



# Homeopathy *and* Dermatology

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*Ronald D. Whitmont, MD*

Homeopathic medicine is a form of natural healing that supports the body's own innate healing mechanisms. Homeopathic medicine treats the whole person, including dermatological issues, as scientific research confirms. There have been a number of good clinical dermatological research studies published in recent years which support the successful treatment and prevention of skin diseases with homeopathic medicine.<sup>548,549,550,551</sup> Evidence suggests that homeopathy is an effective modality for the treatment of a wide diversity of dermatologic conditions including hyperhidrosis, contact dermatitis, vitiligo, eczema and atopic dermatitis, psoriasis and pruritus. Relevant human and animal studies are reviewed.

**Hyperhidrosis** A small office-based prospective case series addressed hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating) in 9 patients individually treated with classical homeopathic medicine. All the patients in this study had hyperhidrosis for at least 1 year and as long as 23 years prior to

receiving homeopathic treatment. Ages ranged from 17 years old to 71 years old. Five patients were male and four were female. Five of 9 patients (56%) had a positive family history of hyperhidrosis.<sup>552</sup>

This study showed that 6 out of 9 patients (67%) responded successfully to homeopathic treatment and achieved a meaningful improvement in their excessive sweating. Their hyperhidrosis generally began to improve within 3 to 4 weeks after beginning treatment. Additionally, all of the responders (100%) noticed improvement in other, seemingly unrelated medical issues, including anxiety, obsessive thoughts, premenstrual cramps, fatigue, eczema, & dietary fat intolerance.

Three of the study participants (33%) failed to achieve meaningful improvement in hyperhidrosis (2 of these non-responders had very mild baseline symptoms), but all 3 "non-responders" still noticed improvement of other medical issues, including foot of constipation, and menstrual cramps. This small study demonstrates one of the benefits of classical homeopathic treatment: it

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<sup>548</sup> Bugdorf, W. H. and R. Happle What every dermatologist should know about homeopathy. Arch Derm 1996;132(8): 955-958.

<sup>549</sup> Darner AM. Immunologic Studies Support Homeopathic Medicine. Arch Dermatol 1997;133(2):244-245.doi:10.1001/archdenn.1997.03890380118024

<sup>550</sup> Clement RT. What every dermatologist should know about homeopathy, hormesis, and pharmacological inversion. Arch Derm 1997;133(2): 245.

<sup>551</sup> Stibbe JR. Homeopathy in dermatology. Clin Dermatol 1999;17(1):65-68

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<sup>552</sup> Signore RJ. Don't Sweat it! Homeopathic Medicine Helps Hyperhidrosis (Excessive Sweating). Homeopathy Today 2014;(Summer): 18-23

addresses and helps the 'whole person,' not only the chief complaint. No adverse events were reported in this study. The homeopathic medicines were safe, well-tolerated, easy to administer, pleasant tasting, and had high patient acceptability.

Other case studies demonstrate the benefits of homeopathy in the treatment of conditions including epidermolysis bullosa.<sup>553</sup>



## Contact Dermatitis

In a large clinical trial of 455 patients with allergies to poison ivy, the oral administration of a homeopathic medicine (made from poison oak) was used prophylactically to help prevent further cases of itchy poison ivy dermatitis. This "isopathic"<sup>554</sup> homeopathic medicine was administered weekly for six weeks prior to actual poison ivy exposure, and then three-times weekly for the remainder of the active season. The investigator found that 350 of the 455 patients (77%) were either completely free of poison ivy rashes or experienced only milder poison ivy reactions. Thirty nine percent (39%) of the subjects were employees of a tree pruning company, and were known to be regularly exposed to poison ivy throughout the summer.<sup>555</sup>

Several of the subjects in this study were patch-tested, which confirmed the presence of allergy to poison ivy before entry into the study. As predicted, the patients' patch-tests, after homeopathic treatment, converted to negative, indicating that the homeopathic medicine was

associated with a change in allergic reactions. Patch tested patients were known to have been exposed to poison ivy throughout the active season in activities such as camping and scouting, yet they remained free of poison ivy dermatitis, which they had previously experienced. Only 2 of the 455 patients (0.4%) had adverse effects, which included mild "nausea and GI discomfort". Overall, the homeopathic medicine was safe and well-tolerated.

## Vitiligo

An open observational pilot study using homeopathy in the treatment of vitiligo, an autoimmune skin disease characterized by white spots with complete lack of pigment cells, evaluated 27 subjects over 6 months. Efficacy was measured using a vitiligo area scoring index (VASI) score, vitiligo European Task Force (VETF) score, and dermatological life quality index (DLQI) score. Investigators found that individualized homeopathic treatment was associated with significant improvement measured by the VASI, VETF, and DLQI scores. This pilot study is important because it suggests that homeopathic medicine is helpful for vitiligo, while conventional medical treatment of this condition is often difficult, expensive, frustrating, and time-consuming, taking years to achieve results. Homeopathy is a safe and inexpensive treatment which would be a welcome addition to many modern dermatology practices.<sup>556</sup>

A prospective case series of 200 subjects with focal, segmental and generalized vitiligo treated with single homeopathic medicines demonstrated a 95% improvement rate. A unique feature of this study was that the researchers performed pre-treatment & post-treatment skin biopsies which were stained using H & E and Mason Fontana stains to compare for the presence of melanocytes & melanin pigment. The researchers found that 190 out of 200 patients (95%) showed improvement in their vitiligo. Seventy percent (70%) showed complete re-pigmentation of vitiligo plaques following homeopathic treatment. Patients found the homeopathic treatment to be simple, inexpensive, and easy to take. There were no adverse effects reported.<sup>557</sup>

A multicenter observational study of 169 patients with vitiligo completed 2 years of homeopathic treatment, and utilized the classical repertorization process.<sup>558</sup> Study results utilized the Vitiligo Symptom Score (VSS) and photographs of the patients. Results were analyzed using the statistical method SPSS version 20. The changes in the mean VSS at intervals of every 6 months were found

<sup>553</sup> Tuij G, Waisse S, Sos AB, et al. Epidermolysis bullosa: report of three cases treated with homeopathy. *Homeopathy* 2011; 100(4):264-269

<sup>554</sup> The term homeopathic specifically designates those products that are prescribed on the basis of their ability to produce a similar (not the same) state in a healthy subject, and are typically prescribed either as treatment or prophylaxis. The term isopathic designates those products that utilize substances identical to the actual causative agent, and are frequently prescribed prophylactically.

<sup>555</sup> Gross ER. An Oral Antigen Preparation in the Prevention of Poison Ivy Dermatitis. *Industr Med Surg* 1958; 27; 142-144.

<sup>556</sup> Ganguly S, Saha S, Koley M, et al. Homeopathic treatment of vitiligo: an open observational pilot study. *Int J High Dilution Res* 2013;12(45):168-177.

<sup>557</sup> Swami S, Dasgupta. S, Basu S, et al. Significant remission of vitiligo by ultra diluted alternative medicines. *Asian J Pharmaceut Clin Res* 2012;5(2):33-35.

<sup>558</sup> The term repertorization refers to the process of cross-referencing the symptoms of a patient with the symptoms produced by homeopathic medicines in a drug-proving.

to be statistically significant. Homoeopathic treatment was useful in relieving vitiligo to varying degrees in 75% of patients. Three percent (3%) demonstrated marked improvement, 11% moderately improved, 56% mildly improved, and the remaining 24% improved, though not significantly. There were no adverse events noticed during the study. The investigators affirmed the strength of an individualized approach to homoeopathy, which utilizes the totality of symptoms in the medicine selection process.<sup>559</sup>

## Eczema

There have been multiple clinical studies published studying the effect of homeopathy in the treatment of eczema. In one, investigators studied 40 children with atopic dermatitis as part of an observational longitudinal study with an average follow-up period of 8 years. The Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital Outcome Score was used to evaluate the results that were classified on the basis of a Likert scale. The patients had begun homeopathic treatment of atopic dermatitis before the age of 5. Seventy percent (70%) had complete resolution of their atopic dermatitis. This research suggests that homeopathy provides a positive therapeutic benefit in atopic children. Furthermore, the subjects treated in this study showed a reduced tendency to maintain atopic dermatitis and a lower risk of developing asthma and allergic rhinitis in adulthood.<sup>560</sup>

Another study evaluated 26 atopic dermatitis patients in a prospective observational study using homeopathy. Investigators evaluated the severity of eczema by Rajka and Langeland's score and a set of 4 Visual Analogue Scales evaluating eczema severity, itch, general and psychological well-being and quality of sleep. They found that homeopathically treated eczema patients demonstrated significant improvement, both clinically and statistically. The researchers concluded that homeopathic medicine could be regarded as a safe and effective choice for patients with atopic dermatitis.<sup>561</sup>

Another study from the Institute for Social Medicine, Epidemiology, and Health Economics in Berlin, Germany evaluated 118 children with atopic eczema. Fifty-four children were treated with homeopathic medicine and 64 with conventional dermatology drugs. Both groups were followed for a period of 12 months. Children in both groups noticed improvement in eczema symptoms and disease-related quality of life, however, eczema

improvement (as observed by physicians) was significantly greater in the homeopathic group.<sup>562</sup>

An observational study of 225 children with atopic eczema treated with homeopathic medicine alongside conventional dermatology drugs over 24 months demonstrated that the severity of eczema improved. Reductions in the use of conventional dermatology drugs were also observed.<sup>563</sup>

In a case series of 6 patients with atopic eczema and irritant contact dermatitis, homeopathic treatment was helpful. Investigators found that irritant contact dermatitis responds more quickly to homeopathic remedies than atopic eczema. Two of the 6 patients also experienced improvement in other seemingly unrelated medical conditions, including constipation, asthma, joint pain, and emotional issues including anxiety and guilt. Finally, homeopathic treatment of eczema was found to be helpful in reducing the use of topical steroids.<sup>564</sup>

## Atopic Dermatitis

Seventeen patients with intractable atopic dermatitis, who had previously failed conventional dermatological drug therapy, were treated with individualized homeopathic medical therapy in addition to conventional dermatology therapy over 6 to 31 months. The efficacy of homeopathic medicine was measured by objective assessments of the skin condition and the patients' own assessments, using a 9-point scale. One patient's dermatitis cleared completely, 7 cleared by 80% improvement, and 9 showed 50% improvement. Importantly, 29% improved so well that they were able to discontinue use of topical steroid ointments.<sup>565</sup>

In an uncontrolled trial 60 people with common skin disorders, including atopic dermatitis, eczema, acne, urticaria, psoriasis and alopecia universalis were enrolled in a study of individualized homeopathic treatment over a period of 3 months to 31 months. Subjects were permitted to use conventional dermatological treatments while taking part in the trial. Using the trial participants' own subjective analysis, improvement was assessed using a nine-point scale similar to the Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital Outcome Scale. On this basis, 10% reported a complete recovery, 38% reported a 75% improvement, 40% noted 50% improvement and 12% noted 25%

<sup>559</sup> Chakraborty PS, Kaushik S, Debata L, et al. A multicentric observational study to evaluate the role of homoeopathic therapy in vitiligo. *Indian J. Res Homeop* 2015;9(3):167-175.

<sup>560</sup> Rossi E, Bartoli P, Bianchi A, et al. Homeopathy in paediatric atopic diseases: long-term results in children with atopic dermatitis. *Homeopathy* 2012;101(1):13-20

<sup>561</sup> Eizayaga, J.E., Eizayaga, J.I. Prospective observational study of 42 patients with atopic dermatitis treated with homeopathic medicines. *Homeopathy* 2012;101(1): 21- 27.

<sup>562</sup> Keil T, Witt CM, Roll S, et al. Homeopathic versus conventional treatment of children with eczema: A comparative cohort study. *Complement Ther Med* 2008;16(1):15-21.

<sup>563</sup> Witt CM, Rainer L, Willich SN. Homeopathic treatment of children with atopic eczema: a prospective observational study with two years follow up. *Acta Derm Venereol* 2009;89(2):182-3. doi: 10.2340/00015555-0580.

<sup>564</sup> Signore, R. Classic Homeopathic Medicine and the Treatment of Eczema. *Cosmet Dermatol* 2011; 24(9): 420-425.

<sup>565</sup> Itamura R, Hosoya R. Homeopathic Treatment of Japanese patients with intractable Atopic Dermatitis. *Homeopathy* 2003; 92:108-114.

improvement. In all, 88% of patients reported more than 50% improvement.<sup>566</sup>

A study of 31 people suffering from either atopic skin and respiratory symptoms, or atopic skin symptoms alone, were treated with individualized homeopathic therapy over a period of 5 years. During a 6-month assessment period following this treatment, the authors determined that 41% of the group with skin and respiratory symptoms achieved at least a 76% improvement in symptoms, while 58% of those in the atopic skin group achieved the same outcome.<sup>567</sup> Interestingly, other investigators have noted that individuals suffering from multiple medical conditions tend to fare better from individualized homeopathic treatment, perhaps because the addition of symptoms from more than one organ system enables more accurate prescriptions.<sup>568, 569</sup>

## Other Dermatologic Conditions

In a prospective multicenter observational study of 397 patients with acute furunculosis, researchers used a furunculosis symptom score (FSS) system to assess patient outcomes after homeopathic treatment. They found that treating patients with furuncles using homeopathic medicines (rather than conventional antibiotics) resulted in a statistically significant improvement in the FSS from baseline and end of treatment in favor of homeopathic medicine. This study reflects the potential usefulness of homeopathic medicine in the treatment of acute bacterial furunculosis. This study is important because it suggests the potential of homeopathic medicine as a useful therapy, particularly in the current era of increasing bacterial resistance to conventional antibiotics.<sup>570</sup>

In a randomized, single-blind, placebo-controlled trial, 100 patients with minor aphthous ulcers were treated with either individualized homeopathic medicines or placebo. Patients received 2 doses, 12 hours apart, and were followed for up to 6 days. Pain intensity and ulcer size were recorded at the start, on day 4, and on day 6. Pain intensity and ulcer size were significantly improved in the homeopathically treated patients compared to placebo group ( $p < 0.05$ ). No adverse effects were reported. The researchers concluded that homeopathic medicine is a

safe and effective treatment for minor aphthous ulcers. This is an important study, because no consistently effective conventional therapy is available for this condition, which is frequently painful and troublesome.<sup>571</sup>

An outcome study to assess the effectiveness of individualized homeopathic treatment in dermatological complaints in a public outpatient clinic included 49 subjects. Outcomes were positive in 59% neutral in 4%, and 37% dropped out. Investigators concluded that individualized homeopathic treatment is effective in dermatological complaints.<sup>572</sup>

A two-part double blind, placebo-controlled trial to evaluate the efficacy of homeopathy for warts and Molluscum contagiosum involved a total of 147 subjects and demonstrated that individually chosen homeopathic medicines were superior to placebo for these conditions.<sup>573</sup>

A 10-week placebo-controlled, randomly-selected, double-blind study with crossover included 29 patients with seborrheic dermatitis. The study demonstrated significant improvement with homeopathic treatment over placebo ( $p < 0.04$ ).<sup>574</sup>

A single homeopathic medicine was studied in relation to the treatment of oral lichen planus, an often painful inflammatory dermatological condition. In this single-blind randomized placebo-controlled, clinical trial, 30 consecutive patients with oral lichen planus were treated for over 4 months. The investigators showed that the size of the oral sores decreased significantly in the homeopathic treatment group and that the average pain score was significantly reduced compared with the placebo group. The researchers concluded that homeopathic medicine has a beneficial effect in the treatment of oral lichen planus in selected patients.<sup>575</sup>

## Psoriasis and Pruritus

A prospective multicenter observational study evaluated 82 patients with psoriasis who were treated with homeopathy over 2-years. These subjects were allowed to use conventional drugs simultaneously, if they chose. The

<sup>566</sup> Itamura R. Effect of homeopathic treatment of 60 Japanese patients with chronic skin disease. *Complement Ther Med*. 2007;15(2):115-20.

<sup>567</sup> Mohan GR, Anandhi KS. Efficacy of homeopathic drugs in dermatitis of atopic diathesis. *Homeopathic Links* 2003;16(4):257-260.

<sup>568</sup> Gibson ERG, Gibson SL, MacNeill AD, Buchanan WW. Homeopathic therapy in rheumatoid arthritis: evaluation by double-blind clinical therapeutic trial. *Br J Clin Pharmacol* 1980;9:453-9.

<sup>569</sup> Witt CM, Ludtke R, Mengler M, et al. How Healthy are Chronically Ill Patients After Eight Years of Homeopathic Treatment?—Results From a Long Term Observational Study. *BMC Public Health* 2008;8:413. doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-8-413

<sup>570</sup> Nayak C, Singh V, Singh K, et al. A Prospective Multicentre Observational Study to Evaluate the Usefulness of the Nine Predefined Homeopathic Medicines in Furunculosis *Homeopathic Links* 2010; 23(1):60-63.

<sup>571</sup> Mousavi F, Mojaver YN, Asadzadeh M, et al. Homeopathic treatment of minor aphthous ulcer: a randomized placebo-controlled clinical trial. *Homeopathy* 2009;98:137-141.

<sup>572</sup> Waisse-Priven S, Jtutj G, Lima LC, et al. Individualized homeopathic treatment of dermatological complaints in a public outpatient clinic. *Homeopathy* 2009;98(3):149-153.

<sup>573</sup> Manchanda RK, Mehan N, Bahl H, et al. Double Blind Placebo Controlled Clinical Trials of Homeopathic Medicines in Warts and Molluscum contagiosum, *CCRH Quarterly Bulletin* 1997; 19: 25-29.

<sup>574</sup> Smith SA, Baker SE, Williams TH. Effective treatment of seborrheic dermatitis using a low dose, oral homeopathic medication consisting of potassium bromide, sodium bromide, nickel sulfate, and sodium chloride in a double-blind, placebo-controlled study. *Altern Med Rev*. 2002;7(1):59-67.

<sup>575</sup> Mousavi F, Sherafati S et al. Immunity in the treatment of oral lichen planus. *Homeopathy* 2009; 98(1):40-44.

researchers found that the severity of psoriasis improved and patients were able to reduce the amounts of conventional drugs that they used. The severity of several comorbid diseases also improved along with quality of life scores. The utilization of all health services decreased markedly in the homeopathic treatment group.<sup>576</sup>

In a randomized, placebo-controlled double-blind trial, researchers studied the effects of homeopathic treatment on pruritis in 20 hemodialysis patients. Kidney failure patients undergoing dialysis treatment frequently complain of severe itching, which is difficult to control with conventional methods. Itching was evaluated using a previously published scale. Patients were classified as responders if they had greater than 50% reduction of itching. The researchers assessed the role of individualized homeopathic treatment in this situation and found that it produced statistically significant reductions in itching at every point of observation.<sup>577</sup>

In a phase III single-blind randomized comparison trial researchers compared a homeopathic ointment versus a topical analgesic (trolamine) ointment in the prophylaxis of acute radiation induced dermatitis in 254 women undergoing post-operative radiation treatment for breast cancer. The researchers found that the risk of acute radiation dermatitis (grade 2 or higher) was significantly lower in the homeopathically treated group<sup>31</sup>. Other researchers have noted similar findings.<sup>578</sup>

## Animal Studies

An in vivo animal study evaluated a homeopathic medicine for its prophylactic effect against experimentally-induced inflammation. Researchers found that homeopathic medicine was significantly more effective in inhibiting rat paw edema caused by carrageenan than placebo controls ( $P < 0.05$ ). The researchers used a well-known experimental model involving prostaglandins and other inflammatory mediators. In this experiment, homeopathic medicine had effects similar to indomethacin, a powerful prescription nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). This study is very important because it shows that homeopathic treatment has significant anti-inflammatory effects, which might be one reason why it is often helpful in the treatment of herpes zoster (shingles), arthritis, and other inflammatory skin eruptions.<sup>579</sup>

A dual-phase single-blind placebo-controlled study of homeopathy in the treatment of atopic dermatitis in dogs reported significant reductions in the pruritus score of dogs receiving homeopathic treatment compared with placebo. Dog owners correctly distinguished between the placebo and homeopathic remedies based on symptom reduction.<sup>580</sup>

Veterinarians have found homeopathic medicine to be extremely beneficial in the treatment of a number of different dermatologic conditions in both small and large animals.<sup>581</sup>

Using an in vivo animal model researchers evaluated a homeopathic medicine in the treatment of heat-induced itching in laboratory rats. The researchers found that in this blinded study, the homeopathic medicine demonstrated significant improvement in itching without adverse effects. It is possible that homeopathy could be helpful in humans with similar conditions including itching without eruptions and itching of unknown origin.<sup>582</sup>

## About The Author:

*Ronald D. Whilmont, MD is Board Certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine, a Founding Diplomate of the American Board of Holistic Medicine, immediate past president of the American Institute of Homeopathy and Clinical Assistant Professor of Family and Community Medicine at New York Medical College. Dr. Whilmont maintains a private practice of classical homeopathy in New York City and Rhinebeck New York.*

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<sup>576</sup> Will CM, Ludtke R, Willich SN. "Homeopathic treatment of patients with psoriasis--a prospective observational study with 2 years follow-up." *J Europ Acad Dermatol Venereol* 2009; 23(5): 538-543.

<sup>577</sup> Cavalcanti AM, Rocha LM, Carillo R, et al. Effects of homeopathic treatment on pruritus of haemodialysis patients: a randomised placebo-controlled double-blind trial. *Homeopathy* 2003;92(4):177-81.

<sup>578</sup> Balzarini A, Felisi E, Martini A, De Conno F. Efficacy of homeopathic treatment of skin reactions during radiotherapy for breast cancer: a randomized, double-blind clinical trial. *Br Homeopath J* 2000;89:8-12.

<sup>579</sup> Dos Santos AL, Perazzo FF, Cardoso LG, et al. In vivo study of the anti-inflammatory effect of *Rhus toxicodendron*. *Homeopathy* 2007;96(2):95-101.

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<sup>580</sup> Hill PB, Hoare J, Lau-Gillard P, et al. Pilot study of the effect of individualised homeopathy on the pruritus associated with atopic dermatitis in dogs. *Vet Rec.* 2009;164(12):364-70.

<sup>581</sup> Cipollone B. Veterinary dermatology and homeopathy, *Europ J Integrative Med* 2012;4(1): 93.

<sup>582</sup> de Paula Coelho C, D'Almeida V, Pedrazzoli-Neto M, et al. Therapeutic and pathogenetic animal models for *Dolichos pruriens*. *Homeopathy* 2006;195(3):136-43.