

HOMEOPATHIC NURSING: A HOLISTIC GEM

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There are many good reasons to consider using homeopathy in holistic nursing practice. It is the third most widely used system of medicine in the world (European Coalition on Homeopathic & Anthroposophical Medicinal Products, 2019). In some countries and cultures, especially England, parts of Europe, and India, homeopathy is recognized as commonly as allopathic medicine. If you are not familiar with homeopathy, it is only natural to wonder what it is, and what is its appeal?

HOMEOPATHY AT A GLANCE

Homeopathy is a holistic system of medicine developed over 200 years ago by German physician Samuel Hahnemann, grounded in one of its primary principles “like cures like”—that is, a substance that causes symptoms in a healthy person can stimulate healing in someone who has similar symptoms. Homeopathy supports the body’s own healing capacity through highly individualized, gentle, and non-toxic remedies prepared through a unique process of dilution and succussion.

Over many years, royal families have chosen homeopathy as their primary source of healing (B.R.Sur Homeopathic Medical College Hospital and Research Center, n.d.). So have 11 U.S. presidents, seven popes, Charles Darwin, Mother Teresa, John Wayne, Orlando Bloom, David Beckham, Boris Becker, Paul McCartney, B.B. King, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Louisa May Alcott (Ullman, 2022; Ullman, 2007).

USING HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINES

Homeopathic medicines, called remedies, shine in a variety of settings. For example, Arnica is a remedy that is widely recognized and used for aching and bruising after an accident. Remedies may be in the form of liquids, creams, gels, or pellets. What you see most often are blue tubes with white pellets inside and packaged gels or creams. These are usually found in

stores’ supplement aisles. Remedies are also available in offices of homeopaths, chiropractors, naturopathic physicians, and some medical doctors. Your favorite sports team physicians are probably using homeopathy as a treatment for their players. Kits that contain remedies that are hard to find can be purchased from specialty pharmacies.

Remedies are manufactured under quality standards. Their regulation is governed by the federal Food and Drug Administration. The Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States (HPUS, n.d.) and its supplements is the official compendium of standards and monographs for homeopathic remedy ingredients.

HOMEOPATHY’S LONG HISTORY

Homeopathy was formally introduced by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann in his 1810 publication, *Organon of the Medical Art*. His book provided the homeopathic practitioner with a guide to his philosophy and practice, one that followed scientific principles and testing. Hahnemann revised his book five times while he refined the art and science of this healing modality.

Homeopathy was very popular as an alternative to the barbaric and often deadly Western methods of treatment in the 19th century. Its practice spread throughout Europe, North America, Australia, and Southeast Asia (India). Homeopathic practitioners were excited by the gentle and dramatic cure of their patients’ ailments. Today homeopathy continues to be used world-wide. In the US, medical providers and consumers have shown increased interest in homeopathy and the profession itself is growing (Homeopathy Research Institute, n.d.; Logsdon, 2021). It is anticipated that as holistic and integrative healthcare continues to become more mainstream and a desired option for consumers, homeopathy will align with their health philosophies and become their source for care.

HOMEOPATHY'S CORE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

There are two core principles in homeopathy. The first principle is *similibus curentur*, or “like cures like.” That is, a substance that causes symptoms in a healthy person can stimulate the body to heal the same symptoms in a person who is sick. Rather than suppressing symptoms, a homeopathic remedy supports the symptomatic healing process from the root cause. For example, bee venom (*Apis*) is often used to enhance recovery from insect stings.

The second principle is potentization, a process of progressive dilution and succussion. Homeopathic remedies are prepared by diluting substances derived from sources such as plants, minerals or can even come from harmful sources. This original “tincture” is often called a mother solution or stock remedy. The solution is then repeatedly diluted in ratios such as 1:10, 1:100 or 1:1000. With each dilution, the remedy also undergoes succussion: the pounding of the prepared remedy solution on a hard surface or, for commercial manufacturing purposes, repeated mechanical shaking. This process, which is unique to homeopathy, enhances the remedy’s potential for healing and minimizes its toxicity. Remedies are typically so diluted that no molecules of the original substance remain.

HOMEOPATHY IN PRACTICE

As homeopathic nurses who practice holistically, we are aware of the tremendous benefit people receive from using these effective remedies. It is believed that the remedy retains an energetic imprint that interacts with the body’s vital force: a concept akin to the life energy central to many holistic philosophies. In practice, when the nurse homeopath assesses a patient (taking a case), they must be good listeners and observers. Skill is required in using all of the senses to understand the whole person and situation. We are “unprejudiced observers,” asking only open-ended questions to document the patients’ own words. Learning to take a case through a homeopathic lens helps the nurse develop even better observing and interviewing skills.

The nurse homeopath believes that mental, emotional, and physical symptoms of an acute or chronic illness are expressions of an underlying imbalance, and by addressing the root cause, the body can restore harmony. Homeopathy is individualized to each patient. A nurse homeopath selects remedies based on the person’s unique set (or group) of symptoms, rather than a one-size-fits-all diagnosis and

treatment. This personalized approach aligns closely with holistic nursing’s emphasis on treating the unique needs of each patient. For example, a patient who describes their sore throat as having pain that extends to the ear and who also has a desire to drink lemonade needs a different homeopathic remedy than the one whose sore throat burns especially when swallowing and has swollen cervical glands. It is the nurse homeopath’s responsibility and skill that brings forth these very individual characteristics of symptoms, whether they are acute or chronic.

Homeopathic nursing supports and promotes holistic nursing philosophical principles of valuing healing as the desired outcome; that the human health experience is a complex, dynamic relationship of an individual’s understanding of health, wellness, illness, and disease; and environmental influences and cultural perspectives inform an individual’s health experience (ANA & AHNA, 2019).

HOMEOPATHY: A HOLISTIC SPECIALTY IN NURSING

As with other nursing specialties, practicing homeopathy requires specialized training/education and certification. The Homeopathic Nurses Association (HNA) supports and advances the specialty and its members. To achieve quality and excellence in practice, there are several homeopathic training and education programs from which to select. Some are accredited through the homeopathic accrediting body

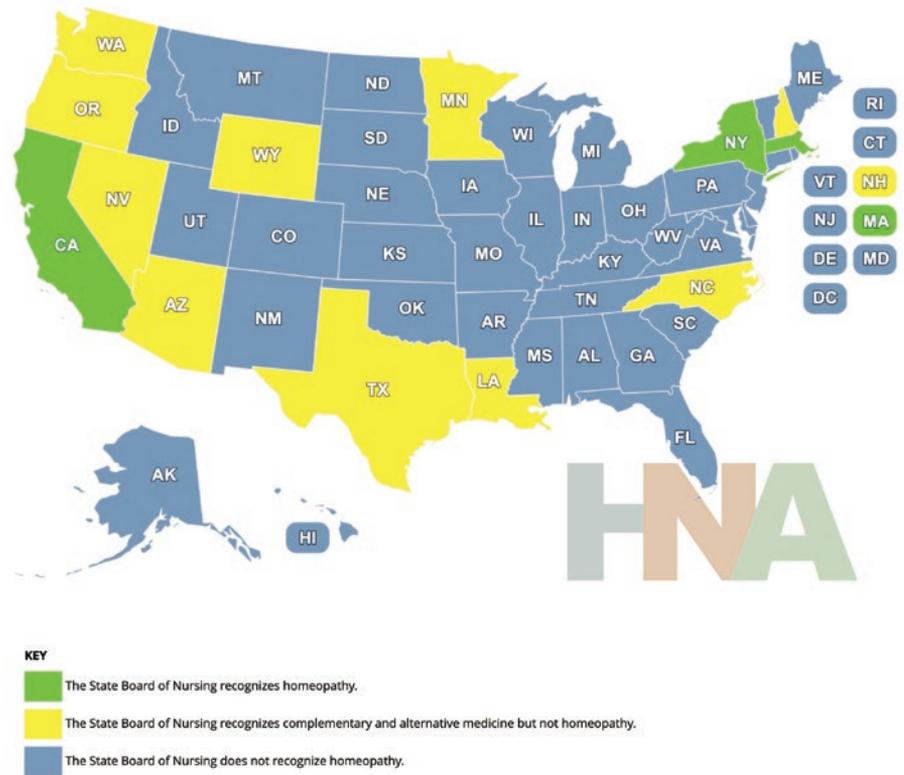


Figure 1. This map culminates a 2022 research initiative by the Homeopathic Nurses Association (HNA) to determine which State Boards of Nursing license integrative or complementary medicine, specifically homeopathy. HNA holds the copyright license for the map which is used here with the permission of the HNA.

(Accreditation Commission for Homeopathic Education in North America, n.d.). There is also credentialing within the profession of homeopathy which includes certification (Council for Homeopathic Certification, n.d.; North American Homeopathy Examiners, n.d.); and in Arizona there is licensure (Arizona Board of Homeopathic and Integrated Medicine Examiners, n.d.).

To determine whether a nurse can practice homeopathy in the state in which they are licensed, the Homeopathic Nurses Association (HNA) conducted a study where they contacted each state Board along with reviewing that state's statutes, rules, and regulations. In addition, the study included in their findings those states that use Scope of Practice Decision Trees to determine whether a specific activity, intervention, or role is within legal and professional boundaries set forth by scope of practice. The results of the study are illustrated in Figure 1. An interactive version of the map can be found on HNA's website at <https://map.nursehomeopaths.org/>.

Not all nurses interested in homeopathy choose to actively practice homeopathy or they may not be able to because of the scope of practice regulation. In this case, they may inform their nursing practice about homeopathy through their roles as educators or case managers, using their knowledge of homeopathy so they may better assess and guide their patients. Those who do actively practice will often use homeopathy as one of several holistic healing modalities.

CONCLUSION

Homeopathy offers an evidence-informed path for gentle, individualized healing. As a nursing specialty it resonates deeply with the values of holistic nurses who care for the whole person—mind, body, and spirit. Whether used as a primary approach or as part of integrative practice, homeopathy invites nurses to expand their healing practice to promote and support

the body's innate ability to restore balance and heal.

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Additional Resources for Learning about the Hidden Gem of Homeopathy

The Homeopathic Nurses Association website is a good place to start. <https://www.nursehomeopaths.org/>

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