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Section B

Homeopathy: A Real Medicine?

Homeopathy is a worldwide form of alternative treatment that can be found in almost every country. The World Health Organization has stated that over 500 million people use homeopathic remedies. Even though it is a pseudoscience in the eyes of Western medicine, people have continued to practice homeopathy since the 1800s. Can such a widely used treatment be rightfully disputed? In order to answer this question, both the past and present forms of homeopathy must be examined.

Homeopathic medicine was founded on two laws, the Law of Similars and the Law of Infinitesimals. The Law of Similars follows the idea of “like cures like”, which means that a substance that causes similar symptoms to an ailment will be a strong cure. For example, an onion can make one cry and have a runny nose, which is very similar to the common cold. According to the Law of Similars, onion would be beneficial to your health. The second law, the Law of Infinitesimals, is the idea that the smaller the dose, the stronger the effect of the medicine. Combined, these two guidelines form homeopathy (Homeopathy, N.D). The Law of Similars is close to some present techniques in Western medicine, for example, a live virus injection to help build immunity. However, the idea of like cures like is far more general than is medical technique. According to the Law of Similars, if a person has a terrible case of dysentery, then small amounts of sugar would be beneficial for curing the diarrhea. In reality, the logic of the Law of Similars would not only make the dysentery worse, but could endanger lives.

The key to practicing homeopathy is the idea of smaller means stronger. The way dilutions of remedies are measured is by using the X or C system. A 6X remedy would be a

concentration that is divided by 1,000,000. A 6C remedy has an original molarity divided by 1,000,000,000,000 ($1 * 10^{12}$). These are incredibly small substances already, but 6X is below the normal dilution range for homeopathic medication. Most of these remedies are marketed between 6X and 30X; the substances are so small the impurities to the capsules would be of larger dose, but that is not even the major problem (Barret, 2009). Around 23X, Avogadro's number will be surpassed, making it physically impossible for there to be any of the substance left. Even though 23X is a clear limit, many popular brands go higher than 400X. Boiron is a French-based homeopathic brand that sells numerous remedies, including their popular flu medication, Oscilloccinum (Boiron USA, 2014). This drug supposedly has a 400X dilution on its active ingredients, meaning that the inactive ingredients (lactose and glucose) are the only ingredients present, which is equivalent to a placebo sugar pill. For a dilution of 400X to be possible, around 10^{398} molecules would be needed, which far exceeds the number of particles in the universe (Barret, 2009). With the Law of Infinitesimals, homeopathic medicine automatically becomes less than or equal in ability to the placebo effect.

Several people have taken up the mission to show this fundamental flaw in homeopathy. People like James Randi, a well-known scientific skeptic who has also attacked psychics and mediums. On more than one occasion, Mr. Randi has taken a full bottle of homeopathic sleeping pills and ingested every capsule, which usually amounts to about thirty. Even though the package claims this to be a lethal dosage, Randi has continuously walked away unharmed and still unaware of the effects of the drugs (Randi, 2014). The reason that James Randi never suffers an injury is because those supposed sleeping pills are so diluted that he would have needed billions of pills to receive a dose of the active ingredient.

Homeopathic remedies faithfully remain close to their founding concepts. Unfortunately, homeopathy as a pseudoscience has gone from implausible to impossible. Homeopathy started with dilutions maximized by a division in the thousands. This is was already small, yet modern homeopathy has mocked its beginnings by using such ridiculously small molarities. In addition, homeopathic drugs are not regulated by the FDA, and have never received proof to their merit in healing ailments (Barret, 2009). Many double blind experiments have been performed to test the validity of homeopathy, and every single one of those experiments came back negative.

Homeopathy plays on peoples weaknesses in order to accrue money. With famous believers such as Dr. Oz, many people who are desperate will turn to this form of alternative healing (Randi, 2014). Even if the original concepts of practicing homeopathy had some results, modern clinics and medicine brands have made it physically impossible for homeopathy to be more than a scam.

Literature Cited:

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