



# Homeopathy's *Role in Addressing* Healthcare *Costs*

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## United States Healthcare Costs - At a Glance

In 2016 U.S. health care spending increased 4.3% to reach \$3.3 trillion (\$10,348 per person) or 17.9% of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP)- up from 17.7 percent in 2015. Physician and clinical services accounted for 20% (\$664.9 billion) and prescription drugs accounted for 10% (\$328.6 billion) of this total.<sup>113</sup>

U.S. healthcare spending continues to rise in proportion to the GDP (see infographic below)<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/Downloads/highlights.pdf>

<sup>114</sup> Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Office of the Actuary, National Health Statistics Group; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc. Accessed from: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-S>

In 2016, the United States spent nearly twice as much as any of the ten highest-income countries in the world on healthcare. U.S. healthcare simply does not measure up or compare favorably with any of these other nations in terms of healthcare statistics: The U.S. has the highest percentage of obese and overweight adults, the lowest life expectancy, and one of the highest infant mortality rates of any developed nation on earth.<sup>115</sup>

These out-of-control healthcare costs combined with poorer than average outcomes is part of an unsustainable trend that must be altered. The use of

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stems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/Downloads/NHE-Presentation-Slides.pdf

<sup>115</sup> Papanicolas I, Woskie LR, Jha AK. Health Care Spending in the United States and Other High-Income Countries. *JAMA* 2018;319(10):1024-1039. doi:10.1001/jama.2018.1150. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2674671>

integrative strategies in medicine, and homeopathy in particular, would help reverse this trend and return U.S. healthcare to quality and longevity. Most European nations already integrate homeopathy into their national health care programs, with program-wide beneficial results that include lower cost and improved quality outcomes.

## Initiatives on The Hill

In March 2018 the first-ever bi-partisan Congressional Integrative Health and Wellness Caucus convened to provide education and stimulate legislative change in integrative healthcare.<sup>116</sup> Staving off the rising trend of unsustainable healthcare costs is an extremely important public health concern and further exploration into the use of alternatives is being encouraged on Capitol Hill.



## Public Health Burden and Costs of Illness

There are many cost burdens and public health crises affecting American healthcare. Two of these burdens are related to chronic pain management and antibiotic resistance. In 2010 the annual cost of pain management was greater than the annual costs of heart disease (\$309 billion), cancer (\$243 billion), and diabetes (\$188 billion) and nearly 30 percent

higher than the combined cost of cancer and diabetes.<sup>117</sup>

Antibiotic resistance has increasingly become an international public health crisis that in 2015 the last administration allocated \$1.2 billion and released a National Action Plan to Combat Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria.<sup>118</sup>

Homeopathy demonstrates benefit in reducing costs and improving outcomes simultaneously in both pain management and treatment of infectious disease, thereby reducing antibiotic resistance. These are just two of many areas that homeopathy has been shown to provide benefit.

Patients treated by family physicians certified in homeopathy are prescribed fewer antibiotics, antipyretic and anti-inflammatory medications for upper respiratory tract infections yet improve faster than those who receive conventional treatment from family physicians who don't use homeopathy.<sup>119</sup>

Studies conclusively demonstrate that, compared with conventional antibiotic protocols for recurrent upper respiratory tract infections and rhino-pharyngitis, homeopathically treated patients have better results, suffer fewer complications, lose less time from work and cost fewer health care dollars than those treated conventionally.<sup>120</sup>

Patients receiving homeopathic treatment for musculoskeletal complaints have similar trajectories, but only use half as many non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) compared with those who receive conventional care. Additionally, the homeopathically treated

<sup>116</sup> Integrative Health Policy Consortium. Retrieved from: <http://www.ihpc.org/new-congressional-caucus-on-integrative-health-and-wellness-formed/>

<sup>117</sup> Gaskin DJ, Richard P. Appendix C: The Economic Costs of Pain in the United States. *Relieving Pain in America: A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education, and Research*. 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK92521/>

<sup>118</sup> Burwell, Sylvia M., Vilsack, T., Carter, Ash. *Our Plan to Combat and Prevent Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria*. 2015. Retrieved from: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2015/03/27/our-plan-combat-and-prevent-antibiotic-resistant-bacteria>

<sup>119</sup> Grimaldi-Bensouda L, Begaud B, Rossignol M, et al. Management of Upper Respiratory Tract Infections by Different Medical Practices, Including Homeopathy, and Consumption of Antibiotics in Primary Care: The EPI3 Cohort Study in France 2007-2008. *PLoS ONE* 2014;9(3): e89990. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3960096/>

<sup>120</sup> Trichard M, Chauferin G, Nicoloyannis N. Pharmacoeconomic comparison between homeopathic and antibiotic treatment strategies in recurrent acute rhinopharyngitis in children (2005). Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/i.homp.2004.11.021>

groups report far fewer side effects and demonstrate no loss of therapeutic opportunity.<sup>121</sup>

In terms of chronic illness, studies demonstrate that homeopathically treated patients experience superior treatment outcomes at similar cost to those who undergo conventional medical management. Conditions studied include headaches, low back pain, depression, sinusitis in adults, and atopic asthma, dermatitis, and rhinitis in children.<sup>122</sup>

Replicated studies demonstrate that homeopathy provides faster relief with significantly lower risks of adverse drug reactions (ADR's) when compared with conventional treatments for acute respiratory illnesses.<sup>123, 124, 125</sup>

## Cost of Homeopathy

While providing the same or better-quality health outcomes, the cost of providing homeopathy remains negligible in comparison to conventional medical treatments.

The U.K.'s National Health Service (NHS) has included homeopathy since its inception in 1948. In 2016, more than 40,000 homeopathic prescriptions cost the NHS about \$120,000 (an average of \$3 per

prescription), I4.<sup>126</sup> In 2013 approximately 0.0013% of the entire 13 billion NHS budget was spent on homeopathic medicines. Labor and overhead costs for the use of homeopathy were only 0.004% of the budget.<sup>127, 128</sup>

A 2015 French health economics review concluded that when patients consulting homeopathic family physicians were compared with those consulting conventionally trained family physicians, they spent an average of 20% less on their health care (US \$78.70 vs. \$98.91). The extremely inexpensive costs of homeopathic medicines were offset by the relatively more expensive costs of longer consultation times required by homeopathic medical specialists, but overall cost savings were still greater in the homeopathically treated group. Homeopathic physicians tend to prescribe far fewer conventional drugs (i.e., psychotropic, antibiotics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) which are potentially much more expensive and hazardous.<sup>129</sup>

In 2011 the Swiss government commissioned a comprehensive review of their health care system that included an analysis of the entire body of evidence derived from randomized double-blind placebo controlled clinical trials, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, clinical outcome studies and epidemiological research examining the use of homeopathy in medical care. They concluded that homeopathy is a clinically effective, appropriate, safe, and cost-effective healthcare strategy for use by Swiss citizens. Since that time they have included, and paid for its use in the Swiss national health insurance program.

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<sup>121</sup> Rossignol M, Begaud B, Engel P, et al. Impact of physician preferences for homeopathic or conventional medicines on patients with musculoskeletal disorders: results from the EPI3-MSD cohort. *Pharmacoepidemiol Drug Saf* 2012;21:1093-101. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22782803>.

<sup>122</sup> Witt C, Keil T, Selim D, et al. Outcome and costs of homeopathic and conventional treatment strategies: a comparative cohort study in patients with chronic disorders. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* 2005; 13:79-86. Retrieved from: [http://www.academia.edu/13576920/Outcome\\_and\\_costs\\_of\\_homoeopathic\\_and\\_conventional\\_treatment\\_strategies\\_A\\_comparative\\_cohort\\_study\\_in\\_patients\\_with\\_chronic\\_disorders](http://www.academia.edu/13576920/Outcome_and_costs_of_homoeopathic_and_conventional_treatment_strategies_A_comparative_cohort_study_in_patients_with_chronic_disorders)

<sup>123</sup> Riley D, Fischer M, Singh B, et al. Homeopathy and Conventional Medicine: An Outcomes Study Comparing Effectiveness in a Primary Care Setting. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 2001; 7:149-159. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11327521>

<sup>124</sup> Haidvogel M., Riley D, Heger Met al. Homeopathic and conventional treatment for acute respiratory and ear complaints: A comparative study on outcome in the primary care setting. *BMC Complement Altern Med* 2007; 7: 7. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1831487/>

<sup>125</sup> Witt CM, Liidtker R, Baur R, et al. Homeopathic medical practice: long-term results of a cohort study with 3,981 patients. *BMC Public Health* 2005; 5:115. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16266440>

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<sup>126</sup> NHS Digital: NHS Prescription Cost Analysis 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.hri-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/NHS-homeopathy-in-the-spotlight-Feb2016.pdf> and <https://www.homeopathyawareness.com/the-nhs/>

<sup>127</sup> Is Freedom of Information Act request to the Department of Health by the Faculty of Homeopathy. Cost was £11.89 million between 2005 and 2008. Homeopathy Awareness. The School of Homeopathy. How much does it cost the NHS to provide homeopathy? Retrieved from: <https://www.homeopathyawareness.com/the-nhs/>

<sup>128</sup> Freedom of Information Act request to the Department of Health by the Faculty of Homeopathy. Cost was £11.89 million between 2005 and 2008. Homeopathy Awareness. The School of Homeopathy. How much does it cost the NHS to provide homeopathy? Retrieved from: <https://www.homeopathyawareness.com/the-nhs/>

<sup>129</sup> Colas A, Danno K, Tabar C, et al. Economic Impact of Homeopathic Practice in General Medicine In France. *Health Economics Review* 2015;5:18. Retrieved from: <https://healthconomicsreview.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s1356-1-015-0055-5>

## Conclusion

Healthcare costs in the U.S. continue to rise unsustainably while quality outcomes decline. U.S. healthcare ranks lower than most other developed nations. Efforts underway on Capitol Hill strive to reverse this trend and integrate alternative approaches, including homeopathy, into the U.S. healthcare system.

Homeopathy is an efficacious, safe and cost-effective medical modality capable of superior outcomes at a fraction of the cost and risk of conventional medical care. Many European nations have already studied homeopathy in great detail and have concluded that greater inclusion and incorporation into their national healthcare programs is warranted. It is time that the U.S. government and FDA take notice of the benefits and advantages of this important medical modality and work to include it in U.S. public healthcare.<sup>130</sup>

## *About the Author*

*Noel Peterson CCH, RSHom (NA), MBA is a board-certified classical homeopath with a full-time practice located in the Austin, Texas area. He currently serves as Vice President on the Council for Homeopathic Certification. Noel believes in making homeopathy more widely available and accessible throughout the American healthcare system and is dedicated to achieving this end through common sense business practices and effective homeopathic care*

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<sup>130</sup> Bornhoft, G, Matthiessen, and PF. Homeopathy in Healthcare: Effectiveness, Appropriateness, Safety, Costs. Goslar, Germany: Springer, 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.homeovet.cl/Libros/Homeopathy%20in%20Healthcare%20Effectiveness,%20Appropriateness,%20Safety,%20Costs.pdf>