

History of Homeopathy... reloaded

Veranstalter: International Network for the History of Homeopathy (INHH); Institut für Geschichte der Medizin der Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stuttgart

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A group of scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds convened for a conference organized by the International Network for the History of Homeopathy (INHH), a network supported by the European Association for the History of Medicine and Health (EAHMH). Fulfilling the primary aim of the network, the conference connected researchers from all over the world who share an academic interest in the history of homeopathy and allowed them to discuss their ongoing projects among peers, an opportunity, many participants noted, that is quite rare in such a specialized and, in many ways, marginalized field. Panels were chaired by Marion Baschin, Robert Jütte, and Martin Dinges and were scheduled to allow for a period of in-depth discussion following each presentation. While the presentations covered a range of historical periods and geographical regions, the same recurring themes continued to emerge: on the one hand, the protracted censorship of research in the history of homeopathy and, on the other, the continued relevance of this work.

The conference opened with presentations by MICHAEL NEAGU (Freiburg) and PETER MORRELL (Stoke-of-Trent) on the founder of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843). Neagu focused on the time that Hahnemann spent in Sibiu at the beginning of his medical career and the possible influences for his later work encountered there, and Morrell considered how Hahnemann's ideas are reflected in his casebooks. Although the life of Hahnemann has been extensively studied, both presentations raised questions that remain unanswered in the early history of homeopathy and highlighted the importance of continued study in this area.

EMOTZI EKLÖF (Stockholm) presented a paper on the controversy surrounding a do-

nation from Olof Christoffer Zetterling to the Faculty of Medicine at Uppsala University with the stipulation that accrued interest should support lectures on homeopathy. Eklöf detailed the medical and societal contexts that eventually allowed the university's medical faculty to allocate funds strictly for the promotion of medical science and discount lectures in homeopathy as unsuitable in achieving this aim, emblematic of the excision of homeopathy from the history of medicine. While her case study focused on the development of homeopathy in Sweden, her presentation generated a discussion about how this trend has many parallels around the world.

The erasure of homeopathy from medical history was also brought up by PAULO ROSENBAUM (São Paulo), who sought to define and redefine the influence of Benoît Mure's (1840-1848) vitalism on medical theory in the nineteenth century, and MARIA CHIRONNA (Altamura/Bari), who detailed the current state of her ongoing project to correct the dearth of proper, rather than partisan, historiographical studies about the spread of homeopathy in nineteenth-century Italy. MELVYN DRAPER (Davis) similarly filled a gap in historiographical research by considering the often-overlooked role of homeopathy in the otherwise extensively-studied exchange between medical missionary work and European imperialism.

Presentations by CAROL-ANN GALEGO (Freiburg) and ROSHNII JU-YI CHOU (Vantaa) also appealed to the history of homeopathy to excavate a marginalized perspective on otherwise well-researched subjects. More specifically, Galego and Chou demonstrated the plurality of responses among homeopaths that arose alongside developments in bacteriology and vaccination, respectively, and considered how local and political factors as well as questions of identity influenced diverging homeopathic responses.

Extending the disciplinary borders of the conference beyond history and science and technology studies, ALICE KUZNIAR (Waterloo) and JOACHIM PETERS (Erlangen) compellingly demonstrated the relevance of the history of homeopathy for literary studies and linguistics. Kuzniar presented her ongoing research on the interpretive value

of considering Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's poetry in light of the medical modalities developed by the homeopathic practitioner, Clemens von Bönninghausen. While she considered how this „homeopathic link“ might account for the uniquely attentive way in which Droste-Hülshoff gave voice to diurnal and nocturnal shifts in her poetry, Peters' linguistic analysis of Hahnemann's symptom repertory demonstrated the way in which Hahnemann's use of metaphor is not solely specific to homeopathic language but is also reflective of contemporaneous German language. While imparting diverging impressions on the singularity of homeopathic language, in both cases, the immeasurable value of the archival material held at the Institute for the History of Medicine in Stuttgart, and the tedious work required to render it meaningful, was brought to the fore.

Promising to ease the process of accessing archival sources ARNO MICHALOWSKI and FLORIAN BARTH (both Stuttgart) presented their ongoing efforts to digitalize Hahnemann's casebooks and asked participants for feedback on their research priorities. Although it is impossible to foresee the possibilities for research enabled by this ambitious digitalization project, it is also impossible to deny that this endeavor will increase access to relevant archival material and, by extension, promote international research in the history of homeopathy.

While the importance of digitalization and other virtual methods of exchanging information among international scholars was reiterated throughout the conference, participants on location were pleased to witness first-hand the archives and artifacts stored at the institute. Casebooks, military remedy kits, portraits and other homeopathic paraphernalia were showcased by MARION BASCHIN (Stuttgart), leaving participants with a renewed sense of engagement in their historical investigations. During the closing discussion, participants exchanged ideas on how to best support research in this field, successfully apply for funding, disseminate research through publications and conferences and, most importantly, effectively convey the contemporary relevance of the history of homeopathy.

Conference overview:

Session 1: Samuel Hahnemann

Chair: Robert Jütte (Stuttgart)

Michael Neagu (Freiburg): Hahnemann in Hermannstadt (Sibiu)

Peter Morrell (Stoke-of-Trent): Are Hahnemann's Methods and Ideas Reflected in his Casebooks?

Arno Michalowski and Florian Barth (both Stuttgart): Digital Edition of Hahnemann's Casebooks – A Workshop Report

Joachim Peters (Erlangen): Modelling 19th Century Pain Assessment? Semantic Analysis of Figurative Language Patterns in the Repertorium R1

Session 2: Homeopathy Worldwide

Chair: Marion Baschin (Stuttgart)

Melvyn Draper (Davis): Doors Unlocked by Medicine: Homeopathy in the Mission Field

Motzi Eklöf (Stockholm): The Zetterling Grant Controversy. An Emblematic Case Study of the History of Homeopathy in Sweden

Paulo Rosenbaum (São Paulo): Historical Roots of Homeopathy in Brazil: Science, Medicine and Politics in the Vitalism of Benoît Mure (1840-1848)

Session 3: Beyond Hahnemann

Chair: Martin Dinges (Mannheim)

Alice Kuzniar (Waterloo): Bönninghausen's Modalities and Droste's Poetry

Marisa Chironna (Altamura/Bari): Wahle in Rome and the Spread of Homeopathy in the State of Church

Session 4: Homeopathy and Scientific Medicine

Chair: Martin Dinges (Mannheim)

Carol-Ann Galego (Freiburg): The Reception of Bacteriology and Germ Theory by Homeopaths in Germany and England (1880-1895): A Comparative and Genealogical Analysis

Roshnii Ju-Yi Chou (Vantaa): „We Support Vaccine, and They Don't.“ British Homeopaths and Small-pox Vaccine, 1878-1898

Marion Baschin (Stuttgart): Homeopathic
Medical Kits in Wartimes

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