

Homeopathy *for Opioid* Addiction *and Pain Management*



Burke Lennihan, RN, CCN and Loretta Butchorn, PhD CCH, RSHom (NA)

Homeopathy has a holistic modality that effectively addresses many of the underlying causes responsible for ongoing pain, often enabling the resolution of acute and chronic pain syndromes. Managing pain in a homeopathic manner is associated with the opportunity to resolve these states, rather than simply suppressing them with addictive pain medicines, which is often the *modus operandi* of most conventional management strategies.⁵²

The Opioid Addiction Crisis: How Homeopathy Can Help

Homeopathy has tremendous potential to help with opioid addiction, which is one of our nation's largest healthcare crises. Not only are there many homeopathic medicines that address pain effectively, but homeopathy has the potential to help those who are addicted to both drugs and alcohol successfully and safely detox while remaining sober.⁵³ According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 70,000 individuals have

died from drug overdoses in the U.S. over the last year.⁵⁴ This represents an increase of nearly 10% since 2017 and 24% since 1999.⁵⁵ Major increases in death rates have been noted in more than 23 states.⁵⁶

Many of these deaths were among those who had recently "detoxed" from drugs and were in the process of transitioning into a non-drug lifestyle. What many fail to realize is that once addicted to drugs (alcohol, heroin, other opioids, cocaine, methamphetamine, tobacco, or cannabis) the body's production of neurotransmitters in the brain is suppressed. Recovery of these neurotransmitters to their normal levels takes many months after drug use is discontinued and the drugs have left the body. A balanced neurotransmitter system is essential for comfortable and productive living. Medical detoxification programs typically last 3-5 days, which is long enough for the drugs to leave the body, but not long

⁵² Whitmont RD. The Opioid Epidemic. *Am J Homeop Med* 2017;110(4):26-30.

⁵³ Bakshi, JPS, "Homoeopathy: a new approach to detoxification," *J OM111* (International Homeopathic Medicine Organization) 1993; 6(2):24-32 in *Am J Homeop Med* (Spring) 2003.

⁵⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.htm>

⁵⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.html>

⁵⁶ Kissin B, Schenker V, Schenker A. The acute effects of ethyl alcohol and chlorpromazine on certain physiological functions in alcoholics. *Q J Stud Alcohol* 1959;20:480-92.

enough for the nervous system to adjust neurotransmitter levels back to healthy and comfortable levels.⁵⁷

This delayed recovery, which is called "PAWS," (Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome)⁵⁸ was first identified in 1959 as a condition that plagues the recovering addict with sleeplessness, irritability, multiple physical and emotional symptoms, and severe cravings for drugs, often with a continual obsessing and fixation on drug usage.⁵⁹ This condition can vary in intensity, fluctuating hourly in early recovery and then intermittently over the next 6 months to 2 years as sobriety continues.⁶⁰

One formal research study and two observational studies completed in Boston, MA indicate the benefits of homeopathic medicine in the treatment of post-acute withdrawal syndrome. The completion rate in these two projects was twice as high in the homeopathic treatment group compared with the conventional group (66% versus 33% in the first, and 63% versus 37% in the second). No adverse events were reported in either of these cohorts.

Two studies performed, one in a 6-month treatment facility,⁶¹ and another in a 28-day treatment program,⁶² found that clients who choose to utilize homeopathic treatment experienced fewer cravings, stabilized in treatment, and completed treatment twice as often as those who chose not to utilize homeopathy in their treatment. A dramatic reduction in PAWS was seen in the clients who chose to utilize homeopathic treatment. The reduction in PAWS provides a clear indication that homeopathy is a useful and inexpensive adjunct modality, even when used alongside conventional medical detoxification.

The symptoms of craving and obsessing about drug use are particularly intense, and tend to trigger relapses in the form of a return to drug use. An important factor that contributes to the increased risk of death is that the detoxification process increases sensitivity to the drug, which means that vulnerability to overdose is much greater during and after detox. As a result, any return to opioid use that doesn't account for this sensitivity is much more dangerous since it easily overwhelms the body and results in overdose. Death can result from using the same amount of drug that had been used and tolerated before

detox simply because the body became more sensitive and vulnerable to it.⁶³

Research has shown that the use of homeopathic medicines can dramatically reduce drug cravings and obsessions and allow recovering addicts to progress beyond this immediate period more easily, and safely move into health and recovery.^{64, 65, 66}

Animal studies using homeopathic medicines have shown a statistically significant reduction in alcohol seeking,⁶⁷ stress,⁶⁸ and anxiety,⁶⁹ which are all early recovery symptoms that frequently trigger deadly relapses.

Depression,^{70, 71} grief,⁷² and the residual symptoms of post-concussive syndrome,⁷³ a condition with many features similar to the very early stages of recovery from addiction, have demonstrated benefit from homeopathic treatment.

The use of homeopathy as a complete treatment for drug addiction has not been extensively studied. However, in a recent randomized, double-blinded trial homeopathy was associated with a significant reduction in the number of days of cocaine use.⁷⁴ Although homeopathy has not played a significant role as an adjunct modality in the medical treatment of addictive illness until recently, homeopathy has been employed as an effective treatment modality for opioid addiction both in India⁷⁵ and in the UK. Research strongly suggests it may provide an important, cost-effective, powerful and welcome tool in managing the current opioid crisis safely. A vast trove of historical data, animal studies, laboratory data and current

⁵⁷ Wellman M. The late withdrawal symptoms of alcoholic addiction. *Can Med Assoc J* 1954;70(5):526-9.

⁵⁸ DeSoto CB, O'Donnell WB, Allred WI, et al. Symptomatology in alcoholics at various stages of abstinence. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res* 1985 Dec;9(6):505-12.

⁵⁹ Bakshi, JPS, op cit.

⁶⁰ Rogers J., Homeopathy and the treatment of alcohol related problems. *Complement Ther Nurs Midwifery* 1997;3(1):21-8.

⁶¹ Butehorn L, Gumz P, Randolph L. Nux vomica, the Amica of Recovery from Addiction: An Exploratory Study of the Use of Homeopathy in the Reduction of Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome in Addiction Treatment. *Homeopathic Links* 2015; 28(01): 054- 056. DOI: 10.1055/s-0035-1544202

⁶² Butehorn L, Gumz P, Randolph L (2017) Use of Homeopathic Nux Vomica in Reducing PAWS (Post-acute withdrawal syndrome) in Early Recovering Addicted Women. *Int J Complement Alt Med Int J Complement Alt Med* 6(4): 00197. DOI: 10.15406/iicam.2017.06.00197

⁶³ Butehorn L. Post-acute withdrawal syndrome, relapse prevention, and homeopathy. *Alt Comp Therapies* 2017;23(6). doi.org/10.1089/act.2017.29139.1bu

⁶⁴ Bakshi, JPS, op cit.

⁶⁵ Rogers J., Homeopathy and the treatment of alcohol related problems. *Complement Ther Nurs Midwifery* 1997;3(1):21-8.

⁶⁶ Sukul A, Sarkar P, Sinhababu SP, et al. Altered solution structure of alcoholic medium of potentized Nux Vomica underlies its anti-alcoholic effect. *Br Homeopath J* 2000;89(2):73-77.

⁶⁷ Sukul NC, Ghosh S, Sinhababu SP, et al. Strychnos Nux Vomica extract and its ultra-high dilution reduce voluntary ethanol intake in rats. *J Altern Com Med* 2001 Apr;7(2):187-93.

⁶⁸ Pinto SA, Bohlend E, Coelho Cde P, et al. An animal model for the study of Chamomilla in stress and depression: pilot study. *Homeopathy* 2008; 97(3):141-4. doi: 10.1016/j.homp.2008.04.001.

⁶⁹ Bellavite P, Magnani P, Zanolin E, et al. Homeopathic Doses of Gelsemium sempervirens Improve the Behavior of Mice in Response to Novel Environments. *Evid Based Complement Alternat Med* 2011;2011:362517. doi: 10.1093/ecam/nep139. Epub 2011 Feb 15.

⁷⁰ Davidson JR, Gaylord S. Homeopathic and psychiatric perspectives on grief. *Altern Ther Health Med* 1998;4(5):30-5.

⁷¹ Chikramane PS, Suresh AK, Bellare JR, Kane SG: Extreme homeopathic dilutions retain starting materials: A nanoparticulate perspective. *Homeopathy* 2010, 99(4):231-242.

⁷² Davidson JR, Morrison RM, Davidson RT, et al. Homeopathic treatment of depression and anxiety. *Altern Ther Health Med* 1997;3(1):46-9.

⁷³ Chapman EH, Weintraub RJ, Milburn MA, et al Homeopathic Treatment of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury: A Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Clinical Trial. *J Head Trauma Rehab* 1999;14(6):521-542.

⁷⁴ Adler UC, Acorinte AC, Calzavro SO, et al. Double-blind evaluation of homeopathy on cocaine craving: a randomized controlled pilot study. *J Integr Med*. 2018;16(3):178-184. doi: 10.1016/j.joim.2018.03.004. Epub 2018 Mar 30.

⁷⁵ Bakshi, JPS, op cit.\

addiction treatment data suggests that homeopathy may be efficacious as a valuable resource in the current opioid epidemic.

Homeopathy for Pain Management

Pain management is considered "the leading edge" of CAM modalities with respect to integration into conventional health care in the US.^{76,77} Several textbooks detail the homeopathic treatment of pain syndromes.^{78,79}

A large-scale study in France demonstrated 50% reduced use of NSAIDs and significantly less use of opioids when homeopathic medicines were prescribed by conventional trained primary care physicians. Long term results, measured by pain reduction and quality of life were significantly improved with the use of homeopathy.⁸⁰ Results suggest that homeopathic medicines act faster than conventional pain medications while reducing the need for them,^{81,82} without any of the associated dangers of dependence or withdrawal effects.⁸³ Homeopathy is superior to placebo in reducing pain in many medical conditions including endometriosis,⁸⁴ joint pain and stiffness,⁸⁴ and hemorrhoids.⁸⁵

Homeopathic Medicines for Specific Pain Conditions

Post-Surgery/Post-Dental Extraction Pain Management

The use of Arnica both pre- and post-operatively reduces bruising, swelling, soreness and pain.^{86,87} Other homeopathic medicines are useful in the augmentation of wound healing, reduced scarring, prevention of infection and palliation of nerve pain and prevention of radiation burns.^{88,89}

Homeopathic treatment is effective in a wide range of clinical scenarios including toothache, burning mouth syndrome and trigeminal neuralgia.⁹⁰ The homeopathic medicines have been shown to demonstrate particular affinity and benefit with respect to nerve pain⁹¹ pain and swelling after placement of dental implants with and without the use of conventional pain medications.⁹²

Homeopathic treatment has been found to be successful in helping 58% of patients avoid a root canal surgery, tooth extraction and pulp capping procedures in at least one small study.⁹³

Fractures

Homeopathy has been found to speed bone healing while reducing the need for analgesics after fractures.⁹⁴

⁷⁶ Weeks J. Academic group leads change for hospitals in integrative pain treatment priorities. Integrator #169, Feb. 28, 2017 accessed at <https://www.integrativepractitioner.com/whats-new/news-and-commentary/academic-group-leads-change-hospitals-integrative-pain-treatment-priorities/> on March 15, 2017.

⁷⁷ American College of Physicians. Noninvasive treatments for acute, subacute, and chronic low back pain: a clinical practice guideline from the American College of Physicians. Annals of Internal Medicine Clinical Guidelines 14 February 2017.

⁷⁸ Loes M, Ullman D. Homeopathy. In: Boswell MV, Cole BE eds. Weiner's Pain Management: A Practical Guide for Clinicians. 7th edition, New York: Taylor and Francis, 2006

⁷⁹ Whitmont RD, Mamtani R. Homeopathy and Chronic Pain, Chapter 17 in Complementary and Integrative Medicine in Pain Management, Weintraub MI, Mamtani R, Micozzi MS, eds. Springer, NY. 2008: 337 – 368.

⁸⁰ 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 EP13-MSD cohort. Pharmacoepidemiol Drug Saf 2012 Oct;21(10):1093-101.

⁸¹ Friesse KH, Kruse S, Moeller H. The homeopathic treatment of otitis media in children—comparisons with conventional therapy. Int J Clin Pharmacol Ther 1997 Jul;35(7):296-301

⁸² Robertson A, Suryanarayanan R., Banerjee A. Homeopathic Arnica montana for post-tonsillectomy analgesia: a randomised placebo control trial. Homeopathy 2007 Jan;96(1):17-21.

⁸³ American Pharmacists Association Handbook of Non-Prescription Drugs. Washington, DC: American Pharmacists Association, 15. Edition.

⁸⁴ Karp SC, Sanchez C, Guilbert P et al. Treatment with Ruta graveolens 5CH and Rhus toxicodendron 9CH may reduce joint pain and stiffness linked to aromatase inhibitors in women with early breast cancer: results of a pilot observational study. Homeopathy 2016 Nov;105(4):299-308.

⁸⁵ Das KD, Ghosh S, Das AK et al. Treatment of hemorrhoids with individualized homeopathy: an open observational pilot study. J Intermit Ethnopharmacol 2016 Jun 25;5(4):335-342.

⁸⁶ Robertson A, Suryanarayanan R, Banerjee A, op.cit.

⁸⁷ Iannitti T, Morales-Medina JC, Bellavite P, et al. Effectiveness and safety of Arnica Montana in post-surgical setting, pain, and inflammation. Am J Tiler 2016 Jan-Feb;23(1):e184-97.

⁸⁸ Pommier P, Gomez F, Sunyach MP et al. Phase III randomized trial of Calendula officinalis compared with trolamine for the prevention of acute dermatitis during irradiation for breast cancer. J Clin Oncol. 2004 Apr 15;22(8):1447-53

⁸⁹ Hostanska, K., Rostock, M., Melzer, J., et al. A homeopathic remedy from arnica, marigold, St. John's wort and comfrey accelerates in vitro wound scratch closure of NIH 3T3 fibroblasts. BMC Complement Altern Med 2012; 12:100.

⁹⁰ Eames S, Darby P. Homeopathy and its ethical use in dentistry. Brit Dent J2011 April 9;210(7): 299-301.

<http://www.nature.com/bdj/journal/v210/n7/pdf/sj.bdj.2011.237.pdf>FIX

⁹¹ Raak C, Bussing A, Grossmann G et al. A systematic review and meta-analysis on the use of Hypericum perforatum (St. John's Wort) for pain conditions in dental practice. Homeopathy 2012 Oct;101(4):204-10.

⁹² Mazzocchi A, Montanaro F. Observational study of the use of Symphytum 5CH in the management of pain and swelling after dental implant surgery. Homeopathy 2012 Oct;101(4):211-6.

⁹³ Hamre HJ, Mittag I, Glockmann A et al. Pulpa dentis D30 for acute reversible pulpitis: a prospective cohort study in routine dental practice. Altern Ther 2011 Jan/Feb;17,1:16-21.

⁹⁴ Sharma S, Sharma N, Sharma R. Accelerating the healing of bone fracture using homeopathy: a prospective, randomized double-blind controlled study. BMC Complement Altern Med 2012; 12(Suppl 1):O61.

Labor pain

The homeopathic medicines reduce labor pain without any side effects in either mother or infant.^{95, 96}

Trigeminal neuralgia

In a four-month study of the homeopathic treatment of trigeminal neuralgia, known as the "suicide disease", significant reductions of pain (60%) were achieved.⁹⁷

Back pain and other musculoskeletal disorders

A year-long study performed in France compared patients with a variety of musculoskeletal disorders, including osteoarthritis, rheumatism, fibromyalgia, muscle spasms, tendinitis, rotary cuff syndrome, ankylosing spondylitis, intervertebral disc disorders, neck pain, torticollis, and spinal stenosis. The homeopathic treated patients used 25% fewer narcotics and half as many NSAIDs as the conventionally treated group. There were fewer adverse events in the homeopathic treatment group, but no differences in specific functional scores or loss of therapeutic opportunity. Patients in the homeopathic cohort tended to have more long standing chronic conditions before treatment.⁹⁸

A two-year multicenter study performed in Germany with patients receiving individualized professional homeopathic treatment for chronic low back pain revealed that disease severity was significantly reduced along with utilization of conventional treatments and health services. Quality of life in the homeopathic treatment group improved significantly, both in physical and mental component scales.⁹⁹

Studies in Europe demonstrate homeopathy provides superior relief from back pain when compared with placebo, and generates fewer adverse events.^{100, 101, 102}

Rheumatology

- Rheumatic conditions also demonstrate promising results when treated homeopathically.^{103, 104, 105}
- Palliation in Cancer Therapy

Homeopathy has a distinct role in palliative cancer care for those who suffer from pain. Homeopathy works well alongside conventional therapeutics including opioid medications.^{106, 107}

General Health Maintenance

Homeopathy is a holistic form of treatment that increases overall health and wellbeing by stimulating self-healing, homeostatic mechanisms in the body. Pain control and resolution are frequent "side-effects" of healing that is initiated by homeopathic treatment. Many studies have focused on the clinical effects of homeopathic treatment in a variety of conditions that are inherently painful. Measures of patient satisfaction, improved quality of life and overall emotional and psychological improvement reflect the nature of this type of treatment and indirectly account for pain resolution. Pain relief is only a single

⁹⁵ Eid P, Felisi E, Sideri M. Super-placebo ou action pharmacologique? Une étude en double aveugle, randomisée avec un remède homéopathique (Caulophyllum thalictroides) dans le travail d'accouchement. Proceedings of the 5th Congress for Homeopathic Medicine, Paris, France, 1994.

⁹⁶ Teixeira MZ, Podgaec S, Baracat EC. Potentized estrogen in homeopathic treatment of endometriosis pelvic pain: a 24-week, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study. Eur J Obstet Gynecol Reprod Biol 2017 Apr;211:48-55.

⁹⁷ Mojaver YN, Mosavi F, Mazaherinezhad A, et al. Individualized homeopathic treatment of trigeminal neuralgia: an observational study. Homeopathy 2007;96(2):82-86.

⁹⁸ Rossignol M op cit.

⁹⁹ Witt CM, Ludtke R, Baur R, Willich SN. Homeopathic treatment of patients with chronic low back pain: a prospective observational study with 2 years' followup. Clin J Pain 2009 May;25(4):334-9.

¹⁰⁰ Beer AM, Fey S, Zimmer Met al. [Effectiveness and safety of a homeopathic drug combination in the treatment of chronic low back pain: a double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled clinical trial.] MMW Fortschr Med 2012 Jun 28;154 Suppl 2:45-57. [Article in German]

¹⁰¹ Stam C, Bonnet MS, van Haselen RA. The efficacy and safety of a homeopathic gel in the treatment of acute low back pain: a multi-centre, randomized, double-blind comparative clinical trial. Brit Hom J2001;90:21-28.

¹⁰² Morris M, Pellow J, Solomon EM, Tsele-Tebakang T. Physiotherapy and a homeopathic complex for chronic low back pain due to osteoarthritis: a randomized, controlled pilot trial. Altern Ther Health Med 2016 Jan-Feb;22(1):48-56.

¹⁰³ Bell IR, Lewis DA, Brooks AJ, et al. Improved clinical status in fibromyalgia patients treated with individualized homeopathic remedies versus placebo. Rheumatology (Oxford) 2004 May;43(5):577-82. Epub 2004 Jan 20

¹⁰⁴ Fisher P, Greenwood A, Huskisson EC, et al. Effect of homeopathic treatment on fibrositis (primary fibromyalgia). BMJ 1989; 299(6695): 365-366. doi: 10.1136/bmi.299.6695.365

¹⁰⁵ Perry R, Terry R, Ernst E. A systematic review of homeopathy for the treatment of fibromyalgia. Clin Rheum 2010;29(5):457-64. doi: 10.1007/s10067-009-1361-2. Epub 2010 Jan 23.

¹⁰⁶ Frass M, Friehs H, Thallinger C, et al. Influence of adjunctive classical homeopathy on global health status and subjective wellbeing in cancer patients - A pragmatic randomized controlled trial. Complement Ther Med 2015;23(3):309-17. doi: 10.1016/j.ctim.2015.03.004. Epub 2015 Mar 23.

¹⁰⁷ Briscoe J. Effects of complementary therapies in cancer care. Nurs Times 2013;109(41):18-20.

component of these clinical trials secondary to the healing of the underlying painful condition.^{108, 109, 110, 111, 112}

In summary, homeopathy holds tremendous potential in the treatment of pain related conditions and in the management of opioid dependence and safe detoxification. Further research in both these clinical areas is certainly warranted. Public health benefits gained from utilizing homeopathic medicine include superior efficacy, lower cost, greater safety and higher patient satisfaction.

About The Authors:

Burke Lennihan, RN, CCH has worked in holistic health care since graduating from Harvard University in 1974. She co-founded the Renaissance Institute of Classical Homeopathy and subsequently directed Teleosis School of Homeopathy. Lennihan co-authored Cough Cures with distinguished pulmonologist Gustavo Ferrer, MD and co-authored a book on holistic animal care with Margo Roman, DVM, while her own Your Natural Medicine Cabinet educates the public about home care with homeopathy. She has edited several standard reference works in homeopathy including Yasgur's Dictionary and Hahnemann Revisited, a textbook for professionals.

Loretta Butehorn PhD CCH, RSHom (NA), Homeopathy Fellow of the British Institute is a licensed psychologist and certified homeopath. She has worked in the addiction field since 1980 and consults to a variety of substance abuse treatment centers in New England. She has been consultant to the Department of Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse in Massachusetts and recently retired from the faculty of Boston College. Dr. Butehorn is a former Board Member on the Council for Homeopathic Certification and a current Board Member of the National Center for Homeopathy. Dr. Butehorn is Director of The Sidewalk, a pro bono homeopathic clinic for the homeless.

¹⁰⁸ Bornhoft G, Wolf U, von Ammon K, et al. Effectiveness, safety and cost-effectiveness of homeopathy in general practice -summarized health technology assessment. *Forsch Komplementmed* 2006;13 Suppl 2:19-29. Epub 2006 Jun 26.

¹⁰⁹ Spence DS, Thompson EA, Barron SJ. Homeopathic treatment for chronic disease: a 6-year, university-hospital outpatient observational study. *J Altern Complement Med* 2005 Oct;11(5):793-8.

¹¹⁰ Witt CM, Ludtke R, Baur R, et al. Homeopathic medical practice: long-term results of a cohort study with 3981 patients. *BMC Public Health* 2005 Nov 3;5:115.

¹¹¹ Van Wasserhoven M, Ives G. An observational study of patients receiving homeopathic treatment. *Homeopathy* 2004 Jan;93(1):3-11.

¹¹² Witt C, Keil T, Selim D, et al. Outcome and costs of homeopathy and conventional treatment strategies: a comparative cohort study in patients with chronic disorders. *Complement Ther Med* 2005 Jun;13(2):79-86.