Landscape of the Mind: The Promise of Homeopathy For Cognitive & Emotional Health

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We have no financial relationships with commercial interests to disclose.

Our presentation does not include discussion of off-label or investigational use.
Welcome to the JAHC

>We’re thrilled to be here

>We started studying homeopathy nearly 40 years ago

>Been blessed to treat patients with a wide range of ailments from the physical to emotional to cognitive

>Been privy to people’s families and lives, some for decades and see the positive impact homeopathy has

>We’re honored to be part of this all-star cast and are so happy to see old friends and meet new ones!
This Weekend’s Lectures

You will hear a broad range of ideas and experience:
- Different ways to think about patients
- Novel approaches to case analysis
- New remedies or unique angles on familiar remedies
- Covering a wide range of topics around mental health
- Many wonderful homeopaths! If you’re not helping someone, find a colleague to refer to
Emotional or Cognitive Challenges in our Patients

- For some, it is the chief complaint
- For others, these challenges may cause physical ailments
- For some, physical ailments may contribute to these issues
- And yet others, it may be obvious there is an issue, but the patient may not be aware
Determinants of Health

- Basic needs being met?
- Contextualize the patients challenges within their life, their family system, their community
Demographics Mental Illness

Mental illnesses, cognitive & emotional, are among the most common health challenges for Americans

More than 50% are diagnosed in a lifetime

1/5 Americans experience a mental illness in any year

1 in 5 children, either currently or at some point, have a debilitating mental illness.

1 in 25 Americans lives with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression.

https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm
Mental Health Facts
CHILDREN & TEENS

Fact: 1 in 5 children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness.¹

- 20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition¹
- 11% of youth have a mood disorder¹
- 10% of youth have a behavior or conduct disorder¹
- 8% of youth have an anxiety disorder¹

Impact

50%  50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.¹
10 yrs  The average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention is 6-10 years.¹
50%  Approximately 50% of students age 14 and older with a mental illness drop out of high school.¹
70%  70% of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness.¹

Suicide

3rd  Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10 - 24.¹
90%  90% of those who died by suicide had an underlying mental illness.²

Warning Signs

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks (e.g., crying regularly, feeling fatigued, feeling unmotivated).
- Trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so.
- Out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others.
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or fast breathing.
- Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or gain.
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships.
- Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.
- Drastic changes in behavior, personality or sleeping habits (e.g., waking up early and acting agitated).
- Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still that can lead to failure in school.
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities like hanging out with friends or going to classes.

4 Things Parents Can Do

- Talk with your pediatrician.
- Get a referral to a mental health specialist.
- Work with the school.
- Connect with other families.

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National Alliance on Mental Illness
www.nami.org
Mental Illness By The Numbers

October 10th World Mental Health Day

1 in 17 Americans
Live with a serious mental illness.

1 out of 4 American families
Has a relative who has a mental illness.

1 in 5 children
Has had a seriously debilitating mental disorder.

More than 50% of students with a mental disorder age 14 and older have a recent history of a mental health disorder.

24% of state prisoners have a recent history of a mental health disorder.

More than 90% of children & adolescents who commit suicide have a mental disorder.

The economic cost of untreated mental illness annually in the United States

$100 billion

Source: National Alliance on Mental Health

Graphic created by FoxWild
Overarching Ideas for Using Homeopathy for Mental Illness

- Unique in the medical world in that we aim to and are able to treat the whole person
- Always look to treat what is *most* limiting to the patient
- Understand emotional or cognitive issues in context of the person’s overall health
Stress & Strain
Many kinds of stress

We respond to stress in predictable and patterned ways

We see manifestations of stress throughout an individual: physically, mentally, emotionally

People respond to stress based on their homeopathic constitutional type
If we perceive that pattern and give a remedy to shift the underlying tendency, the patient will have fewer symptoms.

We can also address more subtle, nuanced aspects of temperament.

At best, remedies help to optimize the patient’s genetic potential.
We Help People Counter the Effects of Stress

Consciousness raising when relevant:

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removing the stress

doing things that release stress

And of course, prescribing a homeopathic remedy that shifts the way a patient responds to stress, making them less susceptible to the same and other stressors.
What Homeopaths Do Best:

- We excel at understanding our patients
- We create space for stories to unfold
- We create a supportive & loving environment
- We ask good questions
- We are patient
- We are big picture thinkers
- We find the Simillimum
Homeopathy For Emotional Issues

- Emotional elements of every case taken
- Common complaints:
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Irritability
  - Anger and violence
  - Emotional dysregulation
  - Jealousy
Homeopathy for Cognitive Issues

- Cognitive elements of every case taken
  - Common complaints:
    - Inborn errors
    - Attentional issues
    - Challenges due to injury
    - Challenges due to illnesses
    - Challenges due to cognitive decline
Emotional Challenges Through the Ages of Life

In children:
- Difficult babies
- Behavioral challenges
- ODD
- Conduct disorder
- Eating disorders

In adults:
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Bipolar
- Personality disorder
- Substance abuse disorder
Cognitive Challenges Through the Ages of Life

In children:
- Pervasive developmental delay
- Autism
- Nonverbal learning disorder
- ADHD
- Dyslexia
- Down’s Syndrome
- Intellectual disability

In adults:
- Intellectual disability
- Stroke
- Vascular insufficiency
- Mild cognitive decline
- Dementia
- Impact of chronic infection
Overlapping Diagnoses - Example with ADHD

Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Conduct disorder

Anxiety

Depression

Learning differences

Autistic spectrum disorders
Positive Attributes of Some Psychological Challenges

Creativity
Spontaneity
Energy & drive
Flexibility
Social ability
Determination
Challenges in this Population

- We are often working with patients on pharmaceuticals so we need skills in that realm related to
  - using drugs with homeopathy
  - supporting reduction in dosing
  - or helping patients discontinue medication when and if appropriate
Challenges in this Population

- Under diagnosis
- Over diagnosis
- Managing expectations of patients and parents of patients
- Managing our own expectations
Challenges with this Population

- Pressure from patients or parents of patients for faster results
- Patient education issue
- Our own impatience
- Based on other patients
- Comparison to allopathic results
Challenges in this Population

- Frustration with less than stellar results
- Overwhelm due to patients’ symptoms
- Time management issues with both case taking & case analysis
Understanding a Patient’s Remedy and Why it Matters

- Other recommendations made by doctor or homeopath need to be filtered through the nature of the person’s remedy type.

- Other recommendations *work better* when they are in line with the person’s natural tendencies.

Examples
Understanding a Child’s Remedy Type

- Can impact the way that child should be parented, what kind of discipline they will need, and what kinds of things parents might pay attention to

- Might parenting impact a child’s behavior and development— you bet!
Practical Points for Carrying Patients Over Time: Between Visits

Did you do everything you wanted to do? Said you would do?
Send an email?
A postcard?
Do research?
Call/contact another provider?
Order something?
Review past medical records?
Policy around contact
Long Term Treatment

- Role of alcohol & recreational drugs
- Role of pharmaceuticals for this population
  - Treating patients on medication
- Think ahead 5 & 10 years
- Aim low, aim long
- Write up expectations, be realistic
- Offer ideas on other support & respite as needed
Long Term Treatment

- Side-step blame & guilt, be solution-oriented
- Use outside expertise to help with assessments
- Do not rush to change remedies if there is some improvement
Long Term Treatment

- Support & encourage other treatment modalities
- Refer readily; many other approaches will work better with a remedy on board
- The role of exercise
- The role of diet
- The importance of the microbiome
The Learning Curve

We’ve had the great fortune of teaching students, colleagues and friends and understand the kinds of obstacles that arise when trying to learn and use homeopathy.

We’ve had the opportunity for reflection and synthesis of our experiences to help further an understanding of using homeopathy.

We work to tack down our clinical work into teachable skills to shorten and deepen the learning curve.
Let’s Jump Into Some of Our Clinical Points

- Case Taking
- Case Analysis
- Case Examples
Case Taking Strategies

- Describe what patient means by anxiety/depression/cognitive challenges
- What does it feel like, for instance, how do they know they have this issue?
- Are there clear triggers?
- Was there an initial etiology?
- What does the patient do to try to help?
Case Taking Strategies
Are There Clear Modalities?

- Company
- Consolation
- PMS time or onset of menses
- Work
- Open air
- Other ailments
- Food
- Situational
- Sleep
Case Taking Strategies

- Rule out physical etiologies such as hyperthyroidism, asthma, tachycardia
- Understand the particular diagnosis/overlapping diagnoses
- Understand aspects related to time: how long have they had the issue, is there a time of day it’s worse?
- Understand intensity/severity of each complaint
- How does it interfere or impact with their life?
Case Taking Strategies

- Understand family and personal history with anxiety and mental illness
- Understand lifestyle, support system, particular or ongoing stressors in patient’s life
- What non-drug approaches, if any, have they tried, with what kinds of results?
- What drug approaches if any, have they tried, with what kinds of results?
Case Taking Strategies

- Take as much time as you need to understand the chief complaint
- Do a brief review of systems, covering the entire body
- Remember the physical general symptoms: body temperature, food cravings, thirst, temperament, nature of pain, sleep, etc.
- Always end on physical body symptoms, and create a sense of closure
Case Taking Strategies

- Creating a calm and welcoming space
- Keep calm
- Leave space for quiet
- Be accepting and non-judgmental
- Put the patient at ease
Case Taking Strategies

- All observations are valuable
- But observations are only as valuable as the questions they lead you to ask
Strange, rare and peculiar-crunk it or junk it?

Only pay attention to the SRP if it is part of an overall pattern in the patient.
Case Analysis

Essential pieces:
- Etiology
- Nature of issue, how it manifests
- Clear modalities
- Review of systems
- Physical general symptoms

With homeopathy we have the unique capacity to give a remedy for the whole person, we should always aim for that
Tools of the Trade

- Studying comparative *materia medica*
- Understanding and using the Repertory to good effect
- Having a framework for where to focus your attention
- Understanding the pattern of pathology
Map of Hierarchy © Paul Herscu ND, MPH

The Map of Hierarchy

Case Examples

- PDD
- ADHD
- Depression
- Panic disorder
- Cognitive decline
Problems Outside Homeopathy

- We come under criticism from medical community for a variety of reasons.
- The vast majority are within our own control.
Problems Inside Homeopathy

- What IS homeopathy?
- So many things under the same name!
- So many types of products
- So many styles of practice
- And even within our corner, of constitutional/classical homeopathy so many approaches
- Many contradict one another, yet all fall under the rubric of homeopathy
Problems Inside Homeopathy

- The information we gather and speak about and read and teach
- How reliable is the information? How real is it?
- We know that many of the original authors copied material from one book to the next
- And we know that many well-meaning folks describe phenomenon that they have heard or read about, but not experienced with patients
Challenges for Our Homeopathic Community

- Ultimately, we need well-designed and well-conducted efficacy trials
- We need to continually articulate the science of homeopathy
- Study benefits are inconsistent or not easily reproducible
Challenges for Our Homeopathic Community

- We need to better articulate how to fund and complete well composed research that tests single remedies on individuals.
- Research methods must be studied rigorously, and the results made public.
The Thrill of Helping
The Stress of Falling Short

❖ The role of humility in medicine. We pass off success to the healing power of nature & to the patient’s own healing capacity

❖ Look for ways to improve skills

❖ Never give up on patients

❖ Cultivate openness to feedback

❖ Grow your generosity of spirit toward those you are treating, the easy patients and more challenging ones, too
The Art of Homeopathic Medicine

- You are the artists of homeopathy
- Take time to hone your craft
- Take your charge seriously
- Put your own stamp on this beautiful medicine of ours

And cherish your profession, it will give to the world & to you, in remarkable ways!
Create Time & Space for Reflection

Find what works for you: love, meditate, write, sing, hike, pray

Essential to your own evolution as a homeopath

This allows for the mind and heart to periodically synch

Find mentors! Mentor others!
We address the whole person, body, mind & spirit in a way most every other kind of medicine cannot.

Most of us who have been a practice a while know the deep ways remedies help people.

And for the homeopath, we are also healed by creating space & bearing witness and seeing people helped.
References


Lamiae Grimaldi-Bensouda et.al. (2016) "Homeopathic medical practice for anxiety and depression in primary care: the EPI3 cohort study

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- Dr Rothenberg’s writing can also be found on the Huffington Post, Elephant Journal, Medium & Thrive Global
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