

## Mischievous attempts to denigrate Homoeopathic Medical Science in the Lay Press

This refers to a prominent first page news item in the TOI of the 27th August 2005 entitled "Major Study calls for end to Homoeopathy-Likens it to Dummy Drugs". Similar reports have simultaneously appeared in a number of national and regional news papers and our Institute has been flooded with anxious calls from its member homoeopaths all over the country about the reason why such a negative interest in Homoeopathy has suddenly surfaced all over the country.

The news report refers to a study published in the Medical Journal 'Lancet' of the issue dated August 26th! Surely the TOI had plenty of matter to report on the news of the day than to peek into a medical journal published just the day before and come out with screaming headlines which not only mislead the innocent people of the country but positively harms the interest of the Homoeopathic profession which has been around from more than 200 years and has 147 undergraduate and more than 25 postgraduate medical Institutions. India boasts of having the largest number of homoeopathic practitioners throughout the world.

The study referred to is by a team led by Swiss scientist Prof Mathhias Egger. They have reviewed a number of trials pertaining to the clinical conditions of Asthma, allergies and muscular problems and have not found Homoeopathy effective in the treatment of these conditions when they compared the results with those patients treated with a placebo.

Apart from noting the obvious difference between the actual study as reported and the sensationalized headlines, we should also explore the technical aspects which are of little interest to the lay reader. The significant issues which emerge are

1. The methodological issues regarding drug trials in Homoeopathy: It has been the bane of research trials concerning Homoeopathy that the researchers have not understood that basics of the science and attempt to

straitjacket the design into the widely accepted randomized double-blind control studies which are a part of allopathic standard regimen. In such a highly individualized treatment as Homoeopathy, this research design becomes an impossibility.

2. Prescribing the correct remedy: It is well-known that one and only one remedy can help the patient out of a host of them. This remedy has to be selected after a careful study of the patient in his illness. The results of any study would always be dependent on this crucial variable. How sure are we that the correct remedy has been administered in the right potency and the right frequency? Evaluating efficacy in a condition without taking care of this principle makes all talk of result evaluation redundant.

3. Faulty research design: Homoeopaths under the influence of allopathic school are often guilty of designing a faulty study which can bring out nothing of value. A number of such trials have been carried out with disastrous results.

4. Even in the previous review studies carried out and reported in the same Journal, the results have always been conflicting with some results reporting favourably on the efficacy of the Homoeopathic treatment and some not. It is as difficult to dismiss the positive as it is harmful to accept the negative results. How does a compiler and a reviewer like Prof Mathhias conclude?

It is seen that the issue is riddled with complexities over which there is no unanimity even amongst professionals of various hues. Under the circumstances, the practice of going to the public with this type of news item causes needless alarm to the public and harms the doctor-patient relationship should the patient suspect that he is being cheated with the administration of 'dummy drugs'.

There is a very large % of our people who are consumers of homoeopathic medicines. This is the cheapest line of treatment available. Given the high costs of allopathic medication and the GATT agreement on patents, the costs of these are expected to skyrocket. Carrying such reports in the lay press is tantamount to pursuing an agenda which is against the interest of the people of this country and as a prime News channel, we consider your duty to set the record straight and reassure the people that the report in the lay press is misleading and should be ignored.



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