

Randi's Bluff Called: His Apparent Misgivings Torpedo the Homeopathic Experiment That Was Not to Be

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(url: <http://www.vithoulkas.com/content/view/92/114/lang.en/>)*

Summary: After George Vithoulkas and affiliated parties agree to conduct and organize a detailed clinical experiment to prove homeopathy's efficacy in response to the one million dollar prize offered by James Randi, a series of suspicious delays and changing requirements on the part of Mr. Randi seriously jeopardize the project's completion. In the course of these impediments, Mr. Randi seemed to take every available opportunity to malign the credibility of Professor Vithoulkas and homeopathy.

Keywords: pointhomeopathic experiment in Greece; Vithoulkas, George and Randi, James.

In 2002 the BBC *Horizon* program presented a documentary that showed that the Benveniste experiment about homeopathy was fake and therefore... homeopathy was also fake! (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/2512105.stm>)

Mr. Vithoulkas had repeatedly stressed in many communications that the experiment was a falsely conceived one from its very beginning (see the correspondence). The opponents of homeopathy, basing their criticisms of homeopathy on this poorly conceived experiment, maintained that homeopathy was simply placebo effect.

Mr. Randi, after this false experiment (ignoring all other experiments that showed the effect of homeopathy), declared in his website (<http://www.randi.org/>) that whoever could prove the validity of the action of a homeopathically potentized remedy beyond Avogadro's number would win a one million dollar prize.

Mr. Vithoulkas challenged this statement and a new experiment was conceived that would prove that highly potentized remedies do actually have a biological effect upon the human organism.

The experiment was simple: An individualized remedy would be given to a number of patients in a double-blind fashion with half of the patients receiving placebo. The Greek homeopathic physicians participating in the case taking and prescribing would at the end of the experiment identify those patients who received a real remedy.

The protocol was structured by a group of interna-

tionally known scientists and the experiment would take place in one of the hospitals in Athens.

What follows is the real story (with facts in correspondence that transpired) of how, through several "tricks," Mr. Randi refused to see the experiment through to its end and rescued his million.

We sent the following statement to Mr. Randi to be posted to his website, but he refused.

Retraction Statement

11.11.2008

Introduction

This is a retraction statement against the erroneous piece of information published on JREF (James Randi Educational Foundation. Website: <http://www.randi.org/>) concerning the supposed "withdrawal of Homeopaths" from an experiment (agreed upon between JREF and the Greek homeopathic team of medical doctors) that was devised in order to prove that there is a biological effect on the human organism from ultra-high dilutions of homeopathic remedies, diluted well beyond Avogadro's number.

Brief History of the Events

- The group of homeopaths led by Prof. George Vithoulkas contracted an agreement with JREF in 2003, with the objective of matching a "challenge" posed by JREF to carry out a scientific experiment that proves that the human organism responds to homeopathic ul-

tra dilutions, and claim the 1 million USD challenge prize offered by JREF.

- In 2003, a team of "skeptics" was set up to represent the JREF side in the scientific experiment that would follow. The group of skeptics and the group of homeopaths led by Prof. George Vithoulkas have been conducting preparatory work continuously since then.

- A protocol was drawn up with the title: 'Do homeopathic remedies have a recognizable biological effect on the human organism?'

- The venue for the experiment was to be a Greek hospital. Eventually, after several contacts with several hospitals, the municipality hospital "ELPIS" in Athens, Greece agreed to host the experiment. The pharmacy that would provide the homeopathic remedies for the experiment – Mr. Korres Pharmacy – was also found and the agreement was finalized on 12.10.2005. At that time Ms. Althea Katz, representative of Mr. Alec Gindis (he was one of the representatives of Mr. Randi) visited the Greek municipality hospital in Athens and discussed all the details about the experiment exhaustively.

- In 26.10.2005, Mr. Alec Gindis informed Prof. Vithoulkas by email that the finances for the experiment were not yet raised and therefore the experiment could not start in spite of the fact that everything else was ready.

- In 17.8.2006, we received a signed agreement from Mr. Randi in which he stated that he was satisfied with the suggested protocol and he waived the claim of a preliminary test.

- As we waited for the finances to be raised in order to start with the experiment in 2.2.2006, we were informed that Mr. Randi had a health problem. When Mr. Gindis asked him to assign a representative in order to deal with all the procedures for the starting of the experiment, Mr. Randi refused to do so. As a result of his refusal the experiment was delayed so long that a new Mayor was elected in Athens who replaced the authorities of the ELPIS hospital, something that we had anticipated and repeatedly stressed to the "skeptics" long ago. The new Mayor, Dr. Kaklamanis, a conventional medical doctor, was indifferent if not hostile to the project. We had repeatedly warned the "skeptics" that if the experiment did not start at the latest by the beginning of 2006, the new Mayor would change key persons in the hospital – the president of the hospital and also the chairman of the scientific committee – and the new staff most probably would not respect the decision of the previous scientific committee.

At this crucial time in the beginning of 2006 when the experiment had to start, Mr. Randi declared that he was sick and that his rehabilitation was going to last from the beginning of February till July, again a most crucial time period during which, if the experiment was not begun, it was likely to be adversely affected by

newly appointed hospital authorities.

On 7.4.2006, Mr. Gindis wrote to Mr. Randi to signal to him that the homeopathic team was ready to start: "All in all, I am impressed that he (Prof. Vithoulkas) managed to put together such a team, find a sponsoring hospital and find a way to recruit patients with advertising efforts and costs carried by the hospital and participating homeopaths." Nonetheless, Randi suspended all activities of the experiment, attributing it to his state of health!

Mr. Randi knew very well that this period was crucial for us to start the experiment, and we had made this urgency explicit by sending several emails urging them that it was necessary to go ahead immediately. But Mr. Randi needed ...six months "to recover," refusing to assign a collaborator. As expected, in Autumn of 2006, a new Mayor, Dr. Kaklamanis, M.D., was elected in Athens.

To us, this extended period of recovery from an unnamed illness seemed suspicious a mere excuse for not starting the experiment.

After the election of the new Mayor, a new chairman for the scientific committee and a new president of the hospital were installed.

Immediately we started pressing Randi and his colleagues to respect the decision of the previous scientific committee or to decide -in a new meeting- in favor of the experiment.

The interesting thing was that on 16.5.2008, Mr. Randi, thinking most probably that we could never succeed in getting permission a second time, suddenly became very gallant and wrote: "In any case, it may not be necessary for me to actually be present in person for these tests. I am prepared to assign security and protocol duties to Alec Gindis and to Mr. Gabor; so they can act in my behalf." But in the meantime, and as early as March 2008, he was already putting up on his website a notice claiming that the "Greek homeopaths have withdrawn from the experiment ... as expected"!!

The important question is: Why did Mr. Randi delay the start of the experiment at the moment everything was in place in 2006, claiming that he...would be recovering for six months and that nobody else could replace him, while the next time, when he thought that we would never succeed in obtaining for a second time permission from the ELPIS hospital, he became so gallant and assigned a collaborator?!

He was so sure that we would not succeed in getting a second permission from the hospital that on 16.5.2008 Mr. Randi sent us a notarized statement saying:

"I intend to go through with the proposed test of the claims of homeopathy, as previously discussed in exchanges between George Vithoulkas and myself. This stance has not changed, and it will not change." [Note his new statement later on (17.10.2008) when he knew already that we had the permission.]

- At the end of July of 2008, after a lot of effort, we obtained for a second time permission to conduct the proposed homeopathic experiment at the ELPIS hospital.

- On the 2nd and 3rd September of 2008, there was a final meeting at the International Academy of Classical Homeopathy in Alonissos to discuss final details of the experiment. In the meeting were present the representative of Randi, Mr. Hrasko Gabor, Ms Althea Katz (representative of Mr. Alec Gindis), Dr. Menachem Oberbaum, principal investigator of the experiment, and Prof. George Vithoulkas. They discussed for two days all the details about the experiment and the discussion was officially taped and also partially videotaped.

- A few days later (during September 2008) we received information from the United States that on Randi's website a notice had been posted since March 2008 under the title "Another Withdrawal," saying, in effect, that the Greek homeopaths had withdrawn from the experiment!! The document stated that "A major test of homeopathy in Greece has met the expected fate, being abandoned by the homeopathy community."

This information infuriated the group of homeopaths led by Prof. George Vithoulkas, whose reputation suffered in that he was subsequently accused of associating with unreliable people.

But the most outrageous event happened on 17.10.2008, when Vithoulkas received an "ultimatum" from Mr. Randi stating that he was changing all the previous agreements and refusing to go ahead with the experiment as planned. Here is what he wrote:

"...Forget all previous correspondence exchanged on the subject. ...What appears here is the current status. ...First, we require that George Vithoulkas submit a regular, properly filled-out application and submit it – just as we require everyone to do. After that has been received, we'll go ahead – as with any regular applicant – with the arrangements, including the requirement for the preliminary stage."

Here you can see his entire statement with some remarks from us in italics:

"To All Concerned: The brouhaha that began as a comprehensive homeopathy test in Greece has been consuming far too much of my time and attention, and of my colleagues', as well. Forget all previous correspondence exchanged on the subject. What appears HERE is the current status. Mr. Randi asked us to forget all previous correspondence after we discovered the false, slanderous and deceptive posting at his website JREF with the title: "Another Withdrawal."

We're starting anew. Bear in mind that WE are offering the million-dollar prize, and WE will control the parameters, in line with the rules of the challenge – which are available to everyone. There will be no more exceptions, which I had – unwisely – granted to certain persons in order to be more accommodating;

they have always chosen to be difficult, capricious, and arrogant as a result of this courtesy. No more.

First, we require that George Vithoulkas submit a regular, properly-filled-out application – just as we require EVERYONE to do. After that has been received, we'll go ahead – as with any regular applicant – with the arrangements, including the requirement for the preliminary stage." Mr. Randi changed the terms of the agreement when he saw that everything was ready for starting the experiment. While his representatives were discussing arrangements with Prof. George Vithoulkas in Alonissos (September 2008), he was publicizing on his website that the Greek homeopaths had withdrawn! "Since I'm not personally handling the challenge applications, I'm not aware of how many places George Vithoulkas has tried for a venue, but I know that his own country turned him down, as well as some others. Second, we'll require that Mr. Vithoulkas obtain a venue and all the necessary facilities for conducting a double-blind, correct, acceptable protocol, before we will go ahead – following the receipt of the application."

Mr. Randi ignores the fact that we had already obtained permission and the facilities for a second time, even though we had informed the "skeptics" in the Athenian and hospital bureaucracy.

"The protocol used by the Royal Society/BBC studies in the UK – based on Jacques Benveniste's design, and carefully supervised by the homeopathic community there – would be acceptable for this set of tests."

Mr. Randi wants to change even the terms of protocol that took years to be contracted.

"Don't contact me personally on this matter. I'll not entertain any arguments or pleas. It will be handled by Alison Smith, working with others on our staff."

Mr. Randi dismissed his previous collaborators, Mr. Alec Gindis and Mr. Hrasko Gabor, who were working with us!

"These 300 words constitute my entire commentary on the matter."

James Randi

It was clear now for a second time that when everything was in place to start the experiment, Mr. Randi didn't wish to go ahead and found ridiculous excuses for withdrawing.

Consequently, as minimal compensation for the damage caused to the morale of Greek homeopaths and the homeopathic community in general, we demand:

1. Personal apologies from Mr. Randi posted on his website.
2. Retraction of the text "Another Withdrawal" from all sites.
3. Posting of this document in the same location on the JREF website that the "Withdrawal Statement" was posted.

4. A legal, notarized statement retracting the last statement of 17.10.2008 that cancelled all Mr. Randi's previous commitments.

If Mr. Randi fulfils all these conditions, we will continue with the experiment as planned. If these conditions are not fulfilled within a month, we will consider Mr. Randi to have withdrawn from the experiment. In any case, we will go ahead and complete the experiment without Mr. Randi, but with the help of sceptics Mr. Alec Gindis and Mr Hrasko Gabor, who are really interested in seeing this experiment finally completed.

*About the Author: George Vithoulkas, M.I.H. is a renowned homeopathic practitioner, author, and educator. He is the founder and director of the Athenian Center for Homeopathic Medicine and the Athenian School of Homeopathic Medicine in Athens, Greece. He has authored several books, among them *The Science of Homeopathy* and *Homeopathy: Medicine for the New Man*. He has published Volumes One through Nine of *Materia Medica Viva*, a multiple volume materia medica set containing his original and confirmed insights into numerous remedies. Several more volumes are expected. AVH*

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