

## **An observational study of patients receiving homeopathic treatment.**

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### **Abstract**

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Observational studies have recently contributed useful information to the debate about the utility of homeopathic treatment in everyday practice.

#### **AIM:**

To gather data about routine homeopathic general practice.

#### **SETTING:**

Eighty general medical practices in Belgium where physicians were members of the Unio Homoeopathica Belgica.

#### **METHODS:**

All patients and their physicians visiting the practices on a specified day completed a questionnaire.

#### **RESULTS:**

A total of 782 patients presented with diseases of all major organ systems which were of sufficient severity to interfere with daily living in 78% of cases. Compared to previous conventional treatment, patients reported that consultations were much longer but costed less. One or more conventional drug treatments were discontinued in over half (52%) of the patients: CNS (including psychotropic) drugs (21%), drugs for respiratory conditions (16%) and antibiotics (16%). Conventional drugs were prescribed to about a quarter of patients (27%), mostly antibiotics and cardiovascular medication. The antibiotics were almost exclusively (95%) used to treat respiratory infections. Prescription costs (including conventional medicines) were one-third of the general practice average. Patients' satisfaction with their homeopathic treatment was very high (95% fairly or very satisfied), and ratings of their previous treatment was much lower (20%). The great majority (89%) said that homeopathy had improved their physical condition; 8.5% said that it had made no difference, 2.4% said that homeopathy had worsened their condition. Physicians' ratings of improvement were similar. Previous conventional treatment had improved 13% of patients, made no difference to 32%, and had worsened the condition of over half (55%). A similar pattern was seen for psychological symptoms.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

Patients were very satisfied with their homeopathic treatment, both they and their physicians recorded significant improvement. Costs of homeopathic treatment were significantly lower than conventional treatment, and many previously prescribed drugs were discontinued.