



The foundations of Homeopathy and its use in the SUS: An integrative review

Os fundamentos da Homeopatia e sua utilização no SUS: Revisão integrativa

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Ariel Camille Alves Salvador

Medical Student at the University Center of Belo Horizonte

Address: Av. Prof. Mário Werneck, 1685, Buritis - Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais,

CEP: 30575-180

E-mail: arielcamiller@gmail.com

Emily Aparecida Almeida Rocha

Medical Student at the University Center of Belo Horizonte

Address: Av. Prof. Mário Werneck, 1685, Buritis - Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais,

CEP: 30575-180

E-mail: emilyaralmeidaae15@gmail.com

Kamila Souza Costa

Medical Student at the University Center of Belo Horizonte

Address: Av. Prof. Mário Werneck, 1685, Buritis - Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais,

CEP: 30575-180

E-mail: kamilauna@hotmail.com

Mariana Camargos da Costa

Medical student at Faculdade Ciências Médicas de Minas Gerais

Address: Alameda Ezequiel Dias 275, Centro - Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, CEP: 30130-110

E-mail: maricamargos1@hotmail.com

Daniela Quadros de Azevedo

PhD student in the Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences - Federal University of Minas Gerais - Department of Pharmaceutical Products - Faculty of Pharmacy

Address: Avenida Presidente Antônio Carlos, 6627, Pampulha – Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais,

Zip Code: 31270-901

E-mail: daniquadrosazevedo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The objective of this study is to evaluate the use of Homeopathy in the SUS, analyzing the existing prejudices and contrasting them with scientific results, using a literature review. **Methodology:** A narrative literature review was carried out and the search for articles occurred through the use of the descriptors inserted in the MeSH: "Homeopathy" and "Unified Health System". The Boolean operator "AND" was used between the combinations. The inclusion criteria were articles related to the selected descriptors, with English and Portuguese language and between 2007-2022. We found 8 articles in Scielo and 17 in pubmed, totaling 25 articles. **Results:** Homeopathy is a medicinal treatment and secular practice. However, despite being regulated by the SUS, homeopathic therapy is not widespread in Brazil, since there are difficulties in the development of research in the area, either due to methodological difficulties or financial support. **Discussion:** The low use of Complementary Therapies in the SUS may be associated with the lack



of knowledge about such practices by health professionals, who in turn are unaware of the existence of the PNPIC, as well as the lack of disciplines that address this theme in undergraduate courses. Even though it is a practice used for more than two centuries in several countries, Homeopathy remains marginalized in the face of modern scientific rationality because it is based on unorthodox principles, which challenge the linear thinking characteristic of the paradigm of traditional science, which presupposes objectivity, stability and simplicity. Conclusion: Humanizing patient care, adopting preventive practices to cope with diseases, building a healthy life, recovering the understanding of the health-disease concept, are the principles that guide SUS policies and that meet the fundamentals of Homeopathy. In addition, its inclusion in the SUS makes it possible to expand the universe of users, configuring the citizen's right to choose. This work suggests more in-depth research on the subject and improvements in communication between health professionals.

Keywords: Homeopathy, SUS, Propaedeutics.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Homeopathy is a holistic and vitalistic system that sees the person, not in parts. Developed by Samuel Hahnemann in the eighteenth century, the therapeutic method has three fundamental principles: the Law of Similars, experimentation on healthy men and the use of ultra-dilution of medicines.¹ Hahnemann systematized the philosophical and doctrinal principles of homeopathy in his works *Organon of the Art of Healing* and *Chronic Diseases*. From this, Homeopathy grew in various regions of the world, and today it is firmly established in several countries in Europe, the Americas and Asia.²

In Brazil, Homeopathy was introduced by Benoit Mure in 1840, quickly becoming a new treatment option for the population.² There was a period of great growth until 1930, with the creation of two faculties of homeopathic medicine, one in Rio de Janeiro and the other in Rio Grande do Sul, a homeopathic hospital linked to the School of Medicine and Surgery of Rio de Janeiro. and, finally, academic leagues of Homeopathy in several states of the country.³ However, between 1930 and 1970, Homeopathy experienced a phase of academic decline, related to the technological advances made by medicine, the expansion of the pharmaceutical industry, antibiotics, medical specialties and the medical-hospital care model. But it was rescued after 1970, seen as alternative medicine, in the context of a crisis of the dominant, specialized, technological, commodified medical model marked by invasive and iatrogenic therapies.⁴

In 1980, the Federal Council of Medicine (CFM) recognized Homeopathy as a specialty (CFM Resolution 1.000/80), which contributed to expand the presence of its teaching in medical education.⁴ Thus, based on this, some Brazilian states and municipalities began to offer homeopathic care as a medical specialty to users of public health services.² And in Brazil, in 2006,



the Ministry of Health (MS) launched the National Policy on Integrative and Complementary Practices (PNPIC) through Ministerial Ordinance No. 971, offering Homeopathy, Phytotherapy, Acupuncture, among other therapeutic techniques, to users of the Unified Health System (SUS), mainly within the scope of Primary Health Care (PHC), among other therapeutic techniques.⁶ In view of the above, the PNPIC aims to develop the therapeutic bond and the integration of the human being with the environment and society, and also to stimulate natural prevention mechanisms.⁷

In view of the advances and setbacks that Homeopathy has undergone since its implementation in the SUS, it is important to note that the PNPIC tends to strengthen the use of this therapy in the public health system, being able to guarantee a safe and effective intervention if applied correctly, because through homeopathic treatment it is possible to promote individualized care, favoring the resolution of health problems and satisfying SUS users.⁷ In this way, The objective of this study is to evaluate the use of Homeopathy in the SUS, analyzing the existing prejudices and countering them with scientific results, using a literature review.

2 METHODOLOGY

This is an integrative literature review, which was carried out through a search in the Pubmed and Scielo databases in June/2023. The search was carried out through the use of the descriptors inserted in the MeSH: "homeopathy" and "unified health system". The Boolean operator "AND" was used between the combinations. The inclusion criteria were articles related to the selected descriptors, with English language and Portuguese and between 2010-2022. We found 8 articles in Scielo and 17 in pubmed, totaling 25 articles. After reading the titles and abstracts of these articles, 21 were excluded due to disagreement with the theme, thus including 4 publications for this integrative review.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Homeopathy is one of the most widely used methods of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) and is growing in popularity worldwide. Homeopathic medicine is recognised as a practice in several countries such as Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.⁸

In Brazil, homeopathy has been recognized as a medical practice since the end of the nineteenth century and as a medical specialty by the Federal Council of Medicine (CFM) since 1980. However, due to the lack of scientific knowledge, there is still prejudice on the part of health



professionals who do not use it.⁶ The low use of Complementary Therapies in the SUS may be associated with the lack of knowledge about such practices by health professionals, who in turn are unaware of the existence of the PNPIC, as well as the lack of disciplines that address this topic in undergraduate courses.⁹

Although it is officially recognized as a medical specialty and even the WHO recommends its inclusion in public health services, homeopathy is part of the academic curricula of Medicine, for the most part, only as an elective subject, with few colleges that offer it as mandatory.² Even though homeopathy has been used for more than two centuries in several countries, it remains marginalized in the face of modern scientific rationality because it is based on unorthodox principles, which challenge the linear thinking characteristic of the paradigm of traditional science, which presupposes objectivity, stability and simplicity.^{3,4}

According to Loch-Neckel, Carmignan and Crepaldi (2010), there is an apparent increase in the interest of medical students in knowing and substantiating concepts of homeopathy and other integrative and complementary practices, attributing this interest to the insertion of these practices in the SUS and to the growing demand of the population for these therapies.² Most of the students who were taught Homeopathy perceived the differentiated view provided by the area on the health-disease-care process, capable of being integrated in a complementary way to the biomedical model.

The WHO has encouraged the development of homeopathic projects that aim to promote and increase its availability in the world's public health systems, associated with classical treatments, because homeopathy is considered an efficient and safe alternative to the treatment of chronic diseases.² In order to systematize the information described above, 4 articles (Chart 1) of greatest relevance to the theme were selected. Monteiro and Iriart (2007) report on the representation of homeopathy to the population and present as a result the expansion of the fields of action of homeopathy in the last two decades, which has ensured greater acceptance by users and institutions. In general, the search for homeopathic consultation by users is due to the search for a solution to a health problem in which the traditional treatment was ineffective. The "slow" treatment was well received by the patients, and its low cost combined with satisfaction with the homeopathic consultation, which is also linked to the more receptive care of the doctors, who are more interested in the users, differing from traditional medicine with its precariousness in care. On the other hand, Salles and Schraiber (2009) point out the resistance and difficulty of managers in the implementation of homeopathy, limited by the lack of knowledge and information, which generates insecurity about this medicine.

Galhardi et al. (2011) reported difficulties in the implementation of the National Policy on Integrative and Complementary Practices (PNPIC) due to the lack of knowledge of managers about the benefits of homeopathy in the SUS. Faisal and Rodrigues (2009) portray access to homeopathy as easier for middle and upper class people, due to their financial conditions and educational levels.

Loch-Neckel, Carmingnan and Crepaldi (2010) evidenced the lack of knowledge about the implementation of homeopathy in the SUS by medical students, making clear the existence of a gap regarding the absence of homeopathy in the students' curricula. Barbosa (2022) also highlighted the fragility of the SUS to implement homeopathy, based on the lack of teaching on the subject in medical and pharmacy schools. In addition, it mentions that in relation to the development of research in the area, the greatest difficulties encountered refer to the existing methodological strategies, as well as the lack of investments.

Table 1: Summary of the main results

Title	Author	Type of study	No. of participants	Year of completion	Findings found
Homeopathy in the Unified Health System: users' representations about homeopathic treatment	Monteiro, D. de A., & Iriart, J. A. B.	Case Study	112 patients	2007	According to the author, of the total population interviewed, 56.7% were unaware that the Homeopathy Service was offered in the health units investigated; 58.5% received indication of homeopathic treatment through relatives, friends and acquaintances, while 66.3% sought homeopathy due to failure of the previous treatment. In the case of the low-income population that uses the homeopathic service in the SUS interviewed in this study, homeopathy is less an ideological choice and more a pragmatic search for a therapeutic alternative to solve a health problem that traditional medicine



					has not been able to solve.
SUS managers: support and resistance to Homeopathy	Salles, S. A. & Schraiber, L. B.	Case Study	16 managers	2009	The results of the interviews with the managers cover several themes related to the major issues, such as the action to universalize access to Homeopathy and, mainly, to perceive the social demand. Thus, the managers understood the importance of defending Homeopathy in the SUS and understood resistance to the full acceptance of this medicine as an option for the population.
Homeopathy in the SUS from the perspective of health students	Loch-Neckel, G., & Carmingnan, F., & Crepaldi, M.A.	Case Study	53 students (Pharmacy, Medicine and Dentistry Courses)	2010	It was found that 36.1% of the interviewees attributed to homeopathy the representation that it is a therapy that uses natural products; while 27.9% relate it through the Principle of Similars; On the other hand, 26.2% indicate that homeopathy makes use of diluted medicines. However, 6.6% described homeopathy as a therapy that uses placebo medicines. In addition, 1.6% associated homeopathy with both an alternative treatment and a single treatment. The interviewees were unaware of the incorporation of homeopathy in the SUS and also a superficial level of information about homeopathic assumptions among the students.



<p>The knowledge of municipal health managers about the National Policy of Integrative and Complementary Practice and its influence on the supply of homeopathy in the local Unified Health System</p>	<p>Galhardi, W. M, P., & Barros, N. F., & Leite-Mor, A.C.</p>	<p>Cross-sectional case study (developed in two phases)</p>	<p>645 municipalities</p>	<p>2013</p>	<p>This study was divided into two phases, in the first phase, among the 645 municipalities 47 registered homeopathy care in the SUS from 2000 to 2007, in this period there was a growth of 14.6%, thus there was an increase in homeopathy care due to the implementation of care in municipalities. Regarding the second phase, of the 42 interviewees, 11 are aware of the policy (26%) and perceive that it supports the implantation and implementation of homeopathy in the SUS. 13 know little (31%), reporting that the Policy had no influence on the implementation or implementation of homeopathy care. 17 are unaware of its existence (41%), having no influence on the Policy either for implementation or for implementation. One manager declined to respond.</p>
<p>Prevalence and associated factors with homeopathy use in Brazil: a population-based study</p>	<p>Faisal-Cury, A., & Rodrigues, D. de O.</p>	<p>Case Study</p>	<p>90,846 participants</p>	<p>2022</p>	<p>According to the dataset in the 2019 National Health Survey (PNS), in which there were 90,846 participants with information on the use of homeopathy, the prevalence of homeopathy use was found in 0.99% of the sample, in which among the participants who were undergoing homeopathic treatment, 76.6% reported paying and 94% reported that the SUS did not provide it. Only 2.9% reported</p>



					that the SUS offered homeopathic treatment. In addition, they found that the highest use of homeopathy is among whites (1.5%), women (1.3%), aged 52 years or older (1.1%), with higher education (2.9%), higher per capita monthly income (2.8%), who lived in urban areas (1.3%), in more developed regions (1.3%), with private health insurance (2.2%) and with a PHQ-9 score greater than 14 (1.9%).
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Homeopathy is a medicinal therapeutic treatment and secular practice. However, health professionals still do not signal it due to lack of knowledge, as there are difficulties in the development of research in the area, either due to methodological difficulties or due to financial support. Despite being regulated by the SUS, homeopathic therapy is not widespread in Brazil. Therefore, it is necessary to have homeopathic physicians working in Basic Health Units and for primary care professionals to be updated on the use of this therapeutic resource, since safe medicines are used and have no harmful effects on the patient, tested and approved by the scientific community.

4 FINAL THOUGHTS

Homeopathy is a generalist therapy that works in all age groups and requires simple technology. The experience of implementation and consolidation of homeopathy as a therapeutic option in public health services can offer important information to support the organization and more effective integration of this therapy in other public health services.

In addition, humanizing patient care, adopting preventive practices to cope with diseases, building a healthy life, recovering the understanding of the health-disease concept, are the principles that guide SUS policies and that meet the fundamentals of homeopathy. In addition, its inclusion in the SUS makes it possible to expand the universe of users, configuring the citizen's right to choose. This work suggests more in-depth research on the subject and improvements in communication between health professionals.



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