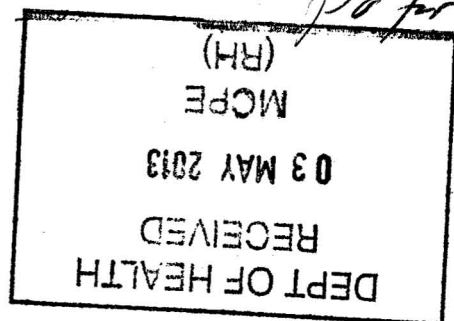




HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

24th April 2013



Dear Jeremy,

Political Issues: herbs and homeopathy

Following our conversation in the Aye lobby after Health Questions last week, I am writing to set out my concerns about the Conservative Party's position politically on the issues relating to herbal medicines and homeopathy.

1. UKIP moving onto our ground

Attached is an extract from a recent UKIP policy statement. The position which UKIP has taken is one with which most of our Daily Mail reading supporters of complementary medicine would agree. At a time when 70% of the adult population have employed complementary medicine - often when they have not found relief through conventional medicine - it is tiresome to see UKIP, again out-positioning our Party - at a time when we can ill afford to lose votes.

2. Herbal Medicine

Whilst I know Dan Poulter has been working to resolve this issue, there is very real concern that the Government will not regulate Herbal Medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine. The current situation is unacceptable, because herbal practitioners need regulation and cannot function as herbal therapists, nor can they cannot obtain stocks of their herbal remedies, without it. This is causing widespread concerns among practitioners and patients alike, and is deeply unpopular. There are safety issues too.

3. Homeopathy

Until approximately 2006 the small number of doctors practising homeopathy and regulated by the Homeopathy Act 1950 and the non-doctor homeopaths, largely members of the Society of Homeopaths, were left in peace to practise without criticisms. After 2006, two or three groups appeared with the intention of stopping the practice of homeopathy in the Health Service at least. These campaigns have more to do with a turf war for resources rather than health issues, and should be resisted. Homeopathy represents a tiny fraction of the NHS budget, but with good outcomes. The Royal London Hospital for Integrated Medicine (formerly Royal London Homeopathic Hospital) has the highest patient satisfaction rating of any NHS hospital. The new groups opposing homeopathy claim it is placebo, conveniently ignoring some sound medical trials that it works. If it is not placebo then it is certainly safe. There are no recorded fatalities from homeopathy, but patients have died from causes related to the use of allopathic medicines.

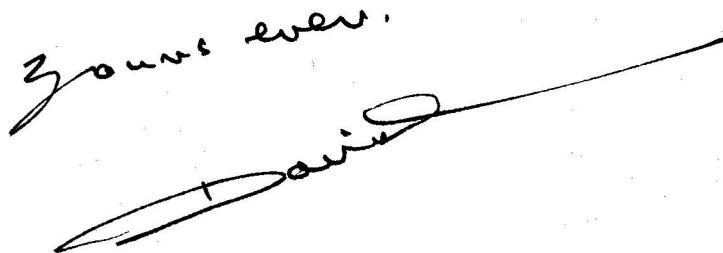
The groups against homeopathy have been effective in infiltrating organisations. HMG's position on homeopathy, set out on the NHS Choices website, was until recently the Government's measured response to the Commons Science and Technology Report Evidence Check on Homeopathy in 2009. It said, *"Our continued position on the use of homeopathy within the NHS is that the local NHS and clinicians, rather than Whitehall, are best placed to make decisions on what treatment is appropriate for their patients - including complementary or alternative treatments such as homeopathy - and provide accordingly for those treatments."*

Recently this wording has been removed and instead a comment by the Chief Medical Officer that homeopathy is placebo inserted in its place, as well as links to external organisations which campaign against homeopathy. For instance, there is a link to the Sense About Science website, and Caroline Finucane, who is Editor of new content at NHS Choices, also writes for the Sense About Science website. This is an organisation which has no expertise in homeopathy and traces its roots back to the ultra-left Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). The RCP switched over to extreme corporate libertarianism when it launched Living Marxism magazine in the late eighties, finally becoming Sense About Science in 2002. The NHS Choices website provides no links to the homeopathic hospitals' websites, nor does it explicitly mention that doctors practice homeopathy.

This has angered patients and practitioners alike. I respectfully suggest that the original wording be reinstated and these links to external organisations be removed or changed to ensure a balanced view.

I will write to you separately about how HMG's policy on homeopathy compares with other European nations.

I am most grateful to you for offering to consider any points that I put to you.

Yours ever,


Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Policy Statement



HEALTH

Delivering better care,
safeguarding the NHS

Delivering Better Care; Safeguarding the NHS

A Healthcare Policy for an Independent Britain

Policy Statement March 2010

UK INDEPENDENCE PARTY

15 Herbal Medicine, Traditional Medicines and Homeopathy

15.1 An independent Britain will immediately repeal any legislation connected with the EU Directive on Herbal Medicine. The Directive seeks to ban herbalists and practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine from using manufactured or pre-prepared herbal medicines.

15.2 A UKIP Government will allow any doctor or Herbal and Traditional Medicine Practitioner to prescribe herbal medicines. This will be done under the supervision of the Department of Health and the County Health Boards.

15.3 County Health Boards may request GP franchise partnership bids to include details of related Herbal Medical services offered on site (or through linked local sites).

15.4 UKIP rejects the recent House of Commons report on homeopathy as an unbalanced and short-sighted dismissal of a branch of medicine that last year treated 54,000 people on the NHS. UKIP endorses the remarks of the Chief Executive of the British Homeopathic Association who pointed out that "the [select committee] inquiry was too narrow in its remit, there is plenty of evidence to support homeopathy, with 100 randomised controlled trials, and many more on outcome measures, which reflect how patients say they feel." UKIP believes that homeopathy has much to offer patients and notes that in a recent survey carried out at England's NHS homeopathic hospitals, some 70 per cent of patients said they felt some improvement after undergoing treatment. UKIP will continue to support homeopathy through the NHS.

16 Regulation of Counselling and Psychotherapy

16.1 UKIP is opposed to the Government's intention to regulate counselling and psychotherapy through the Health Professions Council as their proposals are unnecessary, costly and impossible to enforce properly. Consequently UKIP will examine alternative regulation proposals such as the Practitioner Full Disclosure (PFD) which has been pioneered successfully in Canada and Australia. This is a simple scheme in which practitioners register their qualifications centrally and which provides for an efficient complaints and mediation procedure.

17 The Future of NHS Regulation and Training

17.1 UKIP will retain the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) that will continue with its monitoring and evaluation procedures and determining which drugs will be available from the NHS. The County Health Boards can choose to pay more for a drug but they will be prevented from refusing a drug if it has been sanctioned by NICE.

17.2 The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) will also be retained as this is the Government quango which is responsible for ensuring that medicines and medical devices work and are safe. The Advisory Committees will also be retained to act as advisors to both the Department of Health and the CHBs.