

Response to

Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy? A Consultation

<http://www.nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk/OurOrganisation/Consultations/Current/Homeopathy/Documents/HomeopathyConsultation.pdf>.

Response sent to homeopathy@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

I write as a graduate of Edinburgh University, and as a professor of pharmacology.

I notice that the consultation document mentions the Swiss homeopathy study. This was written by committed homeopaths and has been described as research misconduct: <http://www.smw.ch/content/smw-2012-13594/>

Many other well-qualified people have pointed out that the Swiss study is (to put it mildly) unreliable, e.g.

<http://www.sciencebasedmedicine.org/index.php/the-swiss-report-on-homeopathy/>

and

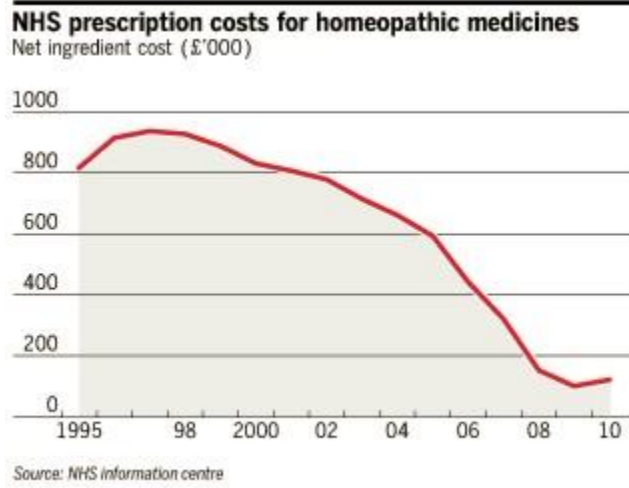
<http://www.zenosblog.com/2012/05/that-neutral-swiss-homeopathy-report/>

There is now a much wider public recognition that homeopathy is a placebo than was the case five or ten years ago. The five university degrees in homeopathy that existed in 2006 have now all closed. There is internecine war within homeopathy between different factions. One alarmingly large section is happy to recommend sugar pills for the prevention and cure of malaria and AIDS. Such behaviour amounts, in my view, to culpable homicide. Others are more modest in their claims (but equally ineffective).

The bioethicist, Kevin Smith of Abertay University. Has argued cogently that homeopathy is not just ineffective, but also unethical, in a paper in *Bioethics*

<http://www.dcscience.net/kevin-smith-homeopathy-ethics-2011.pdf>

Commissioning of homeopathy has already fallen drastically in the UK. The *Financial Times* published an article "[NHS loses taste for homeopathic medicines](#)". The graph says it all.



I'm aware that a few regular doctors in Lothian still cling on to homeopathy. It isn't long since an ex-student of mine, now a professor in the University of Edinburgh, took his child to doctor and was offered Belladonna 30C. Needless to say, he was very indignant about being offered a sugar pill that contained no belladonna whatsoever. Despite his (and my) vigorous complaints, nothing was done about it at the time. I'm happy to see that you are now proposing to stop wasting public money on ineffective mythical medicine. It is only common sense, not least in a time of such financial stringency to stop spending money on things that just don't work.

As well as saving money, a decision to stop funding ineffective medicine would add to Scotland's reputation for being preeminent in medicine. As an Edinburgh graduate it has saddened me to see this reputation tarnished in recent years by support for pseudo-medicine.

You will, no doubt, receive many letters in support of homeopathy from true-believers, and especially from people who make money from selling sugar pills. I urge you to take more notice of the near unanimous opinion of scientists and doctors that homeopathy is just a placebo, and stop funding it.

D. Colquhoun FRS
Professor of Pharmacology
NPP
University College London
Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT
Email d.colquhoun@ucl.ac.uk