

Veterinary Practice News

Why Homeopathy Can Look Flaky to Conventionally Trained Vets

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This veterinarian asks you to take another look at the concept.

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Editor's note: A recent Veterinary Practice News column critical of veterinary homeopathy prompted Dr. Leonard to offer to explain the modality in terms that conventional vets "can understand without eyes glazing over." This is her article.

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Have you ever gotten to the end of your figurative conventional veterinary rope in diagnosing or treating a patient? Have you ever reached into your conventional tool kit and found it to be empty? This happened to me on both accounts and is what led me to alternative methods, to homeopathy.

One reason homeopathy is difficult to understand when you are used to thinking conventionally is that homeopathy, like other holistic modalities, is based on the health of the individual. It strives to provide wellness and balance to the patient who is fundamentally unwell or out of balance.

When a patient is well and in balance, sickness doesn't occur because the immune system and everything else about the patient is functioning at an optimum level, so disease doesn't have an opportunity to occur.

What I mean by "fundamentally" is that homeopaths take a look at much more than the physicality of our patients, in things that can be measured such as temperature, pulse, respiration, weight, blood pressure and findings of diagnostic tests. Questions asked during a veterinary office visit may include what the animal eats, what type of exercise he gets, if he sleeps well at night, if there's a pattern to the patient's signs and if he likes to go for a walk in the rain.

Homeopaths take into account the mental and emotional state of each patient — characteristics rarely considered in conventional veterinary medicine.

It takes awhile to retrain one's brain to look at patients in this manner. When we are trained to look at what is wrong with the patient from a homeopathic perspective, we look at what is different about each patient, without judgment.

In the purest sense, there is no longer "What is wrong?"; "What is right?"; "What is normal?"; or "What is abnormal?" The paradigm becomes "What is." Alas, this way of thinking and explaining to colleagues makes homeopathy seem mysterious and flaky.

Defining Terminology

Homeopaths use unusual words that need to be defined and explained, and this makes the conversation even more confusing for our conventional colleagues.

Homeopathy dates from the 18th century, and many of the words used then are no longer in common use. We cannot give just one answer to the question, "Doc, how do you homeopathically treat 'X' disease or condition?"

This is because homeopathy is not a one-size-fits-all system of medicine. We determine how this dog with diarrhea is different from that dog with diarrhea, and then we are on the way to finding a homeopathic remedy (medicine) that removes the diarrhea and puts the patient more in balance.

Let's say we have two patients who are out of balance. They are middle-aged mixed-breed dogs and they have atopy.

One of the dogs lives in a suburban home with two adults and four kids. One of the adults is a Type A personality who smokes, and one of the kids has ADHD.

The other dog lives with an elderly person in the country and has free roam of the property outside.

These dogs are fundamentally different from each other, due to their home life, their diet, their immunization history, other animals in the home, the schedules and behaviors of the humans they live with, as well as how they innately react to all of these events.

So it is not very difficult to realize, from a homeopathic point of view, that these two dogs will most likely require different homeopathic remedies to abate the atopy and either cure them or provide a better quality of life.

Another example of a homeopathic approach to a patient would be to compare two more patients. One is a rambunctious, young border collie—this is typical for that breed. The other is a young border collie who is afraid of gunfire and other loud noises.

Here is something that makes this dog different from others of her breed. Therefore, this is a glimpse into the pathology (imbalance) of that individual, as well as a window into her “disease pattern” that we are looking for in order to find the homeopathic “remedy pattern” for resolution or cure of this patient’s imbalances.

One of the homeopathy sayings, “Like cures like,” means that the remedy (medicine) properties need to closely match the patient signs in order for cure to occur. We need to find that “like” which matches so we can begin to fundamentally change the patient, moving toward resolution of problems or increasing her wellness and therefore improving her quality of life.

Beyond the apparent kookiness of homeopathy lies the real treasure: Homeopathy studies and treats the underlying imbalance that causes patients to develop illness, rather than attempting to manage only the results of this imbalance, which is what is conventionally considered to be the illness.

Looking at your patient homeopathically, the question is not “Is this animal sick because she has X?” but the answer becomes “This animal has X because she is sick” (unwell or out of balance). In more concrete terms, the cat with lower urinary tract disease is not sick because she has FLUTD, but she has FLUTD because she is sick. Her immune system is out of balance and no longer able to maintain health.

Or the horse with laminitis is not “sick” because he has laminitis; he has laminitis because he is sick (trauma would fit into the “sick” category). This is very different from what we are taught in veterinary college, but once understood it opens up a completely new way of looking at everything.

One of the joys of homeopathy is being able to provide hope to patients whose guardians have been told that there is no hope, no other option for treatment. With each conventional treatment or procedure, the patient becomes sicker and weaker, which is moving more out of balance than moving into balance.

Conventional treatment makes the symptoms go away but does not make the pathology disappear. Homeopathy can remove the pathology.

For instance, with homeopathy alone, severe wounds heal without scarring and much more rapidly than the length of healing stated in textbooks. Hit-by-car and trauma patients are revived quickly and completely with homeopathy, often needing no conventional medications or therapies.

Patients diagnosed with neoplasia and treated homeopathically far outlive standardized expectations, living well and with good quality. Fractures, including non-unions, can completely heal with homeopathy, and much faster than without homeopathic medications.

When I have seen longstanding ocular discharge in a cat or dog completely clear up with just a homeopathic remedy and no other treatments, I have been convinced of the usefulness of homeopathy.

I saw a cat that had never used the clean litter pan inside the basement. She always defecated outside of the litter pan. Nothing her people tried had ever worked.

One homeopathic remedy was given, and the cat defecated in the litter pan for the first time in her life. That was convincing to me.

A dog had severe hematuria after being boarded. One homeopathic remedy and the next urine voided was completely clear of blood.

When you don't have the eyes to see, it is easy to be skeptical or dismissive, as in "These are just anecdotal cases," or "It's a coincidence."

A sloughed footpad on a hound dog, treated again and again conventionally to no avail, completely heals with homeopathy and becomes smooth and intact. How can this be a coincidence? Acute vomiting and diarrhea have been resolved with homeopathy. So have many cases of bite/fight wounds, swellings of unknown origin and anal sac ruptures.

Veterinarians who are also homeopaths often treat complicated cases—those animals on multiple drugs and who have been chronically ill. Homeopathy has been shown over and over to be life-altering and indeed lifesaving. It is very rewarding to watch animals transform from unwell to well.

It would be a sad day to deny animals this form of medicine just because uninformed and misguided individuals deem it worthless, without real knowledge and without a basis for making such a conclusion. Lack of Clinical Trials?

A common criticism of homeopathy among conventionally trained veterinarians is that there is a dearth of acceptable studies on the subject.

It is impossible to have a double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized clinical trial for homeopathic medicines. There are several reasons for this but the primary one is that homeopathy is based on treating the individual patient.

Most conventional treatments—and scientific trials—are set up to annihilate the symptoms of the disease, relating to the parameters of the disease condition rather than to the individual patient. It truly is a case of apples and oranges.

Here are some sources about homeopathy research. One lists over 225 references, and one is 65 pages of abstracts.

[Veterinary Clinical Research-Database in Homeopathy](#)

[Database of Scientific Publications in Homeopathy](#)

[A Research Database and Information for Homeopathy and its use in Veterinary Medicine](#)

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