

This letter to the editor to the 'American Journal of Homeopathic Medicine' the journal of the American Institute of Homeopathy, Alexandria, VA, USA (www.homeopathyusa.org/journal), edited by George Guess was written by Joel Shepperd and first published in AJHM Winter 2002/3 95 (4) 190-191.

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Two ways of seeing are confronted.

Pure observation, direct sensual experience in the homoeopathy of Hahnemann, where is no attempt to look behind the pure phenomena is to be found in contrast with prescribing remedies with regard to categories, concepts, theories and commonalities like families, kingdoms etc.

The author indicates the risk of suppression of the individual by the uniformity of the categories.

Joel Shepperd

Two Ways of Seeing

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor:

In the Summer 2002 issue of the American Journal, you, the editor, have raised unanswered questions. Until you have received your answers, the discussion of the topics should continue. No matter how many growing pains of controversy result, the important problems confronting homeopathy should be out in the open. Here are some comments on a couple of the topics.

Diagnosis by Categories

In the past American homeopaths had conflicts with practitioners who wanted to prescribe by diagnosis of a disease name based on pathology. Now there is conflict with those who want to prescribe by diagnosis of a category name based on commonalities. These new "category diagnoses" include: 1) Ordinary chemical or element categories as a diagnosis, such as a "halogen type;" 2) animal, plant or mineral "family categories" as a diagnosis, such as "snakeness;" 3) interpretation of psychological symbolism as a diagnosis, such as "courage like a lion." Prescribing based on these preconceived named entities is using the same methodology as prescribing by traditional disease names.

Hahnemann spoke out against all preconceived categories, whether allopathic disease names or hypothetically derived groupings. No theories are reliable in the homeopathic method. Only the perceptible signs and symptoms and circumstances are verifiable.

Provings

There must be minimum necessary standards for provings. There is the Hahnemannian standard based on explicit writings. There are modern methods of science that may be called the "gold standard." If neither of these accepted standards are followed, then provings can only be called unreliable.

The homeopathic method of provings is meant to record all subjective and objective symptoms of a medicinal substance, but eliminate influences other than the remedy. Group provings are exactly contrary to the intent of provings. In a group mental influences undoubtedly exist. The resulting mass mind encourages a homogeneous mixture of symptoms that eliminates as much individuality as possible. Only the lowest common denominator of

symptoms will persist. The unique characteristics of each person are easily lost in the collective resonance.

It is not correct to say that very few homeopaths have experience with provings. It is more true that virtually every homeopath has experienced provings on himself or on patients who receive an inexact remedy. Homeopaths prescribe for individuals, not groups. Similarly, provings must be done on individuals, not groups.

The organizers of current provings must answer other questions as well. If these leaders are truly building homeopathy, why do they not choose the lesser known remedies with at least some known symptoms? A completely unknown remedy results in new data that has not been independently verified or disproved. The published cured cases using the new remedy are less than convincing. How many times did it not work? How many are placebo responders? So, most of the new provings must be declared unreliable. (Old provings can be just as unsubstantial).

If the current provers are really thinking of the good of homeopathy, why is there so little cooperation and coordination? Why have different groups under different leaders not proved the same remedy at the same time? The apparent individualism and showmanship are nothing new.

Using Computers

Computers are not analytical, not interpretive and not systematic. It is the people who program this valuable tool who may or may not be organized in such ways. The computer is an accountant. It is an ideal enumerator that never forgets a bit or byte. It does not divide remedies into categories. People do that. As more and more useful homeopathic information is gathered, all of it can be accessed and studied on computer. Then homeopathy can approach a "mathematical precision" as Hahnemann envisioned.

Two Ways of Seeing

The axioms of homeopathy, such as the Law of Similars, the single remedy, and the totality of symptoms are not being denied in the current controversies, but they are being reinterpreted out of context. Hahnemann's exactness of methodology, a scientific method, is now called a dogmatic opinion. How could Hahnemann be so autocratic and innovative at the same time? He was able to develop homeopathy because of his unique, consistent way of seeing Nature.

Hahnemann starts with the sensory experiences, both subjective and objective; he stays with the perceptible signs and symptoms, and ends with all that is needed to be known about how to cure the whole disease process. Everything that is needed to discover the cure for illness is to be found by going into the sensory experience directly, not by looking behind it or beyond it. Wholeness is in the richness of the concrete experiences themselves. Symbols and theories are not more deep or more profound. They are just more intellectual. Sensory phenomena are the only practical and reliable guide. This is still, today, considered a radical frame of reference in science.

On the other hand, most of the so-called new ideas in homeopathy make use of the old-fashioned way of seeing Nature. The old way assumes that reality is discovered by going behind the sensory to find out what lies beyond in the form of relationships of groups or categories. The hypothesized commonalities are given the first authority over the individual who is simply one instance of the more important uniformity.

Instead of seeing the sensory phenomena first and last as did Hahnemann, some modern homeopaths want to explain away the meaning of the experiences, and then apply their theoretical interpretations to the phenomena. Instead of starting with observations of the

senses and staying with all those observations, as did Hahnemann, some current homeopaths search for a hypothesis first, and then select only the observations that support their own ideas.

For instance, it is not a single observation of the senses that people who need animal remedies are jealous; this is a theoretical interpretation of many, many selective observations. All the provings with the symptom of jealousy must be known. All the case histories with jealousy as a symptom must be remembered. All the remedies must be divided into categories of arbitrary kingdoms. All the observations that disagree with this hypothesis are ignored. However, if even more observations are included, another hypothesis can be formulated: All jealous people need an animal remedy like Lachesis, or a plant remedy like Hyoscyamus, or a mineral remedy like Calcarea sulphurica or a nosode like Medorrhinum.

Knowledge is never complete. Even in physics and mathematics, they don't know everything. This process of evolving ignorance is not an excuse for making do with guesswork. So-called reasonable strategies are not acceptable alternatives to painstaking and exacting methodology consistently practiced to the best of our current abilities.

Joel Shepperd, MD

Chicago, Illinois