

Responding to Attacks

Homoeopathy works by the placebo effect

The placebo effect depends on a person's belief and expectations, so this cannot explain why remedies work on babies and animals or in provings, nor why they produce such a variety of other reactions apart from simply getting better. The mechanism of action of the placebo effect is also unknown – in fact less is known about how the placebo effect works than about how homoeopathy works, so the "explanation" is less informative than what it claims to explain. This is not a scientific approach to knowledge.

There is no evidence for homoeopathy

(refer to Research page)

When people talk about evidence they usually mean randomised control trials (RCTs), the method used to test individual drugs. 46% of conventional medical treatments available do not have RCT evidence of effectiveness, but these are not being attacked.

RCTs have weaknesses which can result in drugs being withdrawn because clinical use reveals serious side-effects. A lot of the evidence for homoeopathy is also from clinical use, and if this counts more than RCT evidence for conventional medicine, it should also count for homeopathy.

When a drug fails in an RCT or in clinical practice, doctors do not claim that conventional medicine does not work, but when a homoeopathic remedy fails to produce a positive result in an RCT, it is claimed that the whole system of homoeopathy does not work. The use of double standards like these is not scientific.

The person could have got better anyway

When you hold something in your hand and let it go, what happens next depends on lots of factors but the theory of gravity can explain why a helium balloon goes up, a ball-bearing goes down, and a feather may do either. If there is no certainty in the explanation of what happens after a treatment, it is because there is not a scientific theory to explain it, so anyone using this argument is actually admitting that they do not have a scientific theory of medicine.

We should not waste limited resources on unproven therapies

The object of medical practice is to help people get well, and until there is a system of medicine based on a theory which works 100% of the time, no therapy can be proven or unproven.

Many patients have found that homeopathy benefited them when drugs did not, so this is an effective use of resources. Homoeopathic remedies are also cheaper and do not produce side-effects or hospitalisations from overdoses, so their use may save resources rather than waste them.

One of the reasons for resources being limited is the fact that the cost of health services continues to grow rather than shrink, suggesting that there should be an investigation into the effectiveness of both conventional and alternative medicine.

Homoeopathy has a long history of clinical success, so it is not a waste to spend money on research to discover why this might be the case, since the primary object of scientific research is to extend our knowledge.