

GUEST EDITORIAL

HRI Rome 2015 – Homeopathy research gathers momentum



This issue of *Homeopathy* features a report and the abstracts of the presentations made at the Homeopathy Research Institute's (HRI) 2nd international conference, held in Rome in June 2015. After the resounding success of the first international conference hosted by the HRI in 2013, it was unclear whether a second conference would be greeted with the same enthusiasm. "Cutting Edge Research in Homeopathy" in Barcelona 2013 was the first conference dedicated solely to homeopathy research for a decade and the novelty was therefore compelling. This posed a particular challenge for the planning of a follow-up conference in 2015: would the level of interest be maintained? And how far would homeopathic research have progressed in the interim? Trusting in the dedication of homeopathy researchers and supporters, the HRI proceeded undaunted and determined with preparations for Rome 2015.

The second HRI conference exceeded expectation: the homeopathic community's increased commitment to research was reflected by the greater number of delegates (180 in Barcelona versus 250 in Rome) and the fact that the event sold out 3 weeks in advance. Scientifically, progress was also clear: the standard of submitted abstracts was far higher for this second event, enabling the number of oral presentations scheduled in the programme to be maintained, whilst expanding the poster session; with more authors meeting the necessary standard the number of poster presentations rose from 25 in Barcelona to 35 in Rome. As posters often showcase the work of newer researchers in the field, this bodes well for the future of homeopathy research.

Additionally, HRI's second conference retained its international appeal, with delegates coming from over 39 countries. As so many researchers work in isolation, bringing experts together on this scale is an important aspect of such events. This was articulated by many attendees who welcomed the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, share their work and develop new collaborations.

Continuing controversy

Homeopathy is no less controversial in 2015 than it was in 2013. A high profile report on homeopathy by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council

published in March 2015 concluded that there was no "reliable evidence" that homeopathy is effective for any of the 61 conditions they investigated. This publication intensified the homeopathy debate once more, with widespread reports in the mainstream press claiming that homeopathy had been shown to be no more than placebo.

Against this backdrop, it was interesting to hear keynote speaker, Dr Robert Mathie, presenting his review and meta-analysis of placebo controlled clinical trials of individualised homeopathy.¹ This rigorous study found that homeopathic medicines, when prescribed during individualised treatment, are 1.5 to 2-times more likely to have a beneficial effect than placebo. These results challenge the commonly repeated argument, "*the best studies show homeopathy doesn't work*", and provide strong evidence that the opposite is actually correct, i.e. the best studies show homeopathy works.

And so the debate continues...

Looking two years ahead

As we move forward with plans for the next HRI conference we anticipate further advances in both clinical and basic research, as well as greater recognition of homeopathy as a valid field of scientific enquiry. HRI was delighted to hear that Rome provided a welcome boost to the homeopathic research community and look forward to hosting our third international conference in 2017.

Reference

- 1 Mathie RT, Lloyd SM, Legg LA, *et al.* Randomised placebo-controlled trials of individualised homeopathic treatment: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Syst Rev* 2014; **3**: 142.

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