

Basic research in homeopathy, an update

La ricerca di base in omeopatia, lo stato dell'arte

Paolo Bellavite

Research in homeopathy finds obstacles also in the widespread belief that the efficacy of homeopathic medicines is due to placebo effects only. Therefore, preclinical and laboratory studies of homeopathic medicines and investigation of homeopathic principles (similia and dilution/dynamization), under controlled conditions, may help to clarify many still unanswered questions. We review the literature of animal models where homeopathic medicines have been tested for their effect on genotoxicity, carcinogenesis, immune modulation, and anxiety. Furthermore, the results of a series of in vitro assays of homeopathic medicines or of highly diluted substances (e.g. histamine) will be reviewed. These studies deal with the isopathic principle (a low concentration of a toxic substance enhances self-recovery in a system damaged by a high dose of the same substance), with induction of apoptosis in cancer cells, with gene expression, with regulation of inflammatory cells (macrophages, lymphocytes, granulocytes, basophils). Future research should explore subtle modulations in the expression of multiple genes, in different biological pathways, and expand the investigation on animal models of immune regulation, of stress response, and of inflammation. The several lines of investigation should be integrated according to concepts of networks and nonlinear dynamical complex systems.

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