

Date: 1 August 2012 23:21:44 BDT  
To: info@hmc21.org  
Subject: Incorrect information on your website

Dear Homeopathy: Medicine for the 21st Century

We have been sent your campaign to end BBC Sussex and Surrey's commitment not to broadcast medical advice based on homeopathy.

In the first instance, we draw your attention to the incorrect factual assertions in the material on your website, which you are encouraging people to use when writing to the BBC and to their MPs.

You say that Sense About Science "received over 35% of its donation funding from the pharmaceutical industry between 2004 and 2009." Actually all our income was from donations in this period and 24% of it between 2004 and 2009 came from pharmaceutical companies – that is, if you stretch that to mean devices manufacturers too - at a time when their charitable giving was quite large and reflected concerns about physical attacks on people involved in controversial research. (Homeopathy has never been discussed with this industry, which may mean that they don't care about it.) In the financial year ending April 2009 the proportion reduced to 12%, in April 2010 it was 1%, in the years ending April 2011 and April 2012 it was zero.

You say that the former MP Dr Evan Harris "had previously received support from Sense About Science." This is untrue. A member of our staff was seconded to Dr Harris's Westminster office to work on the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill in 2008, as declared in Dr Harris's register of interests. This was for the benefit of our work on this subject, not Dr Harris' benefit.

You say that only three MPs voted for the Commons Science and Technology Evidence Check report out of 14, implying that the majority disagreed with it. It is not a scientific report, so not one that Sense About Science relies upon, but rather it is concerned with use of evidence in policy. In fact six members had left the Commons and the Chairman does not vote. There was in fact only one member who did not agree with the report.

You say one of the Committee members has connections to the pharmaceutical industries. Presumably you mean Dr Doug Naysmith. He was a member of the All Party Pharmacy Group. Pharmacy is not pharmaceuticals. Dr Naysmith may have been an immunologist but that was his previous job it is not a current interest.

You say that the only research into homeopathy cited in our 2006 2 page summary Sense About Homeopathy was Shang et al 2005. Three other papers were cited, but Shang et al was the most significant as it was a recent meta-analysis of clinical trials on homeopathy, which looked at 110 trials. It would be perverse, in this context, to rely on individual studies when they have already become part of a meta-analysis.

More generally, Sense About Science promotes evidence-based medicine. We have no interest in homeopathy in particular but we draw attention to any misleading claims about ability to cure or treat and we challenge any downgrading of licensing and other thresholds of evidence, whoever is seeking them. Your main argument to include homeopathic medical advice on BBC programmes does not address this or evidence reviews such as Shang et al. Instead you argue that 10% of the public use homeopathy. This does not make them, or the people who sell it to them, qualified to give medical advice. Ten percent of people might use a rickety old bridge but that does not make them structural engineers nor suggest a safe way to build new bridges.

Please confirm by return that you have corrected your material and that you have written to notify anyone you wrote to with these claims.

Yours sincerely

Sile Lane

Director of Campaigns  
Sense About Science