



The case for homeopathy

Homeopathy is under threat. In November last year, as part of cost-cutting, NHS England issued guidance to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) that it should not be available on the NHS, stating there is 'no clear evidence to support its use', although this is disputed (see below).

The guidance means CCGs may withdraw funding for homeopathic prescriptions on the NHS. However, until – and if – the Department of Health blacklists homeopathy, GPs can still prescribe remedies, though patients may have to pay for them. In 2007 Jeremy Hunt, now Health Secretary, supported homeopathic remedies being available on the NHS.

GP Dr Michael Dixon, chair of the College of Medicine, says, 'It's hard to see why access to homeopathy on the NHS should be denied. The savings would be tiny [around £92,000 annually] and, unlike many conventional treatments, homeopathy is entirely safe. It complements conventional medicine and, in some cases, the use of drugs is reduced.'

Worldwide, more than 200 million people regularly use this natural healthcare system, which is based on stimulating our innate healing potential. In the UK, ten per cent – about six million – use it. But the Royal College of General Practitioners says it 'cannot support [homeopathy] being recommended for patients', a stance that Dr Dixon warns 'may be perceived as bullying'.

Businesswoman Jackie Cooper, 55, is one of many passionate

advocates determined to 'save homeopathy for those who find themselves with no other recourse. I urge people to sign the petition for a parliamentary debate [petition.parliament.uk/petitions/200154].'

Two decades ago, after intense pressure at work, Jackie was laid low with a flu-like virus. 'I was achey and exhausted. I couldn't think or do anything.' Her GP diagnosed post-viral fatigue syndrome caused by the Epstein-Barr virus. 'He couldn't give me anything to help.' Jackie was 'incredibly depressed. I thought I could work through it but things got so bad that I tried to get my boyfriend – now my husband and the father of my two daughters – to leave me; the same with my business partner. I had no energy and no life.'

A year on, in desperation, Jackie consulted homeopath Simon Taffler (simontaffler.com). 'He said he could help shift the symptoms in a few weeks with homeopathic remedies and nutritional changes.'

'Gradually I felt the heaviness lifting and the joy come back into my life. Six weeks later I returned to work part-time. It was as if someone had given me wings,' she says. 'My husband had been cynical but he saw the transformation. Now he uses homeopathic remedies, too.'

My ancestor Dr Thomas Skinner, also a consultant obstetrician, was an early pioneer of homeopathy and I have benefited greatly. Many readers have reported positive effects – recently with anxiety, asthma,



FOR HOMEOPATH SIMON TAFFLER'S TOP REMEDIES, SEE MAILONLINE.CO.UK/YOU

pre- and post-surgery bruising and recovery following a heart attack.

Jackie says, 'It gave me my life back when conventional medicine couldn't help. There are no side effects, so what do you have to lose?' For more information, visit homeopathyactiontrust.org. To find a qualified practitioner, visit findahomeopath.org

AND THE EVIDENCE...

■ By the end of 2014, 104 placebo-controlled homeopathy trials had been published in peer-reviewed journals. Forty-three found homeopathy was effective, five found

it ineffective and the remainder were inconclusive, according to the Homeopathy Research Institute. This is comparable with conventional medicine, according to a Cochrane Collaboration analysis.

■ A trial published in April last year showed homeopathic oestrogen was significantly more effective than a placebo for reducing endometriosis-associated pelvic pain.
■ Of 3,000 randomised

controlled trials selected by the BMJ Clinical Evidence database, only 11 per cent of treatments routinely funded by the NHS were rated as 'beneficial', ie proven to be effective with a low risk of harm.

Find vegan valentine treats at Hotel Chocolat, such as a dark chocolate heart-shaped lolly (£2.50) and dark chocolate and salted caramel Precious Heart (£7.50 each, hotelchocolat.com).



Email your questions to sarah@sarahstacey.com