

Press Release

Homeopathy: Medicine for the 21st Century (H:MC21) is gravely concerned at the decision of the Greater Manchester Medicines Management Group (GMMMMG) to tell PCTs and commissioners across the region that homeopathic treatments cannot be recommended.

Firstly, we consider it entirely unacceptable for such a decision to be made without consulting the public or doctors with appropriate training.

10% of people in the UK use homeopathy,[1] with the majority having to pay for it because availability has already been restricted in the NHS. Research conducted by H:MC21 has indicated that only 15.4% of PCTs provide homeopathy routinely,[2] and in the Manchester area only one PCT was identified as doing so.

The effect of such a restriction of availability can be seen in the case of NHS West Kent, where less than 1% of patients were referred for homeopathic treatment, and then “Almost all referrals for homeopathy [were] at the request of the patient”.[3] Because of the small number of referrals it was not possible to assess clinical or cost effectiveness,[4] and so it is hardly surprising the Medical Director of NHS West Kent could tell the Commons Science and Technology Committee that “evidence in favour of homeopathy is so weak as to not make it a priority.”[5]

Secondly, there are little or no checks on the competence of PCT decision-makers to assess studies of homeopathic treatment.

The research conducted by H:MC21 gathered information from 9 of the 10 PCTs in the Greater Manchester area.[6] The 8 PCTs which did not provide homeopathy were also asked “*How many members of the Board of the PCT and of [its] advisory committees and individuals have professional knowledge of the principles and practice of homeopathy?*” Of these:

- 1 PCT (12.5%) said one member of one committee might know about homeopathy, though specialist expertise could be co-opted;
- 3 PCTs (37.5%) did not hold this information;
- 4 PCTs (50%) did not provide any information.

This suggests that the decision by the GMMMMG has not been made on the basis of professional knowledge of the principles and practice of homeopathy.

In the light of the recent revelations about Professor Edzard Ernst’s lack of qualifications in homeopathy, it looks increasingly as though the public are being deprived of access to this therapy on the NHS by alleged ‘experts’ who actually do not have the necessary qualifications to justify their claims of expertise.

References

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- 1 Professor Woods, response to Q211, House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, *Evidence Check 2: Homeopathy* (London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2010), p. Ev 70.
 - 2 William Alderson, *Report of a Pilot Survey of PCTs and Their Provision of Homeopathy* (Stoke Ferry: Homeopathy: Medicine for the 21st Century, 2009), available at <<http://www.hmc21.org/#/pct-survey/4535660289>>.
 - 3 Paras 2.21-2.23, ‘Memorandum submitted by the NHS West Kent (HO 39)’, *Evidence Check: Homeopathy*, p. Ev 35.
 - 4 Paras 2.24, 2.3.1-2.3.2 and 2.3.4, ‘Memorandum submitted by the NHS West Kent (HO 39)’, *Evidence Check: Homeopathy*, p. Ev 35.
 - 5 Dr Thallon reply to Q 112, *Evidence Check: Homeopathy*, p. Ev 44.
 - 6 The Greater Manchester PCTs in the *Pilot Survey* were: Ashton, Leigh and Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Heywood and Middleton, Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Tameside and Glossop, and Trafford.