

The Role of Homeopathy in Paediatrics

Thesis

Submitted for Partial Fulfilment of Master's Degree
In Paediatrics

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2008

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my many thanks and gratitude to my professor **Dr. Iman Abdel Salam Seoud**, Professor of paediatrics for all her help and support not only during this thesis, but throughout my entire residency at Aboul Reesh. She has been a constant source of guidance and support in the past three years and she is a big part of the doctor I am today. She has my full respect and admiration

I am also extending my deepest gratitude to **Dr. Lubna Anas Fawaz**, Assistant Professor of paediatrics, my supervisor, and one of the best homeopathy enthusiasts and activists. She has guided me through this thesis and I owe her my appreciation for teaching me many new theories and concepts regarding homeopathy.

My appreciation goes out to **Dr. Hala Mohammad Lotfy**, lecturer of pediatrics, for her help and support during the past few months

Finally I would like to thank my **family** for guiding me through my thesis. A million thanks to my brothers without whom I could never have completed the surveys and graphs, an ongoing lifelong appreciation to my father, who has always been my strongest fan, and last but not least to my mother, **Dr. Nadia Badrawi** who's help and support was and always has been incredible, and without whom, I would not be the person I am today.

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Abstract

There is an increasing movement towards alternative medicine nowadays. One of the most popular types of alternative medicine is homeopathy. This paper covers the use of homeopathy among children, its role and efficacy. Included also is a survey covering patients at both private and public clinics. The survey shows the patients' desire to be able to use a more natural type of therapy for their children. It also shows that parents want their doctors to offer the choice of alternative therapy rather than the conventional pharmaceutical path. The survey also shows a wide array of interest among paediatricians concerning alternative medicine and homeopathy.

Keywords

Alternative Medicine
Complementary Medicine
Homeopathy in Children
Remedies
Vital Force
Law of similars

List of Abbreviations

1. **CAM:** Complementary and Alternative Medicine
2. **NCAM:** National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
3. **WHO:** World Health Organization
4. **AMA:** American Medical Association
5. **NIH:** National Institute of Health
6. **ADHD:** Attention Deficit hyperactive Disorder
7. **URTI:** Upper Respiratory Tract Infections
8. **CDC:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
9. **EU:** European Union
10. **IM:** Integrative Medicine
11. **CT:** Complementary Therapies
12. **CM:** Complementary Medicines
13. **CHQ:** Child Health Questionnaire
14. **Calc. carb:** Calcarea Carbonica
15. **Natrum mur:** Natrum muriaticum
16. **Phos.:** Phosphorus
17. **FDA:** Food and Drug Administration
18. **HPUS:** Homeopathic Pharmacopœia of the United States
19. **HPCUS:** Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia Convention of the United States
20. **ESSH:** The Egyptian Scientific Society of Homeopathy
21. **NASH:** The North American Society of Homeopaths
22. **OHA:** The Ontario Homeopathic Association
23. **ARH:** The Alliance of Registered Homeopaths

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Introduction and Objectives of the Work

There is an increasing movement towards alternative medicine nowadays. The term Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) includes homeopathy, herbal medicine, aromatherapy, acupuncture, and healing with energy, among many others. Homeopathy is one of the more popular alternative therapies used on children. Homeopathy, a word derived from the Greek “homeos”, meaning similar, and “pathos”, meaning suffering, was developed at the end of the 18th century by the German physician Samuel Hahnemann (*Merrel et al, 2002, Jonas et al 2003.*) It soon spread to other European countries and the United States, in part because conventional medical remedies at that time were often more dangerous or painful than the diseases they were meant to treat. Recently, some patients have turned to alternative medicine because of a growing dissatisfaction with our increasingly impersonal medical system (*Horowitz et al, 2000.*) The use of homeopathy has won support in many international medical circles including the support of some leading medical practitioners all over the world. This is supported by the fact that there are specialized homeopathic hospitals in the UK and that many medical schools in Germany, Britain, USA and France offer courses in homeopathy. In Egypt, alternative medicine is also a growing field, there has been an increasing interest in its scope and many courses are being taught at specialized centres. Part of the objective of this paper is to demonstrate the presence of homeopathy in Egypt, and how patients from different social classes and doctors perceive it.

Homeopathic remedies are based on the totality of a person's symptoms (*Bayley C. 1993*). Choosing remedies based on the symptoms rather than the disease itself is an integral part of the holistic approach to treatment by homeopathic practitioners. As the remedy in its pure form would likely have some degree of toxicity, it is diluted and shaken (succussed) in a 1:10 or 1:100 dilution in a water-alcohol solution. The precise mechanism of action of homeopathic medicines on biological symptoms is still unexplained and for many, the lack of a scientific explanation for homeopathic treatments raises questions about its legitimacy, diagnostic reliability, and scientific basis (*Merrel et al , 2002, Jonas et al, 2003 , Fisher et al, 1994, Vickers et al 1999*).

Homeopathy works through the body's own curative powers in a way best explained by comparison with vaccination. Both vaccines and homeopathic remedies are stimuli which cause mobilization of the body's defense mechanisms and thus increase the ability to oppose a pathogenic influence (*Hjelvik et al 1997*).

As homeopathy appears to be a growing trend in today's world, a general paediatrician should at least have a basic knowledge of its principles, and can thus offer advice to those patients who choose this line of therapy. In a George Washington University Hospital study, many patients visiting a general paediatrician have used different forms of complementary medicine; but many of them, for fear of ridicule, have done so without the knowledge of their paediatrician (*Ottolini et al 2001*). Another study done in John's Hopkins University showed results that parents would prefer for their child's paediatrician to have more basic knowledge about alternative medicine and be able to discuss it with them should they choose to try that form of treatment (*Sibinga EM et al*).

Homeopathy comprises different methods. One such method is ‘classical’ homeopathy, where a long, detailed description of symptoms, often very different in scope to a traditional medical history, will result in the administration of a single remedy given in infrequent doses. ‘Clinical’ homeopathy uses combinations of remedies to treat variations of a clinical condition. Such variability in the methods of practicing homeopathy is one of the reasons that trials involving homeopathy are difficult to conduct, analyze, compare and reproduce (*Jonas et al 2003*). Properly prepared homeopathic remedies are generally considered to have few side effects because they are so dilute. For the same reason, they are unlikely to interact with conventional medicines. There is however, a phenomenon described by homeopathic practitioners as ‘aggravation of symptoms’, whereby a small number of patients may have initial worsening of their symptoms for a few hours after taking the preparation before they start to recover (*Dantas et al, 2000*). Homeopathy is a system of medicine that has been practiced all over the world for almost 250 years. Homeopathic remedies are made from plants, animal substances, minerals and salts and are diluted to such a high extent that few or no molecules remain in the medicine. They work at an energetic level, stimulating the body’s own healing abilities – rather like a message to the immune system – and are prescribed on the principle of ‘like cures like’ (*Bailey C 1993, Vickers 1999 et al*).

Objectives of the study:

1. To overview the scope of homeopathy in paediatric medicine, its efficacy and relevancy.
2. To outline the most common diseases treated by homeopathy.
3. To assess the level of awareness regarding alternative medicine among paediatric staff members and compare it with the average outpatient’s wish to learn and experiment with alternative medicine.
4. To assess the degree of awareness and use of alternative medicine among patients in both private clinics and government university hospital clinics

Review of Literature

Definition and Types of Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

Definition of complementary medicine as adopted by the Cochrane Collaboration

"Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is a broad domain of healing resources that encompasses all health systems, modalities, and practices and their accompanying theories and beliefs, other than those intrinsic to the politically dominant health system of a particular society or culture in a given historical period. CAM includes all such practices and ideas self-defined by their users as preventing or treating illness or promoting health and well-being according to *the Panel of Definition and Description, CAM Research Methodology Conference in 1997*

Although the term complementary and alternative medicine are generally used together, each one has an individual definition

Alternative Medicine

The term **alternative medicine** covers any healing practice "that does not fall within the realm of conventional medicine." Commonly cited examples include homeopathy, naturopathy, acupuncture, chiropractic, and herbal medicine, though many other practices use the term (*Bratman and Steven 1997*).

Alternative medicine practices are as diverse in their foundations as in their methodologies. Specific practices may incorporate or base themselves on traditional or pre-scientific understandings of medicine, folk knowledge, spiritual, metaphysical, or religious beliefs, or newly contrived approaches to healing.

Advocates of alternative medicine hold that the various alternative treatment methods are effective in treating a wide range of major and minor medical conditions, and contend that recently published research such as *Michalsen et al, 2003, Gonsalkorale et al, 2003 and Berga et al, 2003* proves the effectiveness of specific alternative treatments. They assert that a PubMed search revealed over 370,000 research papers classified as alternative medicine published in Medline-recognized journals since 1966 in the National Library of Medicine database (*Linde 1998*).

Complementary Medicine

The term **complementary medicine** refers to nonconventional treatments used in addition (complementary) to conventional medicine prescribed by a physician

The term *complementary medicine* was widely adopted to describe systems of health care and individual therapies that people used as adjuncts to their conventional health care (*Ernest, 1995 and Joyce 1994*). The term 'complementary' has come into regular usage in the last 17 years, commonly understood as complementing conventional medicine (*White, 1991*). Practitioners often label complementary medicine as such because they believe that it complements more of the needs of the patient than conventional medicine.

The Compact Oxford English Dictionary in 2007 defines complementary medicine as "medical therapy that falls beyond the scope of scientific medicine but may be used alongside it, e.g. acupuncture and osteopathy.

The Cochrane Complementary Medicine Field says "what are considered complementary or alternative practices in one country may be considered conventional medical practices in another. Therefore, the definition of *the Panel of Definition and Description, CAM Research Methodology Conference in 1997* is broad and general complementary medicine includes all such practices and ideas which are outside the domain of conventional medicine in several countries and defined by its users as preventing or treating illness, or promoting health and well-being. These practices complement mainstream medicine by contributing to a common whole, satisfying a demand not met by conventional practices, and diversifying the conceptual framework of medicine (*Manheimer and Berman, 2007*).

Complementary therapies are often used in palliative care or by practitioners attempting to manage chronic pain in patients. Complementary medicine is considered more acceptable in the interdisciplinary approach used in palliative care than in other areas of medicine. From its early experiences of care for the dying, palliative care took for granted the necessity of placing patient values and lifestyle habits at the core of any design and delivery of quality care at the end of life. If the patient desired complementary therapies, and as long as such treatments provided additional support and did not endanger the patient, they were considered acceptable (*Allan Kellehear, 2003*)

Complementary medicine treatments used for pain include: acupuncture, low-level laser therapy, meditation, aroma therapy, Chinese medicine, dance therapy, music therapy, massage, herbalism, therapeutic touch, yoga, osteopathy, chiropractic treatments, naturopathy, and homeopathy. As stated before, complementary medicine is often categorized together with alternative medicine using the umbrella term **“Complementary and Alternative Medicine” (CAM)**.

Many people utilize mainstream medicine for diagnosis and basic information, while turning to alternatives for what they believe to be health-enhancing measures. Studies indicate that alternative approaches are often used in conjunction with conventional medicine (*Barnes et al 2004*.) This is referred to by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) as integrative (or integrated)

medicine because it combines treatments from conventional medicine and CAM for which there is some high-quality evidence of safety and effectiveness. According to *Andrew and Weil in 2008* a leading proponent of integrative medicine, the principles of integrative medicine include: appropriate use of conventional and CAM methods; patient participation; promotion of health as well as treatment of disease; and a preference for natural, minimally-invasive methods

Another form of alternative therapy is Holistic Medicine. **Holistic Health** is actually an approach to life. Rather than focusing on illness or specific parts of the body, this ancient approach to health considers the whole person and how he or she interacts with his or her environment. It emphasizes the connection of mind, body, and spirit. The goal is to achieve maximum well-being, where everything is functioning in the very best that is possible. Holistic Health is based on the law of nature that a whole is made up of interdependent parts. The earth is made up of systems, such as air, land, water, plants and animals. If life is to be sustained, they cannot be separated, for what is happening to one is also felt by all of the other systems. In the same way, an individual is a whole made up of interdependent parts, which are the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. When one part is not working at its best, it impacts all of the other parts of that person. Furthermore, this whole person, including all of the parts, is constantly interacting with everything in the surrounding environment. For example, when an individual is anxious about a history exam or a job interview, his or her nervousness may result in a physical reaction--such as a headache or a stomach ache. When people suppress anger at a parent or a boss over a long period of time, they often develop illnesses such as migraine headaches, emphysema, or even arthritis. (*Walter, 1999*).

Types of “Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)”

1. Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a technique of inserting and manipulating fine filiform needles into specific points on the body with the aim of relieving pain and for therapeutic purposes. According to acupuncture theory, these acupuncture points lie along meridians along which “**qi**”, a kind of vital energy, is said to flow. Acupuncture is thought to have originated in China and is most commonly associated with Traditional Chinese Medicine. While acupuncture has been a subject of active scientific research since the late 20th century, its effects are not well-understood, and it remains controversial among researchers and clinicians (*Ernst and Edzard, 2006*)

The WHO, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) of the National Institutes of Health, the American Medical Association (AMA) and various government reports have all studied and commented on the efficacy (or lack thereof) of acupuncture. There is general agreement that acupuncture is safe when administered by well-trained practitioners using sterile needles, and that further research is warranted (*NIH 1997, NIH 2006 and Ernst et al, 2003*).



Woman with acupuncture needles in lower back, close-up

According to the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, and the World Health Organization in 2003, acupuncture may be considered as a complementary therapy for acute and chronic pain control, arthritis/arthrosis, bursitis, tendinitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, sleep disorders, selected dermatoses (urticaria, pruritus, eczema, psoriasis) and sprains and contusions (*Ernest, 2003*) .

Pomeranz , Chiu in 1976 and Eriksson in 1991 suggested that the analgesic action of acupuncture is associated with the release of natural endorphins in the brain. This effect can be inferred by blocking the action of endorphins (or morphine) using a naloxone. When naloxone is administered to the patient, the analgesic effects of morphine can be reversed, causing the patient to feel pain again. When naloxone is administered to an acupunctured patient, the analgesic effect of acupuncture can also be reversed, causing the patient to report an increased level of pain (*Mayer et al, 1977 and Bishop, 1980*).

In 1997, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) issued a consensus statement on acupuncture that concluded that

“there is sufficient evidence of acupuncture's value to expand its use into conventional medicine and to encourage further studies of its physiology and clinical value” (NIH, 1997).

Because acupuncture needles penetrate the skin, many forms of acupuncture are invasive procedures, and therefore not without risk. Injuries are rare among patients treated by trained practitioners. These risks may include bleeding, hematomas, and dizziness (*Lao et al, 2003 and Norheim, 1996*).

2. Chiropractic

The Council on Chiropractic Education in 2007 stated that chiropractic is a complementary and alternative medicine health care profession that focuses on diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mechanical disorders of the musculoskeletal system and their effects on the nervous system and general health. It emphasizes manual therapy including spinal manipulation and other joint and soft-tissue manipulation, as well as exercises and health and lifestyle counseling. Traditionally, it assumes that a vertebral subluxation or spinal joint dysfunction can interfere with the body's function and its innate ability to heal itself (*Keating, 2005*). Chiropractic is well established in the U.S., Canada and Australia (*Tetrault, 2004*).

Chiropractors share the principle that the spine and health are related in an important and fundamental way, and this relationship is mediated through the nervous system. (Gay and Nelson, 2003). Chiropractors pay careful attention to the biomechanics, structure and function of the spine, its effects on the nervous and musculoskeletal systems, and the role these systems play in preventing disease and restoring health (Keating JC 2006).

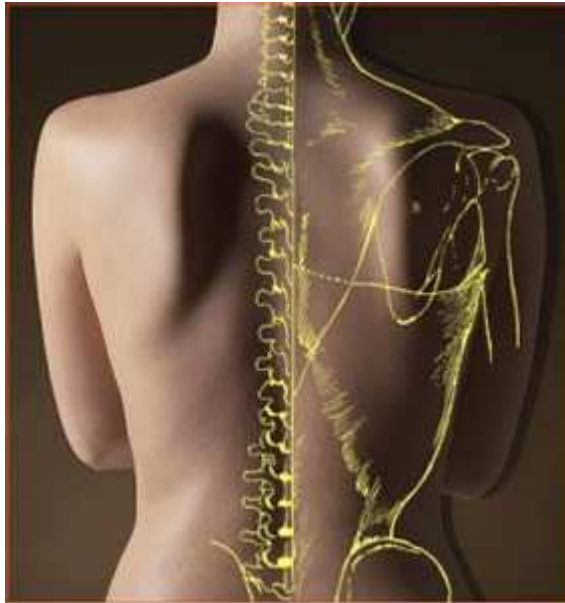
Chiropractic philosophy goes beyond simply manipulating the spine. Like naturopathy and several other forms of complementary and alternative medicine, chiropractic assumes that all aspects of a patient's health are interconnected. Palmer, the founder of chiropractic, hypothesized that vertebral joint misalignments, which he termed “*vertebral subluxations*”, and which has a different definition than in conventional medicine, interfered with the body's function and its innate ability to heal itself. Vertebral subluxation has thus become the core hypothesis of chiropractic (Keating, 2005).

There are two schools of philosophy in chiropractic, Straight and Mixed. *Straight* chiropractors adhere to the philosophical principles set forth by D. D. and B. J. Palmer, and retain metaphysical definitions and vitalistic qualities. Straight chiropractors believe that vertebral subluxation leads to interference with an innate intelligence within the human nervous system and is a primary underlying risk factor for almost any disease. Straights view the medical diagnosis of patient complaints (which they consider to be the “secondary effects” of subluxations) to be unnecessary for treatment. Thus, straight chiropractors are concerned primarily with the detection and correction of vertebral subluxation via adjustment and do not “mix” other types of therapies (Keating et al, 2005)

Mixer chiropractors “mix” diagnostic and treatment approaches from naturopathic, osteopathic, medical, and chiropractic viewpoints. Unlike straight chiropractors, mixers believe subluxation is one of the many causes of disease, and they incorporate mainstream medical diagnostics and employ myriad treatments including joint and soft tissue manipulation, electromodalities, physical therapy, exercise-rehabilitation and other complementary and alternative approaches such as acupuncture. Mixers tend to be open to mainstream medicine (Kaptchuk and Eisenberg ,1998) and are the majority group (Coulehan, 1985).

This is still a continuing source of debate within the chiropractic profession as well, with some schools of chiropractic still teaching the traditional/straight subluxation-based chiropractic, while others have moved towards an evidence-based chiropractic that rejects metaphysical findings and limits itself to primarily neuromusculoskeletal conditions (Kevin and Alan, 2000 and Homola, 2006). A 2003 survey of North American chiropractors found that 88% wanted to retain the term *vertebral subluxation complex*, and that when asked to estimate the percent of visceral ailments that subluxation significantly contributes to, the mean response was 62% (McDonald et al, 2003)¹. The World Health Organization in 2005 defined *subluxation* as “a lesion or dysfunction in a joint or motion segment in which alignment, movement integrity and/or physiological function are altered, although contact between joint surfaces remains intact”. It is essentially a functional entity, which may influence biomechanical and neural integrity. This definition is different from the current

medical definition, in which subluxation is a significant structural displacement, and therefore visible on static imaging studies."



Spinal manipulation is the most common treatment used in chiropractic care (*Christensen and Kollasch, 2005*) and is most frequently employed by chiropractors. (*Vohra et al, 2007*). It is a passive manual maneuver during which a three-joint complex is taken past the normal physiological range of movement without exceeding the anatomical boundary limit; its defining factor is a dynamic thrust, a sudden force that causes an audible release and attempts to increase a joint's range of motion

Chiropractic is mainly used for conditions such as lower back pain, headache, neck pain, whiplash, scoliosis and sciatica

3. Herbalism

Herbalism is a traditional medicinal or folk medicine practice based on the use of plants and plant extracts. Herbalism is also known as **botanical medicine**, **medical herbalism**, **herbal medicine**, **herbology**, and **phytotherapy**. Sometimes the scope of herbal medicine is extended to include fungi and bee products, as well as minerals, shells and certain animal parts.

Many plants synthesize substances that are useful to the maintenance of health in humans and other animals. These include aromatic substances, most of which are phenols or their oxygen-substituted derivatives such as tannins. Many are secondary metabolites, of which at least 12,000 have been isolated — a number estimated to be less than 10% of the total. In many cases, these substances (particularly the alkaloids) serve as plant defense mechanisms against predation by microorganisms, insects, and herbivores. Many of the herbs and spices used by humans to season food yield useful medicinal compounds (*Lai, 2004 and Tapsell, 2006*).

Most herbalists concede that pharmaceuticals are more effective in emergency situations where time is of the essence. However they claim that over the long term herbs can help the patient resist disease and in addition provide nutritional and immunological support that pharmaceuticals lack. They view their goal as prevention as well as cure.

Herbs have a wide array of use for human illnesses and conditions. Following is a sample of herbs and naturally grown products and their therapeutic uses.

- **Artichoke** may reduce production of cholesterol levels in *in vitro* studies. Clinical evidence of reduction in serum cholesterol is lacking (*Gebhardt, 1998 and Pittler et al, 2002*).
- **Cranberry** may be effective in treating urinary tract infections in women with recurrent symptoms (*Jepson and Craig 2008*).
- **Echinacea extracts** may limit the length and severity of rhinovirus colds; however, the appropriate dosage levels, which might be higher than is available over-the-counter, require further research (*Schoop 2006 and Shah, 2007*).
- **Garlic** may lower total cholesterol levels (*Ackerman, 2001*).
- Purified extracts of the seeds of **Hibiscus sabdariffa** may have some antihypertensive, antifungal and antibacterial effect. Toxicity tested low except for an isolated case of damage to the testes of a rat after prolonged and excessive consumption (*Ali, et al, 2005*).
- **Oregano** may be effective against multi-drug resistant bacteria. (*Cappello et al 2007*).
- **Peppermint oil** may have benefits for individuals with irritable bowel syndrome (*Liu et al, 1997*).
- **Ocimum gratissimum** and **tea tree oil** can be used to treat acne (*Shahla et al, 2007 and Martin and Ernst, 2003*).
- **Green tea** components may inhibit growth of breast cancer cells (*Belguise, 2007*) and may heal scars faster (*Zhang et, 2006*).
- **Honey** may reduce cholesterol and may be useful in wound healing (*Molan, 2004*).

4. Homeopathy

Homeopathy (also homœopathy or homoeopathy; from the Greek ὁμοιος, *hómoios*, "similar" + πάθος, *páthos*, "suffering" or "disease") is a form of alternative medicine first defined by Samuel Hahnemann in the 18th century (*Merrel and Shalts 2002, Jonas 2003 et al*). Homeopathic practitioners contend that an ill person can be treated using a substance that can produce, in a healthy person, symptoms similar to those of the illness. According to homeopaths, serial dilution, with shaking between each dilution, removes the toxic effects of the remedy while the qualities of the substance are retained by the diluent (water, sugar, or alcohol). The end product is often so diluted that it is indistinguishable from pure water, sugar or alcohol. (*Smith and Trevor, 1989*.) Practitioners select treatments according to a patient consultation that explores the physical and psychological state of the patient, both of which are considered important to selecting the remedy (*Smith and Trevor, 1989*.)