

TOPICS IN MODERN HOMEOPATHY

HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE FOR THE 21st CENTURY

mediral international inc * toll free 877-633-4725 * 303-331-6161 * fax 303-355-4155 * www.mediral.com

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THERAPEUTIC BASICS

1. Prevention through lifestyle.
2. Do no harm.
3. Remove the cause.
4. Treat the whole person.
5. Vital force.
6. Study nature.
7. Teach wellness.

HAHNEMANN AND HYGIENE

Common Sense Principles of Health & Wellbeing

The practice of medicine has come a long way. Sanitary conditions contribute to the health of individuals and communities, and it is equally important during the therapeutic phase of treatment. While these are obvious principles today, such wasn't always the case. Few people know that Samuel Hahnemann was an outspoken proponent for hygiene and cleanliness, both prophylactically and in therapy. In his first essay in 1784, 'Directions for Curing Old Disease,' he stressed the principles of hygiene that would eventually be adopted in most of contemporary medicine.

Samuel Hahnemann, the father of modern homeopathy, was far ahead of his contemporaries in his teachings on the importance of hygiene. In the 19th century, public waste disposal, good food and clean water for drinking and bathing were in short supply. Neither doctors nor governments seemed particularly interested in addressing the issue or improving the situation for their constituents or their patients. Physicians often discouraged patients from bathing, they regularly performed surgery without washing their hands, and they frequently assisted in the birthing process immediately following post-mortem autopsies of diseased corpses.

Hahnemann was astute enough to recognize that the sanitary conditions commonly found in most towns were of such poor quality that they were obstacles to cure, often contributing to the illnesses and regional epidemics of the time.

Hygiene is more than just cleanliness. As general principles, Hahnemann's hygiene included cleanliness, a sensible diet, moderate exercise and exposure to sunshine and fresh air. A change of climate, the seashore and cold water were also held as valuable, remedial agents. As potent as it is, even homeopathic medicine can be impeded by irresponsible lifestyle, proximity to waste and filth, and stale, stagnant air inflicting constant damage to the vital force.

Hahnemann encouraged cleanliness in environment, clothing and bed, linen as a preventative as well as during treatment

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He was a believer in fresh air. If a patient could not spend time in an open air setting, arrangements were to be made for fresh air to flow throughout the house. He considered anything with a strong smell to be a pollutant, such as too many flowers or candles, even large, fragrant trees with broad, thick leaves next to an open window. He viewed all of these as impediments to healing and were to be avoided.

Hahnemann was a proponent of baths, recognizing more than just the therapeutic heat of the water, but never encouraged regular mineral baths.

Physically, a recovering patient should engage in activity and exercise without exertion. Gradual exercise tones the organs and muscles and gives a healthy glow that leads to a strong heart and healthy digestion.

Hahnemann believed that mental exertion and uncontrolled emotions such as anger, rage, etc were detrimental to healing and should be avoided when possible. Mentally, visitors to the sick were advised to avoid strong emotions, as they are promoters of illness both in the patient and the visitor. This often led to restricting the visitation privileges of friends and family during the time of healing. Visitors to the sick were advised to avoid frequent visits, only staying for a short while and not engaging in close contact with patient or utensils.

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Women were advised to avoid tight clothing, and especially the ‘mischief done by wearing corsets.’ He attributes the development of varicose veins to a sedentary lifestyle and, particularly, the tightness of garters and leggings.

Children were to have airy, light, uncluttered nurseries. Fresh water and the healthiest of small, frequent meals were a must, as was the avoidance of fats and sweet meats. Hahnemann contends that infants should sleep a great deal on a relatively hard bed, and laziness should not be tolerated, always training the mechanical body and senses.

According to Samuel Hahnemann, hospitals built in crowded, congested areas or damp from excavated lower levels were dirty and unsuitable for a patient’s healing. Their juxtaposition to the narrow roads without adequate sewage drains and disposal complicated the picture. He recommended that hospitals be built away from busy areas, above ground with proper drainage and bright, airy rooms.

He proposed a set of principles for the identification and isolation of patients with contagious conditions. He also insisted on appropriate disinfection measures of everything in the patient’s room after dismissal.

These principles extended to the conditions of prisons and the importance of ventilation and precautions against overcrowding. Prisoners from another country were to be thoroughly checked for disease and contagion before admitting them to the general prison population. Once an inmate was released, Hahnemann recommended cleaning and disinfecting the room by heating it to a temperature of 302°F.

In ‘Epidemics in General,’ Hahnemann dabbled in town planning as he encouraged suburbs to be built with adequate drainage of swampy areas, and houses built with level embankments to maintain dry, suitable interiors with open, airy rooms.

“In towns about to be build, houses higher than two stories should not be allowed, every street should be at least twenty paces in width and build quite straight, in order that the air may permeate it unimpeded and beyond every house, there should be a courtyard and a garden as broad and twice as long as the house. In this way the air may be readily renovated, behind the houses in the considerable space formed by the adjoining gardens and in front by the broad straight streets.”

Extremes are best avoided. Moderation is taught by most experienced physicians today, and Hahnemann lived by the rule of moderation. It was often observed that he would partake of fine wine and an occasional after-dinner pipe. About wine, he was heard to have said, *“I cannot recommend the frequent use of wine unless it be mixed with water as was the custom of Romans and Greeks.”* About his smoking, he admitted, *“It is a useless habit acquired in my earlier days.”*

HOW MUCH CLEANLINESS IS TOO MUCH?

Are there dangers in going overboard – can we be too clean? Our immune systems require exposure to microorganisms to develop normally. In our zeal to be clean, science has given us more than 1000 new antibacterial products in the last 20 years. The incidence of allergies, asthma and various autoimmune disorders is on the rise (0.5 – 1.0% annually) in developing nations where improved sanitation practices are being implemented. This may be related, at least in part, to the infatuation with cleanliness and the media advertising to live ‘germ free.’ As public and private sanitation increases, are we losing the ability to fight off microbial challenges and creating a preponderance of new chronic diseases? Some scientists think so.

Too much hand washing can leave the protective mechanisms of the skin damaged and unable to defend the body against microbial intruders. These mechanical barriers are important, but even more important is the damage that is potentially being done to our immune systems.

The ‘use it or lose it’ principle is unavoidable in living systems. If a patient breaks his arm and has to be immobilized for a few months, the muscles and bones atrophy; similarly, if the immune system isn’t challenged (by exposure to food proteins, bacterial cell wall endotoxins, etc) and allowed to learn and mature according to design, it malfunctions and atrophies as well. There are studies out now that support the hygiene hypothesis, which states that reducing exposure to microbes due to sanitation policies and procedures has led to an increase in asthma and allergies. One of the studies demonstrated that childhood exposure to bacterial endotoxins served as a protective mechanism from atopic, hypersensitivity (http://www.respiratoryreviews.com/jan03/rr_jan03_hygiene.html).

Another study in Australia demonstrated that children who have pets, and children who go to daycares and are allowed to contract and recover from normal childhood illnesses have a lower incidence of Leukemia. It appears that early exposure is important in the formation of a properly functioning immune system.

It is also theorized that the new anti-bacterial soaps may select for resistant organisms that are, by definition, tougher or more pathogenic, much like antibiotic therapies can select for and allow proliferation of resistant bacteria. There isn’t any research to support or refute this yet, but it is worth consideration.

The solution may lie in remembering that hygiene isn’t limited to cleanliness, in also includes fresh air and sunshine, nutrition and moderate exercise. Moderation seems to be the key – a little bit of everything and never too much of anything.

ADDITIONAL READING: In addition to his well known Organon of Medicine, Hahnemann teaches the basics of hygiene in many of his other publications, such as The Friend of Health I (1792), The Friend of Health II (1795), Handbook for Mothers (1796), Directions for the Treatment of Chronic Sores and Ulcers (1784) and Medical Observations (essays from 1781 – 1784).

THE NATURAL HYGIENE MOVEMENT

Isaac Jennings was teaching hygienic healthcare as early as 1822, but it is Sylvester Graham in 1932 who is credited with the founding of the 'Natural Hygiene' movement. The Natural Hygiene movement developed from the Popular Health movement, and has since had a regular following of physicians who taught healthy living through natural approaches. The strictest of Natural Hygienists believe that no medication is ever appropriate, and interferes with the body's self-initiated attempts to cleanse, heal and maintain itself. They are also opposed to immunizations, chlorine and fluorine in drinking water, chemical/pharmaceutical intervention, toxic habits (i.e. smoking, drinking) and irradiated and genetically modified foods. Natural Hygiene is not a therapy, it is a lifestyle that maximizes the chances for good health and recovery.

There is no single 'diet' that the Natural Hygiene approach recommends. The danger in the '1 Diet Fits All' approach is that it doesn't take into account biochemical individuality. Occasional fasting, food combining, minimizing processed foods and increasing raw / living foods are all parts of their dietary approach.

The word 'hygiene' has always meant more than just cleanliness. It is a lifestyle that includes bathing, exercise, more natural dietary choices and more fresh air and sunshine as the cornerstones of the philosophy. The maintenance of health through prevention and simple lifestyle choices holds tremendous promise for our overburdened healthcare system.



Hygeia, daughter of Aesclepius and Epione.

In Greek mythology, Aesclepius, the god of medicine, fathered six daughters. Hygeia was the goddess of health and wellness, and was generally understood to be associated with the maintenance of health through *prevention*. Panacea specialized in the extractions of herbs and their curative effects on the body, and was thus the goddess of *cure*. Aceso was the Greek goddess of *recovery* and the healing process; Laso was the goddess of *recuperation* from illness; Meditrina was the goddess of *longevity* and wine; and Aglaea, the youngest of the sisters, was the goddess of *natural beauty*.

TOPICS

Mediral International Inc.
10550 East 54th Avenue, Unit E
Denver, Colorado 80239 USA
www.mediral.com

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Samuel Hahnemann is best known for his discovery of the principles of homeopathy, but he was also a forward thinking pioneer in his understanding of hygiene and how it relates to health.

PLEASE DELIVER TO:

"If you understand yourself, you will understand nature."
- Inscription on the Temple at Delphi