

Creating Standards and Competencies for Homeopathic Practice

Homeopathy is currently being used by a wide variety of health-care practitioners in North America. The political and legal environment in which homeopathy is practiced is in a rapid state of evolution. The creation of standards and competencies for the professional practice of homeopathy is critical in providing a unifying and stabilizing force in the midst of this change.

What is a standard? A standard is a precept or principle by which something can be measured. Standards of practice create the groundwork for a profession. In a community that has been torn at times by individuals or groups who claim that the only "right way" to practice homeopathy is "my way" or "our way", it is vital to develop common standards of practice. The establishment of standards for the professional practice of homeopathy strengthens the homeopathic community by creating greater unity in the profession.

Competencies can be thought of as proficiencies. They pertain to certain domain of practice. For example, homeopathic competencies can be defined as the knowledge, skills and qualities that any homeopathic practitioner needs in order to prescribe homeopathic remedies, and to manage the responses to those prescriptions. Medical competence in the practice of homeopathy can be described as the minimal set of medical knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to practice homeopathy in a fashion that is effective and safe for the client.

Consensus on standards and competencies has important implications and benefits for the interdependent components of the homeopathic community -- schools, accreditation organizations, certification boards and professional organizations. Homeopathic instruction must be based on definable standards and competencies, and homeopaths must be capable of demonstrating these by passing the standardized measurements set by certification boards. These standards can eventually lay the groundwork for the recognition of an independent profession of homeopathy in the United States.

The Council for Homeopathic Education (CHE) was founded in 1982, with the mission to

accredit homeopathic schools and educational programs. In 1999, the CHE identified the establishment of consensus on standards and competencies as a priority necessary to achieve its mission. Accreditation of educational institutions is a function vital to the development and recognition of homeopathy as a health-care profession.

In January 2000 at Mountain Lakes, New Jersey, the CHE held a summit with representatives from various key homeopathic organizations in North America. The purpose of the summit was to create standards and competencies for the professional practice of homeopathy in North America. The costs of this meeting was in part supported by a grant from the Homeopathic Community Council. Invited organizations included American Association of Homeopathic Pharmacists (AAHP), American Board of Homeotherapeutics (ABHt), American Institute of Homeopathy (AIH), Council for Homeopathic Certification (CHC), Council for Homeopathic Education (CHE), Homeopathic Association of Naturopathic Physicians (HANP), Homeopathic Community Council (HCC), Homeopathic Nurses Association (HNA), Homeopathic Pharmaceutical Association (HPhA) National Board of Homeopathic Examiners (NBHE), National Center for Homeopathy (NCH) and North American Society of Homeopaths (NASH).

Discussions generated from this summit continued for many months until a draft was developed from representatives of the various organizations. This document was then distributed for comment to the various homeopathic organizations and schools. Feedback was received and the CHE is in the process of creating a final document which should be available by the beginning of 2002.

The introduction to the summit report ends with the following: "One of the positive outcomes of the Summit process was the high degree of consensus among participants from diverse segments of the homeopathic community. We believe this heartening outcome is a good omen for the future, and for harmony within the homeopathic profession." May it be so.

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