it as the most appropriate prescription.

Their analysis clearly detected two distinct clusters of symptoms matching the clinical pictures of the medicines Bryonia and Gelsemium, thereby demonstrating that there was no unique 'Genus Epidemicus' in this population during the first wave of Covid-19. This also demonstrated the ability of homeopaths to detect symptomatic patterns in patients. In the second part of the presentation, **Aaron To** and **Dr Yvonne Fok** from the Hong Kong Association of Homeopathy gave a more detailed description of 366 Omicron cases registered in Hong Kong, illustrating the clear clinical differences between the Delta and Omicron waves.



Dr Alexander Tournier, Aaron To and Dr Yvonne Fok take questions on the CLIFICOL project

**Dr Robbert van Haselen**, Director of the International Institute for Integrated Medicine in the UK, pointed out the paradox that, even though conventional and non-conventional doctors have great respect for clinical research, studies show that less than 5% recognise that it is particularly relevant to their clinical practice. Most physicians rely more on their own experience and, in practice, invert the well-known pyramid of levels of evidence. Because of this, Dr van Haselen stressed the importance of the publication of good quality clinical cases in accordance with available guidelines, as well as the validation of symptoms attributed to medicines in the homeopathic literature. The latter can be achieved through the investigation of prognostic factors and through use of Big Data technology, which makes it possible to search through cloud-based medical records by means of algorithms. He stated that prognostic factor research, initiated several years ago by Dr Lex Rutten (The Netherlands), has so far been insufficiently recognised.

**Prof Michael Frass** presented a series of studies he has conducted showing the effectiveness of additive individualised homeopathy in cancer patients. Collectively, these studies show that homeopathic treatment, when added to conventional treatments for various types of tumours, achieves a general and symptomatic improvement of the patient greater than that seen in control groups. Responsive symptoms included pain,

fatigue and appetite, as well as a decrease in the adverse effects of conventional treatments and improvement of concomitant diseases: overall these clinical benefits resulted in significantly improved quality of life. He went on to describe his most recent study published in *The Oncologist* in 2020. In this three-armed RCT involving ~ 150 patients with advanced non-small cell lung cancer, two treatment groups received both standard care and a homeopathic consultation – one group receiving an individualised homeopathic prescription, the other receiving a placebo. The control group received standard care alone.

In this study, the most remarkable of the entire series presented by Frass, in addition to the improvement in quality of life mentioned above, the most surprising result was that patients treated with homeopathy survived a median of 435 days, compared to 257 days for those receiving placebo and 228 days for the control group – a highly relevant clinical impact.

### Basic research

**Dr Stephan Baumgartner** stated that 18 experimental models have been used in basic homeopathic research, 15 of which have generated positive results. He underlined the importance of studies that have demonstrated reproducibility, especially when carried out in different laboratories. Dr Baumgartner explained his own repeated experiments with duckweed and wheat models, stressed with arsenic and treated with dilutions of *Arsenicum album*. He stated categorically that, the accumulation of scientific evidence leaves no doubt in his mind that the effects of homeopathic dilutions are beyond the placebo effect.

Another aspect Dr Baumgartner referred to is the well-known non-linearity of the homeopathic effects detected in the laboratory. In experiments with the duckweed model exposed to different homeopathic dilutions of gibberellic acid (a plant growth-promoting phytohormone) some dilutions significantly inhibited growth and others showed no effect. Even more paradoxically, when the same experiment was repeated several years later, the effect was reversed, with some dilutions of the substance having a growth-stimulating effect – a phenomenon for which there is no clear explanation. Finally, Dr Baumgartner shared his observation from decades of experience in the field that, based on scientific evidence, the magnitude of the effect of homeopathic dilutions is directly correlated to the complexity of the system on which it acts i.e. the greatest biological effects are seen in humans; the next largest effects are seen in animals; then plants; and finally the smallest effects are seen in single cells.

Dr Alexander Tournier returned to present a summary of the research carried out in physico-chemistry. He reported that of 203 published experiments, 73% showed positive results. The most widely used and replicable research techniques were: Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR), spectroscopy, electrical impedance and imaging methods. He listed the theories that have been tested to explain the mechanism(s) of action of homeopathic dilutions: quantum coherence domains, nanoparticles, weak quantum theory and water clusters.

Brazilian professors, **Prof Leoni Bonamin**, from Universidade de Paulista and **Prof Carla Holandino**, from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, summarised 25 years of homeopathic research carried out by several research groups from different universities in Brazil. They highlighted fascinating work in terms of quality and quantity in the areas of in vitro and in vivo research, clinical research, physico-chemistry, veterinary medicine and agriculture.

Prof Bonamin and her team have published 100 papers and Prof Holandino has been directly involved in 70 publications. Brazil has thus positioned itself as a leader both in South America and internationally. Some of the research highlighted included animal and in vitro models of inflammation; the treatment of mice with melanoma and lung metastases by inhalation with an ingenious spraying system; research done with virus nosodes (Influenza and Dengue), fungi (Candida) and parasites (Leishmania), showing both in vitro and in vivo activation of the immune system of experimental animals against these pathogens; a long series of research on Chagas disease; and veterinary research with positive results on heart failure in dogs with Crataegus 6ch. Interestingly, the effect was evident with the 6ch dilution but not with Crataegus in herbal tincture form.

### Homeopathic pathogenetic trials (provings)

'Homeopathic pathogenetic trials' aka 'provings' are a type of research unique to the field of homeopathy. In these studies, homeopathic preparations are given to healthy individuals to assess their clinical potential: in accordance with the 'like treats like' philosophy at the core of homeopathic prescribing, symptoms triggered by the medicine in the volunteers during the trial, are the symptoms which can potentially be treated by this medicine in clinical practice.

**Prof Ashley Ross** of the Durban University of Technology, South Africa, has extensive experience in the field, having conducted 32 provings since 1998. His presentation focused on the increasing regulatory challenges he has encountered over time due to the potential for unpredictable outcomes. Moreover, provings are carried out without preclinical animal studies to guide them. This raises important ethical questions, necessitating the need for multi-agency approval of experimental protocols. Homeopathic Drug Provings Guidelines published jointly by the Liga Medicorum Homoeopathica Internationalis (LMHI) and European Committee for Homeopathy (ECH) in 2014, as well as those published by the Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia Convention of the United States (HPCUS) in 2015, represent a significant step forward in terms of managing methodological and regulatory aspects of such studies. The positive side of these difficulties is that they force research to improve considerably on a methodological and scientific level.

### Reflecting on HRI Online 2022

The scientific level and breadth of the programme was exceptional, thanks to the carefully chosen line-up of speakers all of whom had been Keynote Speakers at previous events, and represented different sub-fields of homeopathy. As attendee Mr Tony Pinkus (Pharmacy Dean, Faculty of Homeopathy, UK) expressed it: "The calibre of speakers throughout the programme was astonishing". Heartfelt thanks go to the delegates, presenters, sponsors and exhibitors without whom HRI Online 2022 would not have been possible. In particular, congratulations go to Amy Hurlstone (HRI Event Manager), Chris Connolly (HRI Communications Manager) and Jacky Johnson (Executive Assistant & Company Secretary) for their work in creating this event; and to Prof Ashley Ross for his excellent Chairing throughout the day.

*"The calibre of the speakers throughout the programme was astonishing"*

- Tony Pinkus  
Pharmacy Dean, Faculty of Homeopathy

HRI has been delighted to receive feedback confirming that the day achieved its two primary aims – providing listeners with a succinct overview of the current status of scientific research in homeopathy across multiple topics, and highlighting the identifiable positive impact being achieved in homeopathy research through fostering of 'key collaborations' at an international level.

### Looking forward to HRI London 2023

Although we were pleased to take advantage of the virtual platform of HRI Online 2022, enabling us to bring the research world to new audiences around the world, there is still nothing which compares to interacting with colleagues face-to-face. With this in mind, HRI is looking forward to welcoming delegates in person to our next full 2.5 day conference, 'HRI London 2023' on 16-18 June 2023.



Dr Alexander Tournier, Dr Stephan Baumgartner, Prof Carla Holandino, Prof Leoni Bonamin and Prof Ashley Ross bring the day to a close with an inspiring panel discussion.

### Concluding remarks

The event closed with a discussion session chaired by Prof Ross: panellists Dr Tournier, Dr Baumgartner, Prof Holandino and Prof Bonamin were in agreement on two key points: that homeopathy can be researched effectively using modern conventional research methodology and that clear progress can be seen in the research sector, particularly in terms of clarifying the mechanism of action of homeopathic medicines.



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### Find out more about HRI

HRI is a UK based charity dedicated to promoting high quality research in homeopathy at an international level.

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