

Berkshire Priorities Committee

Policy Statement 10 Homeopathy

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The Berkshire Priorities Committee has considered the question of funding for homeopathy and reviewed best available evidence for clinical effectiveness of homeopathy treatments. This included high quality review papers from peer review journals and the following organisations were contacted and asked to contribute material:

- Bristol Homeopathic Hospital
- Royal London Homeopathic Hospital
- Glasgow Homeopathic Library
- British Homeopathic Association

Homeopathy is based on the hypothesis that a disease can be cured by remedies that produce the same symptoms as the disease in a healthy individual. Homeopathy relies on very high dilutions. These include 'ultra molecular' dilutions, which do not contain any of the original substance).¹

It was noted that there was a distinction between homeopathic and herbal medicine.

Is Homeopathy Clinically Effective?

A recent large meta analysis of homeopathic medicine incorporated 24 clinical categories, four types of homeopathy and 50 classes of homeopathic remedies and concluded "The results are not compatible with the hypothesis that the clinical effects of homeopathy are completely due to the placebo. However, we found insufficient evidence from these studies that homeopathy is clearly efficacious for any single condition"²

However, there is not enough information in any one condition with any one homeopathic treatment to say that homeopathy should be used. A number of trials for more specific therapeutic areas report no benefit above placebo or lack of reproducible results.^{2,-10}

Homeopathy has not been proved to be efficacious beyond the placebo for any one particular treatment by independently randomised control trials. Until this evidence is available, the Berkshire Priorities Committee recommends the following:

- 1) That homeopathy should remain a low priority treatment due to the limited evidence for clinical effectiveness.***
- 2) The contract between HA/PCGs and the Royal London Homeopathic Trust should be terminated, with a view to honouring payment for existing patients currently being treated and patients currently on the waiting list.***
- 3) Future referrals for homeopathy should be 'in exceptional circumstances only' and shall be agreed by the East or West Case Review Committees.***

References

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4. Ernst E, Pittler MH (1998) Efficacy of homeopathic arnica: A systematic review of placebo and controlled clinical trials. Archives of Surgery 133:11: 1187-90
5. Kleijnen J, Knipschild P, Reit G. (1991) Clinical trials of homeopathy. BMJ 1991 302: 316-147.
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