



papel da homeopatia no tratamento da asma: Uma revisão bibliográfica

The role of homeopathy in the treatment of asthma: A literature review

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to characterize Homeopathy, describe the pathology of asthma and explain, based on a literature review, the positive or negative health impacts of the use of Homeopathy as an adjunct to the traditional treatment of asthma. The research was carried out by searching for scientific productions in the Pubmed database, by inserting the following MeSH descriptors: "Asthma"; "Homeopathy". From this, it was possible to obtain the translation of these terms into the medical vocabulary, and the following expressions were found: Homeopathy; Asthmas and Bronchial Asthma. The Boolean operator "OR" was used for combinations related to Asthma and the AND operator for combinations related to Asthma and Homeopathy. The inclusion criteria were articles related to the selected descriptors, which have agreement with the theme of the work, published between the years 2013 and 2023, using the filters: "full and free text" and "10 years", the latter refers to the date of publication of the articles searched. A total of 14 articles were found in English and Spanish, and after reading the titles and abstracts, 3 were excluded for evading the proposed theme. It is noteworthy that 9 of the 11 articles studied question the veracity of the use of Homeopathy in the treatment of Asthma. Therefore, it is worth discussing the effectiveness of Homeopathy in the treatment of asthma and its use. The present article brought contrary references, which shows the existence of a controversy in relation to the use of Homeopathy in the current century. It is undeniable that non-traditional medicine has several benefits and has grown in the country and therefore has to be presented to health professionals and patients as an option terapêutica. Com this, it is clear the need for further studies on Homeopathy and other integrative practices, a greater inclusion of these practices in the Unified Health System, in addition to the greater inclusion of them in Brazilian medical education in order to demystify untrue information about this important science. Homeopathy is the most widely used complementary and integrative therapy in the treatment of asthma today, but scientific studies must be continuously developed for its recognition and dissemination as a therapy that promotes safe and lasting cures.

Keywords: Homeopathy, Asthma, Health impacts.

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INTRODUCTION

Homeopathy is a medical specialty that defines itself in treating diseases by similarity, that is, the like are cured by the like, this means that substances that cause symptoms in healthy individuals can be used to treat patients with similar symptoms. The healing of the sick person is related to the stimulation of vital energy, producing a healing reaction.

Joint Ordinance No. 14, of August 24, 2021 of the Ministry of Health, which approved the Clinical Protocol and Therapeutic Guidelines for Asthma, points out that the prevalence of asthma symptoms among adolescents in Brazil is among the highest in the world. In 2012, the National School Health Survey (PENSE), a cross-sectional study conducted by the Ministry of Health with 109,104 ninth-grade adolescents from public and private schools in all Brazilian states, confirmed prevalence rates of asthma symptoms of 23% and medical diagnosis rates of 12%, indicating underdiagnosis of asthma in Brazil. The WHO points out that asthma is present in all countries of the world, regardless of the level of development, but 80% of asthma-related deaths occurred in developing countries.

According to Robbins (2006), asthma is a chronic recurrent inflammatory disorder, characterized by reversible bronchospasms of the tracheobronchial airways due to smooth muscle hyperreactivity, excess mucus and inflammation, whose symptoms are cough with episodic wheezing and dyspnea, the proper examination being spirometry, the traditional drug treatment is inhaled corticosteroids, corticosteroids, Beta - 2 - short-acting agonist (B2CA) and Beta - 2 - long-acting agonist (B2LA).

Although conventional drug therapy is well established, joint treatment with alternative therapies, such as acupuncture, acupressure, hypnosis, Ayurveda and Homeopathy, has been sought by asthmatic patients due to the increased expenses of traditional treatments and to avoid negative impacts, such as side effects caused by the use of medications, especially patients with renal and hepatic comorbidities.

Studies indicate that homeopathy has been the subject of studies to prove its efficacy as an adjunct to conventional asthma treatment, with only one article² indicating a slight improvement in the asthma quality of life score (AQLQ), while two articles³ indicate higher costs of asthma treatments with alternative therapy included.

The increase in the use of alternative therapies reflects the change in thinking in modern society, which is increasingly looking for treatments that are less harmful to human health. For this reason, in the current century, the association of integrative practices with traditional



medicine has often been evidenced as a way to amplify their results and reduce harmful effects on patients' health.

Therefore, the objective of this article is to characterize Homeopathy, describe the pathology of asthma and explain, based on a literature review, the positive or negative health impacts of the use of homeopathy as an adjunct to the traditional treatment of asthma.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological strategy employed is the systematic review of the literature. The research was carried out by searching for scientific productions in the Pubmed database, by inserting the following MeSH descriptors: "Asthma"; "Homeopathy". From this, it was possible to obtain the translation of these terms into the medical vocabulary, and the following expressions were found: Homeopathy; Asthmas and Bronchial Asthma. The Boolean operator "OR" was used for combinations related to Asthma and the AND operator for combinations related to Asthma and Homeopathy. The inclusion criteria were articles related to the selected descriptors, which have agreement with the theme of the work, published between the years 2013 and 2023, using the filters: "full and free text" and "10 years", the latter refers to the date of publication of the articles searched. A total of 14 articles were found in English and Spanish, and after reading the titles and abstracts, 3 were excluded for evading the proposed theme

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Title	Author	Type of study	Number of participants	Year of Completion	Find Found
1. Alternative Prosthodontic Therapies: A Multifaceted Approach	Arush Beri Jr. et al.	Systematic Review	As this is a Systematic Review, there are no participants	2022	Alternative therapies should be seen as a complement to traditional treatment in general. Its efficacy as an isolated therapy is debatable, but when combined with conventional treatment, it can be a valuable addition to the prosthodontist's therapeutic arsenal. Because alternative therapies are typically safe, they can be used in



					conjunction with traditional therapeutic approaches to reduce patient anxiety in dental offices.
2. Evaluating the effect on asthma quality of life of added reflexology or homeopathy to conventional asthma management-an investigator-blinded, randomised, controlled parallel group study	Ayfer Topcu et al.	Randomized Clinical Trial	86 participants	2020	In this study, the addition of homeopathy or reflexology to conventional treatment did not result in improved quality of life in asthma.
3. Person with allergy symptoms use alternative medicine more often	Anna Klack et al.		4671 participants	2016	The occurrence of allergic diseases and asthma influences the frequency of use of alternative medications. However, the frequency of alternative medicine use does not depend on whether allergic disease or asthma is confirmed by a doctor.
4. The impact of reflexology added to conventional asthma treatment on markers of airway inflammation - a randomised study	Ayfer Topcu et al.	Randomized Clinical Trial	84 participants	2020	This randomized controlled trial of reflexology and homeopathy failed to show significant improvement in selected markers of inflammation and airway hyperresponsiveness in asthma.
5. A Systematic Review of Controlled Trials of Homeopathy in Bronchial Asthma	Mohammad Qutbuddin et al.	Systematic Review	55 participants	2019	Overall, the findings of this review seem to be sufficiently promising and qualitatively suggest a definite role of homeopathy in addition to placebo in the treatment of bronchial asthma; however, they are not adequately supported by the A-level of evidence.



					Although few studies were classified as 1a or 1b, they still suffered from many important caveats, including inadequate sample power and size, and less robust designs in terms of randomization, blinding, and choice of outcome measures.
6. Selling falsehoods? A cross-sectional study of Canadian naturopathy, homeopathy, chiropractic and acupuncture clinic website claims relating to allergy and asthma.	Blake Murdoch et al.	Cross-sectional study	392 participants	2016	Increased regulation and government endorsement of CAM (complementary and alternative medicine) disciplines, such as naturopathic self-regulation in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta, may have contributed to a growth in the perception of their legitimacy and effectiveness as health care providers. Unfortunately, many of the interventions advertised by naturopaths, homeopaths, acupuncturists, and chiropractors lack evidence of efficacy, as we have found to be the case with allergy and asthma
7. Trends in the use Complementary and Alternative Therapies among US Adults with Current Asthma	The death of Al.	Cross-sectional study	160,285 participants	2023	Overall use of at least one CAM among adults in the United States increased from 2008 to 2019, with individual CAM use increasing or remaining stable



					<p>during this period. However, trends in the use of individual therapies varied and were heterogeneous based on population characteristics and daytime and nocturnal asthma symptoms. Healthcare providers should be aware of these trends and perform medication/treatment reconciliation, particularly when patients are also taking asthma medications, to avoid potential side effects and interactions.</p>
8. Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of treatment with additional enrollment to a homeopathic integrated care contract in Germany	Benjamin Kass et al.	Comparative, prospective and observational study	2524 participants	2020	From the insurer's perspective, ICCH treatment resulted in higher costs across all diagnoses, but appeared to be cost-effective for migraine or headache, atopic dermatitis, and depression, according to the international threshold values used.
9. A retrospective cost analysis of additional homeopathic treatment in Germany: Long - term economic outcomes	Julia K Ostermann et al.	Retrospective Observational Study	43,800 attendees	2017	The analysis showed that, even with the 33-month follow-up, there were still differences in costs between the groups, with higher costs in the homeopathy group.
10. Can Additional Homeopathic Treatment Save Costs? A Retrospective Cost-Analysis Based on 44500 Insured Persons	Julia K. Ostermann et al.	Retrospective Observational Study	44,500 attendees	2015	Compared to usual care, additional homeopathic treatment was associated with significantly higher costs. These analyses did not



					confirm the previously observed cost savings arising from the use of homeopathy in the healthcare system.
11. Bronchial Asthma and Complementary Alternative Medicines (MAC)	Claudio D. González et al.	Interview	635 participants	2014	In this study, it is reported that, in the metropolitan region of Buenos Aires, patients with bronchial asthma who resort to Alternative-Complementary Medicines tend to have more severe forms of the disease and longer course of evolution. The most commonly used MACs would be herbs (in the form of low-cost infusions), homeopathy, acupuncture and yoga, with demographic differences among users, as well as in the attitudes assumed by them in relation to the chosen MAC

A total of 11 articles (Chart 1) of major importance to the subject studied were selected. Among them, Arushi Beri Jr.(2022) provides information that supports the idea of associating traditional and alternative medicine, which confirms the effectiveness of the use of combined therapies in reducing patients' anxiety during dental procedures. This article also emphasizes that alternative therapies have been used for this purpose in China and Eastern countries for thousands of years. This publication says that alternative practices have a tried-and-true method and because of this cannot be excluded from the usual processes of science and medicine. The publication also cites several advantages of non-traditional medicine, such as: safety, absence of toxicity and little production of side effects, which goes against the assertion that alternative practices have no scientific evidence.



Furthermore, according to Teixeira (2017), through his Homeopathy article "The review Clinical research in homeopathy: systematic reviews and randomized controlled trials published in the Journal of Homeopathy" reports the positive results observed in dozens of placebo-controlled homeopathic clinical trials for various clinical conditions, as well as in systematic reviews and meta-analyses. These results are exemplified in 2 clinical trials conducted in important Brazilian research institutions: "Potentiated estrogen in the homeopathic treatment of pelvic pain associated with endometriosis: A 24-week, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study" and "Double-blind, randomized clinical study in children with recurrent tonsillitis undergoing homeopathic treatment". Such ideals, added to the cases mentioned in the previous paragraph, further contradict the thinking that suggests the lack of scientific proof of non-traditional medicine for the treatment of the various existing pathologies.

It is noteworthy that 9 of the 11 articles studied question the veracity of the use of Homeopathy in the treatment of Asthma. Works such as Blake Murdoch (2016) discuss the danger of using alternative treatments that lack a scientific basis in the treatment of diseases. This article cites the need to create legal policy strategies to restrict the provision of unproven treatments. However, there are other sources that dispute the idea presented in the article found. According to Rohde et al. (2021), in 1980, through resolution no. 1000/80, Homeopathy was recognized as a medical specialty and "there are many high-quality studies published in reputable medical and scientific journals such as the *Lancet*, *BMJ*, *Pediatrics*, *The Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal*, *Chest* and many others." According to this source, "most of the clinical research conducted on homeopathic medicines published in scientific journals has shown positive clinical results, especially in the treatment of respiratory allergies and influenza.

In addition, this book also reveals that "homeopathic medicines may be a viable alternative to conventional asthma medications, including corticosteroids and bronchodilators. They can be given both as an acute treatment (in crisis) and in the prevention and cure of chronic treatment. Asthmatic patients who received usual care and individualized homeopathy produced significantly better effects than usual treatment and placebo, indicating that homeopathy is superior to placebo. In other research, they showed positive effects in the control of acute asthma episodes, reducing the frequency and intensity of subsequent episodes, and weaning from bronchodilators and other drugs." In addition, according to Teixeira (2017), to ensure the safety of homeopathy users, the WHO regulates all the necessary guidelines for the creation and use of homeopathic medicines. Such findings challenge the approach of works such



as Blake Murdoch (2016), who proposes the limitation of alternative medicine due to the danger it presents.

In addition, Chukwuemeka E. Ogbu (2023) shows that the use of at least one Complementary and Alternative Medicine/Therapy (CAM) increased between the period from 2008 to 2019 in the USA in the treatment of asthma. According to the author, "in 2019, 48% (95% CI, 46–50%) of U.S. adults with active asthma reported using any MAC in the past 12 months. Overall, there was an increase in the use of at least one MAC, with 41.3% reporting use in 2008 and 47.9% reporting use in 2019 (difference, 5.6% [95% CI, 3.5% to 9.7%])." There was a predominance of use among adults aged 18 to 55 years (52%) when compared to adults over 55 years of age (42%) and women (53%) when compared to men (40%). Other items were included, such as income and symptoms. According to the same study, "Prevalence was higher in adults at the income level of <\$25,000 (54% [95% CI, 47–60%]) than in those at the income level of \geq \$25,000 (45% [95% CI, 42–48%])." Looking at asthma symptoms, "Use of at least one MAC was highest among adults with daytime symptoms >2 days/week (59% [95% CI, 55–63]) and lowest in those with daytime symptoms throughout the day (43 (95% CI, 40–46)). Moreover, adults with nocturnal symptoms 1–3 times/week had the highest prevalence (59% [95% CI, 51–68%]), while those with symptoms \geq 4 times/week had the lowest prevalence (44% [95% CI, 41–47%])."

In addition, studies such as Benjamin Kass (2020) show the difference in costs of traditional treatment compared to alternative treatment in Germany, which points to higher prices for homeopathic asthma treatments, despite having a better cost-benefit ratio for migraine or headache, atopic dermatitis, and depression. The study stresses that the findings should be used with caution due to the limitations of the study done. However, according to the Ministry of Health, "All homeopathic medicines in the Brazilian homeopathic pharmacopoeia are included in the National List of Essential Medicines (RENAME) and can be agreed to be offered in the SUS." Also, according to the "National Monitoring Report on Integrative and Complementary Health Practices in Health Information Systems" produced by the Ministry of Health, between 2017 and 2019 15,603 health centers offer integrative practices, such as Homeopathy, free of charge. Although this number represents only 37% of the available health centers, this service grew when we compare 2017 (13,123 offered Homeopathy) and 2019 (15,603 offered Homeopathy). Such thoughts do not corroborate the result observed in the aforementioned study, since there is the possibility of using Homeopathy free of charge, through the Unified Health System (SUS). And the first study was done in Germany and not in Brazil



With all this information, it is worth discussing the effectiveness of homeopathy in the treatment of asthma and its use, since most of the studies found in the main databases expose its high cost and the absence of information to prove its use. However, the present article has brought references that contradict these ideas, which shows the existence of a great controversy in relation to the use of Homeopathy in the current century. Perhaps this is due to the lack of knowledge about the exact process of action of homeopathic medicine in the human body, which creates resistance within the scientific community, which transmits this thought forward.

Still, according to Teixeira (2017), it is necessary to change the panorama of medical education in relation to traditional medicine. Perhaps this is very important for the health agents themselves to be aware of these practices, since it is a right of the Brazilian citizen to be able to choose forms of care beyond traditional medicine. It is undeniable that non-traditional medicine has several benefits and has grown in the country and therefore has to be presented to health professionals and patients as a therapeutic option. Thus, it is clear that there is a need for further studies on Homeopathy and other integrative practices, a greater inclusion of these practices in the SUS, in addition to their greater inclusion in Brazilian medical education in order to demystify untrue information about this important science.

CONCLUSION

The results achieved in the elaboration of this literature review lead us to the conclusions of the articles analyzed. In a brief summary, in relation to efficacy and safety, although some articles question the use of homeopathy in the treatment of asthma, it can be stated that some articles have demonstrated an increase in the use of alternative therapy associated with the traditional treatment of asthma, confirming a remarkable improvement in patients who use homeopathy in the treatment of asthma. On the other hand, in a retrospective analysis of the cost of homeopathic treatment, this cost is higher for asthmatic patients treated by this specialty. In this sense, it is noted that Homeopathy, a science that is increasingly studied, is the most widely used complementary and integrative therapy in the treatment of asthma, but scientific studies must be continuously developed for its recognition and dissemination as a therapy that promotes safe and lasting cures.



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