Chapter 17
Is Homeopathy Useful in Psychotherapy?
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Abstract
This chapter summarizes the research findings of a clinical psychology dissertation on the interaction of homeopathy and depth psychotherapy. Psychotherapists were interviewed about their experience when homeopathic remedies were given to their psychotherapy patients. Thirty-nine descriptions of improvements in patients were identified. Details and complications to be considered by mental health therapists and homeopaths are discussed. The research finds that homeopathy can work synergistically with psychotherapy to move patients towards greater awareness and holistic functioning.

1 Introduction
Wholistic psychotherapists see the importance of a new paradigm shift in consciousness that demands the release of old concepts of healing. They are searching for alternatives to modern psychopharmaceuticals and new ways to include the mind-body in their work. The philosophy and practice of homeopathy may have much to offer psychotherapy as we explore integrative methods to transform the human being. Jungian psychotherapy, particularly, shares a history with homeopathy that can be traced back to origins in alchemy and the Vitalist tradition [1] [2] [3].

The synergistic partnership of homeopathy and psychotherapy seems promising; however, we need to ask what actually occurs when homeopathic remedies are introduced into the psychotherapy field. Is the psychotherapeutic process enhanced or is it disturbed in any way? In what ways are homeopathy and psychotherapy similar and in what ways are they different and work in exclusive areas of the human experience?

Psychotherapists need to investigate the effectiveness and validity of homeopathy if they are going to refer their clients to homeopaths. Are homeopathic remedies useful for clinical depression, addictions, suicide, dying, borderline issues, psychosis, and other severe mental illnesses? Can they
replace medications or be used in conjunction with them? Do remedies have adverse effects that must be understood? Can psychotherapy be shortened or deepened with homeopathy?

There are other questions within the psychotherapeutic frame. How are the transference, counter-transference, and the energetic field between therapist and client affected by homeopathic remedies? Are dreams and the body changed? When is it appropriate to refer for remedies? What factors determine when to refer for homeopathy rather than medications or other alternative practices?

Psychotherapists might also wonder how to introduce the subject of homeopathy to clients and how to work with clients when the proper remedy is not found or is antidoted, or when aggravations occur. There may be concern about the openness of homeopaths to consultation and what value therapists may find in this type of consultation. Therapists will want to know how to become better educated about homeopathy and how to find effective homeopaths.

This chapter is a review of introductory research into these questions where only some of the questions can be explored. It is therefore also an invitation to conduct more research on this topic.

2. The research

I was curious to discover how psychotherapists experience the introduction of homeopathic remedies into the therapy process with their patients. As a participant researcher in my dissertation [4] I was involved in my own experience of therapy and homeopathic treatment and many of my clients were seeing a homeopath during their depth psychotherapy. I was able to observe the movement of the psyche before and after homeopathic remedies were taken.

The research itself consisted of interviews with thirteen professionals. Seven are therapists and six are therapist-homeopaths. Common themes were identified that might give a more comprehensive insight into the world of psychotherapy and homeopathy.

The research participants indicated a special interest in a wholistic approach to therapy and healing that includes the body, and the importance of the spiritual and transcendent in their lives. Their trust in homeopathy came from their personal transformative experiences with remedies or from the experiences of their children or close associates. These were significant enough in their life stories to lead them to incorporate homeopathy into their practices. The intensity of their personal experiences with homeopathy is clear in the interviews.

One participant remembered her first reaction to a remedy: "It was like a storm had broken and the sun was out. I started to have flying dreams and dreams where I was doing daring things. I noticed an emotional shift at a very deep level." A psychoanalytically-oriented therapist observed: "I think the remedy made it possible for me to start differentiating myself from my therapist and get into a negative transference." One male participant noted: "About ten years earlier I had put a lid on my emotional life and this remedy essentially blew the lid right off." A woman recounted: "All the grief I had been unable to feel in the year preceding the breakup came tumbling out."
A homeopath-therapist described her experience when *triturating* (grinding the substance in milk sugar with a mortar and pestle) a remedy: "We resonate with the remedy and we really know that substance, how it can be used, and what it has to offer. Those remedies are vibrating with energy on a collective level, on an archetypal level, on a spiritual level." Another therapist reflected: "A new remedy had an enormous effect. I used to bite my nails to the quick and I have stopped. My energy is much higher, and I'm not depressed. I feel better than I have ever felt before in my whole life." Participants noted that when they observed a child getting significantly better after months of trying other methods of cure it was clear it was not a placebo effect.

### 2.1 Observations

Thirty-nine descriptions of improvements after the introduction of homeopathic remedies were noted in the interviews. I list the descriptions in groups:

- There is the very physical, yet emotional, subtle-body experience of the "opening of heart energy," "touching the life force," and "returning to essence." Therapists noted that clients had "greater distance from and disidentification with problems," were "more loving," and "more able to discuss new issues."

- More expressions that the participants used when describing their clients' experiences include: "opening to feelings," "feeling positive and safe," "stability, grounded, balanced, and centred," "more empathy," "world is friendly," "movement out of difficult relationships," "experience grief," "more decisive," "less obsessive," "opening and strengthening," "move to deeper work," "increased resiliency," "emotional shifts," and "more available and connected." All of these are signs of improvement in self-awareness that is the purpose of psychotherapy.

- "Decreased suicidality," "improvement of serious mental problems," "personality changes," "reduced medications," "less depression," "attachment issues improved," and "shorter therapy" are encouraging to see and warrant much more research. "Spiritual healing," and "easier dying" speak of spiritual subtle-body aspects of homeopathy.

- Dreams are an important barometer of the movement of psyche. Co-researchers observed "more movement in dreams," "increased dreaming," and "dreams as messengers of healing."

A homeopath-therapist mentioned the importance of the remedy metaphor for understanding clients in new ways and a new lens for understanding dreams.

> As a homeopath I may think of a Bird remedy in relation to a flying dream. Could a fear of flying mean Bromine? Fear of inflation? Is this a mineral remedy or is this a gas? What does it mean? Cannabis, dreams of flying? Is it about the fall? This is what we do as therapists hearing dreams on two or three levels ... Especially with animal remedies the client will stop being in victim-aggressor mode and the dreams will change. Mineral remedies are more about the emptiness. I had one fellow who had dreams of nuclear waste before I became a homeopath. I am sure he was a Plutonium and if I had given that remedy his dreams would have changed. When I give a remedy things change in dreams.
One therapist explained how remedies can help a patient in therapy by working on another energetic level.

Particularly when people feel shattered or fragmented, a remedy will help them hold together and be able to have whatever feelings are there. I am thinking of one person in particular who was taking a tree remedy, White cone pine. It would consolidate her and she was able to tolerate her feelings and her situation again. Homeopathic remedies can change a therapy. A clinic patient I worked with for years experienced a depression and a layer of being stuck that nothing was touching. When she took a remedy everything changed in unpredictable ways. I couldn’t have guessed how it was going to be. It was like she touched her life-force. It was not therapy that did it. After the remedy she could use the therapy, but I don’t believe that if we had worked for 10 more years it would have helped her that much. I feel sometimes you have to work on another level. There is something about the heart energy that increases. There is a layer of healing that is not touched if you don’t do homeopathy.

Many participants felt that therapy proceeds more quickly and deeply when used in conjunction with remedies.

I think that clients move through the psychotherapy process more quickly with homeopathy. The first thing I see is defensiveness and fear and attachment to the defences . . . People assume that their defences are themselves. “I am my defence. This is who I am. I’m not going to change.” People become less identified with that defence when given a proper remedy. It gives that moment of reflection so they can pull back and be curious. It is easier to ask, “What am I doing.” The remedy helps them to disidentify. It gives them a break. It addresses the fear factor. If you aren’t as identified as a defence you aren’t as attached. It’s not who you are. It is easier to think of changing.

One therapist said, homeopathy gives therapy a “jump-start” that takes it out of the pathological realm and deepens the client’s essence.

After she began homeopathy it was much easier for her to express anger. She began to sleep better and arrive in therapy with many more dreams including dreams of the ocean. There was also a detoxing reaction. She was able to talk about suicide attempts from many years before for the first time. She expressed “Everything has opened up since I saw the homeopath.” A year later she was given a feminine remedy, Sepia (Cuttlefish), that addresses the oppressed feminine, for one who is devoted but is distant from family, and for one who loves dancing but is sexually inhibited. After this remedy she felt great. She wasn’t feeling anger in the same way and got off of Prozac.

Some of the therapists were concerned that homeopaths often do not follow up clients or set a safe framework.

Sometimes homeopaths don’t do enough follow-up to let people know what the process is going to mean for them. You can’t just give someone a remedy and say, “I’ll see you in a month.” All of a sudden the client can get hit by a reaction. I think you need to let people have some framework to indicate what is about to happen to them.

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Participants discovered that clients often don’t realize they have changed after taking remedies.

People do tend to forget that homeopathy even worked at all... There is a good story about this. One very depressed man was given Mustard, a flower remedy. The next time he came in he was much better. He had been depressed for years. He told me that he wasn’t feeling better because of the remedy; it was because he had gone out and gotten a job. It didn’t occur to him that he hadn’t gotten a job earlier!

A homeopath-therapist emphasized that in homeopathy everything makes sense and nothing is discarded. “It is an incredible experience to sit in this field where everything is actually possible and can be heard. There is no judgment about it. It is such an expanded field.” She sees homeopathy as an alchemical process. “They are not so stuck in problems anymore because something expands. The container becomes bigger and that also expands the container in the therapy as well.”

A therapist expressed that remedies add something extremely valuable to the therapeutic relationship.

When a client has taken a remedy it seems there is something extra working with the person’s strengths, with the person’s needs, but not against the person. There is something very positive about it. The whole frame of it is positive as opposed to “we’ll cut off this piece; we’ll get rid of it.” There is also a dimension of hope. I know that a homeopathic remedy is part of the essence of the person. So that it deepens their essence. I have a sense of integrity about it.

Participants often talked about other modalities they use in their therapy that have an energetic feeling similar to homeopathy. Sandplay is an interesting example.

Sandplay feels similar to homeopathy. It is energetic. It is working silently and we trust this process. The energies of the body and psyche will be constellated in the sand. You don’t have to talk about it. This is a very different way to look at the movement of the psyche. Often sandplay allows the deep unconscious to be expressed in a way that is not conscious to the person. Their hands are doing it. There is a deep trusting of an energetic level that is below verbal, that is all symbolic, totally symbolic... Images come alive because you are touching them and feeling them. In homeopathy you are taking something energetic that comes alive in you.

Suicide was addressed by several therapists. One told about a client who had a secret suicide plan despite presenting with a happy-go-lucky demeanour. The homeopath did not know about the secret suicide plan but prescribed the remedy Hemlock.

Eventually she was given Hemlock (Conium maculatum – the very poison Socrates was forced to drink to end his life) which I thought was fascinating considering the homeopath didn’t know about the suicide ideation. The cough stopped over a couple of months and she ended a destructive relationship that we had talked about for years and got nowhere with... She stopped seeing him right after the remedy. She was building new relationships, her life was expanding, and she was no longer obsessed with ending her life. I was impressed with the layers that the remedy was able to reach that talk therapy alone could not.
A homeopathic remedy improved the life of a psychotic patient who didn't want to be on medication.

One patient in particular was too paranoid to do psychotropic medication. She was actively psychotic but some of her friends went to homeopaths before her psychotic break so she came to me for homeopathy. I was able to give her the remedy and she kept seeing me for psychotherapy. After about a month she shifted. A few weeks on antipsychotic medication pulled her enough out of the psychosis and for the rest of the time she was totally managed with Anacardium, a tree remedy. She came to me after her second psychotic break and hasn't had another hospitalization. She's married and doing fine after 5 years.

A woman in hospice was lifted from depression and was able to continue in depth psychotherapy for six years before she died.

I gave her a combination of Aurum muriaticum natronatum (gold salt) and Ambra grisia (ambergris). Three days later her depression had lifted. She lived another six years and I continued to see her. We had to have a party when they kicked her out of hospice because she was going to live. She continued in long-term depth psychotherapy with me. It was extraordinary work to do at her age. She originally had a conflicted relationship with her son but it ended in a good and peaceful way. She didn't die and she had this opening. With the remedy she regained enough vitality and time to do the healing so that she died a more whole person, a less fearful person, and not a depressed person. She was at peace with who she was.

Many of the therapists value the mutually beneficial relationship they have with homeopaths who work with their patients.

We usually have an initial consult with each other after my client's first session. I give some history, and the homeopath shares some initial impressions. I am always fascinated that she can get to basic information that I wasn't able to obtain as a therapist after 3 or 4 years. It is often about substance abuse or something pretty significant that didn't come out. Somehow something triggered it for the client in the homeopathic interview so they talked about it. She found out something important about almost every client. Often our consultation is while she is still searching for a remedy if she didn't find it during the initial interview. Whatever insight I offer must help her put some pieces together. She feels it fills out the case and helps her a great deal. It gives her a larger picture.

I may call the homeopath later because I have seen some change, or I am so amazed, or to thank her for the help, or to say that the client is looking worse. I call freely as I would a psychiatrist. I like the collaborative feeling. Part of what I don't like about private practice recently is the solo-ness of it and how much it is done behind closed doors. It is important to sense if clients are open to being talked about before consultation. You have to be sensitive to that. My clients seem to feel safe with the process of being talked about with the homeopath and they seem to enjoy it.

All of the participants mentioned the importance of appropriate timing when considering referral to a homeopath or introduction of a remedy into therapy.
Sometimes it is important to wait to refer to a homeopath until you have a solid frame with someone. Psychological work ahead of time may make it possible for people to tolerate more life energy that will be released with homeopathy.

Another therapist says she refers to a homeopath when she sees that a client is stuck and circling rather than spiralling.

The clients who are stuck or keep circling in their complexes are the ones I refer to a homeopath. I see a complex as a point on a spiral. Every time we circle up the spiral we pass the point where the complex touches, and every time the complex rears up again. “Here we are again.” Each time you reflect on it your relationship to a complex changes, the response changes. When I see people who are not spiralling but are circling, I think that homeopathy is indicated. Homeopathy can help me work with them to get them off of that circle and get them into the spiral. I think that every rung of the spiral reflects more individuation, more self-awareness, more power over the complex, and more ability to not be held by it.

Clients can be hesitant to participate in both therapy and homeopathy owing to the financial commitment.

Part of what impacts people is the cost of paying for a therapist and a homeopath. It is a lot to ask people to do and I think that one of the referrals that I made really couldn’t afford it. That will be one of the deciding factors for the woman I just referred. Young women living in this urban area don’t have much disposable income and yet I remember hearing that some of the best candidates for homeopathy are younger people.

Homeopathy is based on a deep empathy for the particular human being. If the therapist resonates with the client and with the remedy, a profound healing environment can be created. Both the therapist and the client will gain a greater perspective on the client’s life through the encounter with homeopathy. The therapeutic field is affected by homeopathic remedies changing the experience of therapist and client through an expansion of the field that includes changing dreams and transference / counter-transference issues.

I discovered that homeopathy affects the therapy and the therapeutic field. The interplay between two people is always shifting and being impacted by any number of internal and external factors. When I was given a remedy and I was no longer really depressed or really irritable, the therapy and the field changed as well. There was more opening.

A therapist expressed how therapy went to a deeper place after a remedy was introduced.

We aren’t spending nearly as much time on the negativity. She used to feel assaulted by negative thoughts and be demoralized. That shifted almost immediately. The negativity isn’t always there or right around the corner. I feel our work deepened. I feel there is more connection to our work and we got to a very deep place that we had skirted around. We were better able to get into it and it didn’t destroy her to look at some difficult things.
There are new developments in homeopathy that are making it more effective and more easily understood so that it can be more relevant to modern psychotherapy. Homeopathy can address the shamanic, energetic level of healing. Attachment issues that are central to therapy are being discussed in terms of homeopathic remedies including Milks, Sugar, and maternal remedies connected with the birth process such as Umbilical cord, Placenta, DNA and Amniotic fluid.

Homeopaths understand the energetic factors that affect us from the past and from the collective. Therapists will benefit from exploration of the impact of these collective fields. Many of the participants take part in family constellation work, Genograms, and energy healing of various kinds.

2.2 Alchemical process: impact of research
Participants discovered that the interview process allowed them to consolidate ideas and experiences that had been waiting to arise in connection with homeopathy and therapy. They were given the space to review their own transformations with homeopathy as well as the journeys of their clients. In this review process the many tiny miracles that were witnessed in the therapeutic field, synergized by a potentised material, came to light. Invariably the co-researchers commented on their increased awareness of what has been occurring in their consulting rooms. There was the budding realization of the importance of this synergy.

This topic has acted upon every aspect of my own life. During these years I witnessed my clients opening either dramatically or more slowly with remedies. My trust in the process deepened and my increasing conviction that remedies contribute to therapy has strengthened. Several clients told me that they wished I had pressed them to try homeopathy sooner as they were discovering new ways of being in their lives that they had never thought possible. Therapy was more important for them as they began to realize how much more of life was now available to explore.

I discovered a dynamic interaction in the dreams of my clients and in my own dreams when homeopathic remedies are introduced. Even when I am not aware that a client has taken a remedy I can often see its action in the dreams.

Professionally, I am now more acutely aware of the necessity to involve all aspects of the client in the therapy: mind, emotions, spirit, and body. There is a significant loss when the body is ignored and a wholistic perspective is not maintained.

3 Conclusion
Psychology underwent profound changes after the development of psychotropic medications. Our culture increasingly depends on the use of medications and cognitive behavioural adjustments in order to condition people to a fast-paced lifestyle that demands immediate solutions that may be band-aid approaches to healing.

The therapists in this study are pioneering an alternative model of understanding the psyche from a wholistic, energetic point of view. They are candid about the successes and challenges in this new partnership of disciplines.

References

Homeopathy offers...
Homeopathy offers a treatment that can shift psychological states without suppressing and without side-effects. It can help clients become more available and connected to the therapist and more able to do the psychological work. The transference, counter-transference and therapeutic field are positively impacted. Clients have more distance from their problems, increased resiliency, decisiveness and stability, and are able to move out of difficult relationships and situations. The participants also observe increased energy, openness to feelings, empathy and love. There is evidence that remedies are useful for serious mental health conditions and for those who are dying. Therapy is described as being shorter and general health improved. Changes in dreams indicate psychological movement. Medications can often be reduced or eliminated. Homeopathy offers a cost-effective, less toxic, and more integral treatment that has immensely beneficial social and economic implications.

Homeopathy works synergistically with psychotherapy to move the client towards greater awareness and wholistic functioning. It is especially useful when therapy is stuck. Some clients have difficulty relating to the idea of homeopathy while others have problems staying with the process. Homeopaths can have challenges finding the proper remedy, adjusting for aggravations, and preventing antidoting. The therapist and client need to have the ability to wait for the process to unfold. Consultation with a homeopath, on the other hand, can give both therapists and homeopaths new perspectives on their clients.

Homeopathy is a wholistic medicine that provides healing on levels of being that may not be easily reached in psychotherapy and works well in partnership with it. Homeopathy also addresses the generational aspect of symptoms that may not be touched by the therapeutic exploration of individual life history.

Education of therapists and clients about homeopathy is imperative in this medically-oriented culture where we have been conditioned to assume that we are separate selves living on the earth. Homeopathy in concert with the containing function of psychotherapy awakens us to the realization that we are living, vital organisms woven into the pulsating web of life; moving us from alienation to intimate connection, from doing to being.

References