

Homeopathic medical practice: long-term results of a cohort study with 3981 patients.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

On the range of diagnoses, course of treatment, and long-term outcome in patients who chose to receive homeopathic medical treatment very little is known. We investigated homeopathic practice in an industrialized country under everyday conditions.

METHODS:

In a prospective, multicentre cohort study with 103 primary care practices with additional specialisation in homeopathy in Germany and Switzerland, data from all patients (age > 1 year) consulting the physician for the first time were observed. The main outcome measures were: Patient and physician assessments (numeric rating scales from 0 to 10) and quality of life at baseline, and after 3, 12, and 24 months.

RESULTS:

A total of 3,981 patients were studied including 2,851 adults (29% men, mean age 42.5 +/- 13.1 years; 71% women, 39.9 +/- 12.4 years) and 1,130 children (52% boys, 6.5 +/- 3.9 years; 48% girls, 7.0 +/- 4.3 years). Ninety-seven percent of all diagnoses were chronic with an average duration of 8.8 +/- 8 years. The most frequent diagnoses were allergic rhinitis in men, headache in women, and atopic dermatitis in children. Disease severity decreased significantly ($p < 0.001$) between baseline and 24 months (adults from 6.2 +/- 1.7 to 3.0 +/- 2.2; children from 6.1 +/- 1.8 to 2.2 +/- 1.9). Physicians' assessments yielded similar results. For adults and young children, major improvements were observed for quality of life, whereas no changes were seen in adolescents. Younger age and more severe disease at baseline were factors predictive of better therapeutic success.

CONCLUSION:

Disease severity and quality of life demonstrated marked and sustained improvements following homeopathic treatment period. Our findings indicate that homeopathic medical therapy may play a beneficial role in the long-term care of patients with chronic diseases.