

Homeopathic Treatment of Autism by Jim Burnett

Jim Burnett is a writer and editor who is currently working on a book about the promise and peril of alternative medicine. This is a sample chapter for the book proposal. Burnett is a graduate of Whitman College and Duke Law School. He has written extensively about politics, legal and social issues, and sports, and is the author of *TEE TIMES: On the Road With The Ladies Professional Golf Tour* (Scribner, 1997). He plans to write about a wide range of alternative medicine therapies, including homeopathy, anti-aging medicine, acupuncture, and supplements, as well as a number of other forms of treatment.

Chapter 1: ODDBALLS: The Strange Medicine of Homeopathy

On April 21, 2006, Sophia Edwards presents at the American Medical College of Homeopathy in Phoenix, Arizona – generally referred to as AMCH. Sophia, her mother Valerie, and her grandmother Janet flew in to Phoenix from Des Moines yesterday. They have a 1:30 p.m. appointment with Dr. Todd Rowe, the president of AMCH.

Sophia will be six years old in June. She's an adorable moppet. Her straight, light brown hair is cropped off just past her ears. She's dressed in a light blue, short-sleeved jersey, blue shorts, and tennis shoes. Her 34-year-old mother, who resembles the actress Maura Tierney (Abby on "E.R."), and her grandmother a youthful woman in her mid-50s, also are wearing shorts and casual tops. It's a sunny, hot spring day in Phoenix, and you picture the three of them on a family outing at the zoo or the water park, laughing and eating ice cream.

But the beauty of the day seems to be almost a cruel hoax. Sophia, Valerie, and Janet are here at the recommendation of a family friend. On February 1, Janet had sent Dr. Rowe an e-mail.

"My granddaughter, Sophia Edwards, born June, 2000, is autistic. She has had ABA training, attended Fraser School and is now in the Mounds View School District in Des Moines. A friend, Cathy Jackson of Phoenix, told me about you and the great response you have had with autistic children. What process must we go through to have our granddaughter examined and treated? We are eager to hear from you.

Thank you,
Janet Millen."

Mary, the secretary at AMCH, responded the following day.

"Hi Janet Millen. Thank you for your e-mail. Dr. Todd Rowe, our head doctor here at AMCH, is not taking on new private patients any longer. But we are a

teaching school and we could see your granddaughter in one of our clinics. Our first opening is April 21, at 1:30 p.m.”

Shortly before the Edwards family arrives, Dr. Rowe addresses six students (and one writer) in the classroom at the College. Located in a modern four-story building of glass and bronze metal in downtown Phoenix, AMCH features a classroom, a handful of offices, a bookstore, and a pharmacy of homeopathic remedies.

Currently, there are 16 full-fledged students in one class and 20 in the next class at the College, which was founded by Dr. Rowe in 1996. They range from medical doctors who are interested in alternative medicine and/or disillusioned by conventional medicine, to osteopaths to chiropractors to nurses and nurse practitioners to laymen. The curriculum extends for three years. AMCH also offers a part-time curriculum, which has attracted an additional 35 students. Rowe’s dream is to build a brand-new homeopathic medical school in Phoenix, with a four-year course of study, by 2009.

The classroom is bright and pleasant. Video equipment is scattered around the room. The white walls are framed with sepia-toned photos of a Hall of Fame of homeopathic doctors, including Samuel Hahnemann, who founded homeopathy in 1797. Pictured with a journal in front of him and a quill pen in his hand, Hahnemann bears some resemblance to George Washington, complete with powdered wig. Hahnemann’s aphorisms of homeopathy reside in frames on the wall as well. “Aphorism 1—“The Physician’s highest and *only* calling is to make the sick healthy, to cure, as it is called.”

“Autism has been associated with birth difficulties, addiction in parents, and vaccinations,” Rowe tells his students. Rowe is a slender man of medium height with thinning hair and wire-rimmed glasses. Dressed in a short sleeve white shirt, brown bow tie, dark slacks, and black loafers, Rowe bears a bit of a resemblance, at least physically, to the writer/comedian/actor Ben Stein. But Rowe’s personality is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the acerbic Stein. Rowe, who practiced psychiatry in Vermont and still sees a number of patients with psychological problems, has a gentle, reflective manner. He’s Mister Rogers with bow tie instead of a sweater.

Rowe offers a thumbnail sketch of the victims of autism. Many kids seem to develop normally until they reach the age of 18 months or so. In many respects, it is the cruelest aspect of autism. You think your child is doing fine, and then they start to slip away from you. And from everyone else. Often, they seem to disappear down the rabbit hole and into an alternative universe. From the outside—and only from the outside--autism appears to resemble a childhood form of Alzheimer’s disease. Autistic kids lose their ability to speak. They exhibit repetitive behavior such as spinning or head-banging. Emotional problems abound. Many autistic kids can’t stand to be touched. Some are math and science wizards. A decade ago, they might have been labeled idiot savants, to use a term that has become not only politically incorrect, but factually inaccurate as well.

Some 500,000 American kids under the age of 21 are autistic. It’s a mystery disease. No known cause. No known cure. And the incidence of autism has exploded. There are ten times as many cases as in 1985. One in about 150 children is diagnosed with autism,

or, more formally, Autism Spectrum Disorder. It is a disease of the developed countries—America, Japan, England, Denmark, France. Or are those countries simply more adept at identifying and diagnosing autistic kids?

One thing is certain. Autism is every parent's nightmare. A cover story in *Newsweek* in 2005 describes the disease in stark terms.

“An intellectual thief, autism infiltrates children's brains, stalling or stealing cognitive and social development. In classic autism, babies fail to coo or babble by their first birthdays. Or words that do develop (“dada,” “up,” “toy”) inexplicably disappear. One-year-olds don't respond to their names. A child once bursting with potential finds spinning tops more captivating than her mother's smile. Kids with Asperger's [a relatively mild form of autism] may not be as closed off, but they suffer severe social deficits. Many are verbal fanatics, immersing themselves in long-winded monologues about obscure topics, like fat fryers or snakes. [One researcher] recalls a child who bowed and spoke in Shakespearean English, ‘almost as if I had plucked him from 14th-century Verona.’ Such oddities can make these children social pariahs. Baffled by human interactions and frustrated by their inability to make friends, some kids spiral into debilitating fits of anxiety and depression. Many children on the autism spectrum will never live independent lives. ‘We're talking about children who need lifelong care. This is an astonishingly devastating disease.’”

Medications for autism range from anticonvulsants (many victims of autism suffer from seizures) to stimulants to anti-depressants. Sophia took Klonopin, a heavy-duty anti-anxiety drug, for about six months. She no longer takes it on a regular basis, but Valerie gave her one yesterday as a precaution before the drive to the bustling airport and the flight to Phoenix.

The family featured in the *Newsweek* story, Barry and Dana Craven of Northbrook, Illinois, tried a myriad of conventional and alternative treatments for their two sons, including neurofeedback, music therapy, swimming with dolphins, gluten-free diets, anti-anxiety drugs, and steroids. They replaced their carpets with wood floors, bought a water-purifying system, and installed a home sauna in the hope it would remove any heavy metals, such as mercury and arsenic, from the boys' bodies. Total cost for one year? Over \$75,000. “I'm willing to try just about anything if it makes sense,” Dana told *Newsweek*.

Of course she is. Parents clutch at the smallest shards of hope, even though most of the razor-edged shards cut them to the bone of their despair, desperation, and guilt.

Time weighed in with its own cover story on autism in May, 2006. New research indicates that autism, like cancer, consists of many diseases with a variety of distinct causes. Many classic symptoms of autism are no longer considered to be fixed behaviors. Head-banging, spinning, and endlessly repeating words or phrases may simply be coping mechanisms. Lack of emotion or affection may be the result of the impaired wiring in the brain, which prevents autistic kids from communicating with the outside world.

The assumption that most autistic kids are mentally retarded also may be flawed. It is not a childhood form of Alzheimer's. Some autistic kids have photographic memories

and devour entire books. Some demonstrate tremendous creativity and produce remarkable works of art.

Scientists have recently discovered that kids with autism have an excessive amount of white matter in their brains, a condition that seems to be triggered by genetic weaknesses and/or environmental factors. It results in a brain with regions that lack coordination. Marcel Just, director of the Carnegie Mellon's Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging says, "There's a lack of synchronization, sort of like a difference between a jam session and a string quartet. In autism, each area does its own thing." UC San Francisco neuroscientist Michael Merzenich studied an autistic boy who couldn't speak or concentrate on any task for more than a few minutes. Yet the boy, an accomplished poet, is aware of his autistic condition. Merzenich wonders how many other autistic kids "are living in a well where no one can hear them."

And perhaps living in such a well for decades. Another *Newsweek* cover story in late 2006, entitled "What Happens When They Grow Up," focused on autistic teenagers and young adults. The latest research indicates that the brain of kids with autism tends to be larger and tends to develop prematurely. A cure remains elusive. Theories about the causes of autism continue to run the gamut from genetics to environmental factors to hormones. And treatments range from the teaching of basic life skills through intensive behavior modification, to diets purged of gluten and casein, to the use of supplements of Vitamin B and fish oil.

But at the heart of the article is the gut-wrenching trauma of raising an autistic child and caring for him or her for decades. The cost, an estimated \$3.2 million for the lifetime care of a person with autism, is staggering. And few government funds or services are available for adults with autism.

As the *Newsweek* article states, "Many adults with autism require so much special care that it's hard to imagine anyone but a loving family member providing it." "My wife and I are concerned about what's going to happen to our son when we pass on," says Lee Jorwic, whose son, Christopher, 17, is unable to speak even though he's been in therapy since childhood...[Autism Society of America president Lee] Grossman says the Autism Society gets hundreds of calls every day from families like the Jorwics. "The most distressing, the most disheartening, are from parents of older kids, parents who are at the end of life," he says. "They've been fighting all their life, and they don't have a place for their kid after they die."

At least two novels have been published in recent months by the mothers of autistic children. *Daniel Isn't Talking*, by Melanie Marsh, is a beautifully written and bluntly told horror story about a mother in London whose life is ripped apart by her son's autism. Her marriage crumbles. She is forced to sell furniture and jewelry to cover the expense of a private teacher for Daniel. She wastes away physically and mentally. "My reality is that my child lives peacefully within a dysfunctional brain while I search madly—tear myself apart—trying to think for the both of us how to get out of this burning building of autism." She has nightmares about Bruno Bettelheim, who famously described how some prisoners in Nazi concentration camps began to emulate their captors. His findings became known as the Stockholm Syndrome. But Bettelheim pressed his luck by theorizing that autism was caused by bad mothering. Not only did he popularize the term

“refrigerator mothers,” he also compared the mothers of autistic kids to Nazis and witches. Possessed of nothing more than a Ph.D in philosophical aesthetics, Bettelheim had ventured far out of his depth. He even claimed he could cure autism with Freudian psychoanalysis. Two generations of parents of autistic children spent their lives wracked with guilt because of Bettelheim’s loony theories.

Daniel’s improvement in the book is remarkable. But not miraculous. In real life, Marsh’s nine-year-old son Nicolas has made huge strides as well. He attends a regular school and plays soccer with his friends. “But does he still have challenges?” Marsh said in an interview in *Newsweek*. “Absolutely. He still feels a little lost sometimes, I imagine.” However, Marsh’s main message is upbeat. “People [falsely] think autistic people can’t change,” she says.

As the 2006 *Time* cover story notes, there are some reported cases of kids with autism who appear to have made a full recovery. One of best known cases, at least in alternative medicine circles, is that of Max Lansky, who was diagnosed with autism at the age of 2 ½. In her book, *Impossible Cure: The Promise of Homeopathy* (2003), Amy Lansky attributes her son’s recovery to homeopathy. A True Believer—and who can blame her—Lansky quit her job as a computer science researcher for NASA to become a homeopathic practitioner and advocate, spearheading a successful fight to legalize the practice of homeopathy in California. But Lansky’s claims for homeopathy aren’t totally convincing. The homeopathic remedy given to her son seemed to help him quite a bit. But so did a number of other treatments, including the substitution of goat’s milk for cow’s milk in Max’s diet. (Cow’s milk may be linked to autism. The boy Daniel in Melanie Marsh’s novel and, I assume, her real-life son Nicolas also improved when switched to goat’s milk.) Osteopathic treatments made a huge difference as well. Max’s osteopath believed that Max exhibited signs of cranial compression. After treatment, Max began to talk a bit. As Lansky describes it, “the first veil lifted.”

So why wouldn’t Valerie and Janet bring Sophia to a homeopathic doctor in Phoenix? It’s a MasterCard-sponsored no-brainer.

Cost of the trip to Phoenix for Sophia, Valerie, and Janet? \$1,200.

Cost of the appointment with Dr. Rowe. Normally \$350 for the initial interview and \$100 for subsequent follow-up sessions. (The fee for Sophia’s consultation with Dr. Rowe was waived since Sophia was seen as a clinical and not a private patient.)

Hope? Priceless.

Dr. Rowe walks to his office and is introduced to Sophia, Valerie, and Janet. Valerie and Janet are seated on a brown leather couch in front of a large window. Sophia is wandering around the cozy office clutching a multi-colored plastic toy in the shape of a small hula hoop. One student, Connie Newman, is sitting in on the session. Back in the classroom, the other students are observing on a TV monitor, writing notes or typing them into their laptops.

The Interview begins. The Interview is at the heart of homeopathy. In fact, some True Believers of homeopathy believe that The Interview itself triggers the healing process. It is one of the stranger beliefs in homeopathy, a form of medicine that even its proponents concede is a bit weird. Or maybe just downright bizarre. In his book *Practical Homeopathy* (2000), Vinton McCabe, a student, teacher, and practitioner for over 20 years, writes

“Let’s get this over with right up front; homoeopathy is an oddball sort of medicine, one that refuses to be easily categorized or explained... at its best, it seems to be a form of intuitive practice that was the brain-child of a disgruntled German physician, Samuel Hahnemann, who was quite literally driven from the practice of medicine because of his beliefs.”

The Interview, the first session with a new homeopathic patient, generally lasts for two hours. The homeopath asks detailed questions about the patient’s condition and symptoms. No detail is too small or too insignificant. Favorite foods? Tendency to feel hot or cold? Favorite colors? At times, The Interview can seem as trivial as a couple of teenagers exchanging chitchat on myspace.com. At times, it can seem as irrelevant as the price of bread in Uzbekistan.

But Rowe can’t ask Sophia about her symptoms or even her favorite foods. Valerie tells him that Sophia “lost much of her verbal at around 18 months.”

Sophia’s regression was horrifying for Valerie, husband Doug, and eight-year-old son John. It was literally terrifying for Sophia. “Almost every night, she woke up screaming,” says Valerie. “Crying. Crying. She wanted to be with you but she wouldn’t let me touch her.

“How long did the crying last?” asks Rowe.

“One or two hours.”

“Was she responding to some kind of dream?”

“It didn’t seem like a dream.”

“Did anything calm her down?”

“Videos helped a little.”

“What were her favorites?”

“She likes Teletubbies. And Baby Einstein. She likes music. She still likes music a lot.”

Sophia is slouching up against Victoria and Janet as The Interview continues. She’s looking out the window. She’s playing with her plastic hoop. She sits on Valerie’s lap, laughs, and puts her arm around mom’s neck. I’m surprised--I was under the impression that autistic kids avoid touch and rarely display affection. Not always, obviously.

In this respect, at least, Sophia has improved by leaps and bounds. Until a few years ago, she pulled away from contact. “It was almost like touch hurt,” says Valerie, stroking Sophia’s hair and leg. “She calms a lot easier now.”

Gradually, the night terrors lessened, as did Sophia’s tantrums during the day. She wakes up at night about twice a week, but the crying jags have largely subsided.

“No sense of what wakes her up at night?” asks Rowe.

“No idea.”

Sophia loves to be in the pool. She’s taking swimming lessons. She’s highly coordinated. She lines up her toys in the same precise order.

“Has to be perfect?” asks Rowe.

“Yep.”

Rowe addresses the elephant in the room, looming over The Interview.

“Her speech—is it stuck?”

“It is—for the last two years. She doesn’t use language if she doesn’t have to. She points to the door.”

Sophia is in a class for autistic children, with five other kids, all boys, in Des Moines. (For reasons no one can explain, about 80% of autistic kids are male.) The school mainstreams the autistic kids for part of the day. Her teachers tell Valerie that Sophia learns quickly. But when she masters a situation in school, she doesn’t always carry it home with her.

Valerie is more animated as The Interview proceeds, leaning forward on the couch, words tumbling out, looking for answers, politely pleading for help.

Student Connie Newman, who is sitting next to Rowe, is watching Valerie closely. Newman, a nurse, has seen many distressed parents of sick children over the years. But her empathy goes beyond the professional. Newman’s 36-year-old son suffers from bipolar disease, and his life has been a struggle.

“I know how she feels inside,” Newman tells me after The Interview is over. “You want to do something to fix your kid. You’ll do anything you think might help. You could tell she had taken Sophia to other places. It seems almost like a last resort.”

“They seem to be a very supportive family. At times Sophia seems in her own little world, but she also responds a lot to the mother and grandmother. I think there is hope for her.”

A long discussion ensues about the food that Sophia prefers. Favorite flavors of ice cream, favorite colors of popsicles.

Does Sophia know that everyone is talking about her? It sure seems like it. She tugs on Valerie’s hand and says, “Uhh!” The message seems pretty clear. “I’m bored. Let’s go.”

But The Interview isn’t over.

“What is Sophia sensitive to?” asks Rowe.

Lots of things. Noise. Any sort of chaos, like at the airport yesterday. Sophia slouches affectionately in Valerie's lap and laughs when Mom blows in her ear. She clambers over to sit on Janet's lap. Although Sophia is not hyperactive in a clinical sense, she rarely stops moving for more than a few seconds.

"She doesn't like to sleep in bed, but she'll go down in the basement where it's pitch black," says Valerie, frustration in her voice. Although Sophia is potty trained, she'll drop her pants and poop or pee on the floor if not taken promptly to the bathroom.

"What makes Sophia unique and different?" asks Rowe.

It's a highly significant question. The homeopathic remedy that Rowe prescribes will be, to an extent, determined by the answer. It's also a question that is critical to the philosophy of homeopathy, which views each patient as a unique individual possessing a body, mind, and spirit that must be treated and harmonized.

"She's so good with numbers," says Janet.

"Her memory," says Valerie. "She knows where everything is. Her obsession with water."

"What would a successful treatment outcome be for Sophia?" asks Rowe.

"I'd like her to talk to me, look at me, and understand what I'm saying to her," says Valerie. "Just to be able to tell me how she feels and what hurts and what she wants. So she can understand and learn." Valerie pauses for a moment. "I guess some impulse control would be important, too."

Victoria lies back against the couch, wiped out. Sophia is kissing her and laughing. It's a happy sound. But it mingles with the overwhelming sense of sadness in the room. You can almost hear the heartbreak—it seems as audible as the click of a small, dry stick that is snapped in two. For those of us watching in the classroom, it's a somber episode of Reality TV, and it's matter-of-factly devastating. I can't help picturing the days and months and years to come for Sophia and her family, a deck of cards that, regardless of how often it is shuffled and dealt, keeps turning up jokers.

Rowe suggests that Valerie and Janet pick up a copy of *Impossible Cure: The Promise of Homeopathy*, from AMCH's bookstore before they head back to Des Moines. The book will offer them another small shard of hope.

Sophia will return for a follow-up consultation in two months. "You should see some improvement in a few months," Rowe tells Valerie and Janet. Sophia helps pick up the toys on the floor. The Interview is over.

A few minutes later, Rowe returns to the classroom. He seems a bit shaken. "The problem is, I'm not at all sure what to do," he says quietly. "You want to help all these kids so much." About 80% of the time, Rowe knows what remedy he will prescribe by the end of The Interview. Not this time. "This is a very complicated case."

Rowe morphs from practitioner to professor. He notes the unusual degree of affection between Sophia and her mother and grandmother. He points out the weaknesses of interviewing an autistic child in an office setting. "It's helpful to video a typical day [at home] with them."

The evaluation of the case commences. The students toss out themes and symptoms elicited during The Interview that seem significant. Vaccinations—Sophia was vaccinated a month or two before her autism symptoms surfaced. (Vaccinations are considered a prime suspect in the recent surge of autism, although evidence to date is almost solely anecdotal.) Night terrors. Touch. Control. Water. Music. Insomnia.

Rowe writes and circles the themes on a whiteboard covering the front wall of the classroom. He lists symptoms on the board as well. Spinning. Lining toys up precisely. Preference for cold foods.

It's a typical classroom scene. Students take notes on their laptops or in their notebooks. Rowe is an excellent teacher, mellow enough to josh with the students but intellectually rigorous as well, quick to challenge a shaky response.

Then it's on to the ultimate issue. What is the best remedy to prescribe for Sophia? "Phosphorous," suggests one student. "Why?" asks Rowe, clearly unimpressed. "Tarant," offers another. It's homeopathic shorthand for tarantula, the spider remedy. And it's a plausible remedy. Tarantula, a remedy derived from a piece of ground up and diluted Spanish tarantula, often is prescribed for patients with attention deficit disorder, anxiety, and hyperactivity. It's associated with symptoms such as restlessness, impatience, impulsiveness, sensitivity to touch, love of music, preference for bright colors, and a craving for cold water. Sophia's craving for cold foods, popsicles, water, and music, combined with her autistic condition, seems to be a reasonably close fit to the symptoms related to tarantula.

But Rowe is not convinced. There are 3,000-4,000 homeopathic remedies. The key to a cure, according to homeopathic theory, is to find the precise remedy to match Sophia's symptoms. It's something of a game of pin the tail on the donkey. Only in this case, it's a matter of pinning the tale on the little girl.

"I need to work on it more," he tells his students. "There's nothing we can really hang our hat on. Autistic cases are not easy. But there's not a lot conventional medicine can offer."

Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, was born in 1755 to a family of porcelain painters. A brilliant and mercurial youngster, he attended the top medical school in Germany, which was located in Leipzig. In order to afford tuition, he tutored other students and translated scientific texts. He was fluent in English, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek, and also capable of translating Hebrew and Arabic.

Above all else, Hahnemann was a rebel. He was appalled by the conventional medicine of the 18th century. Barely advanced from prehistoric times, doctors believed that illness was caused by an imbalance of bodily fluids, or "humours." Bloodletting, which dates back to ancient Greece, was utilized in an attempt to purge the body of the "bad blood" that caused illness. The more serious the illness, the more pervasive the

bloodletting. At the time, it was believed that the body would replenish the lost blood in a matter of hours.

Treatments were often synonymous with torture. In her excellent book *Copeland's Cure: Homeopathy and the War Between Conventional and Alternative Medicine* (2005), Natalie Robins skillfully and sickeningly describes the gruesome practice of medicine in Europe and America at the time Hahnemann became a doctor.

“The knives that were once used by doctors to drain blood from the bodies of men, women, and children were folding triple-bladed instruments with bone handles and highly polished sheaths...Always nearby was a shallow bowl—plain or ornate with delicate flowers or birds—to catch the cascading blood as it flowed from the diseased bodies. The pain of multiple incisions in the scalp, neck, wrists, ankles, back, penis, vagina, and forty other sites was invariably excruciating. Just as often, the bites of leeches were used as an alternative to knives. Those who survived their bloodletting sometimes got better...

“And if the removal of enough blood to cause the patient to lose consciousness—sometimes as much as 70% of the person's blood—didn't bring about a cure, there was also mercury, arsenic, or lead, which purged the body of its excesses if they didn't first poison the patient, or blistering, pulling teeth, sweating, ice, starvation, darkness, and silence. Illness was always dreaded; the popular treatments for it were hell on earth. Even babies were bled.”

Remedies could be nearly as bizarre as they were brutal. Lethargy often was treated with massive doses of whiskey, wine, opium, or roast beef. The words of the 17th century playwright Moliere were almost as true in the 18th and 19th centuries. “Nearly all men die of their remedies and not of their illnesses.”

In 1792, Austrian Emperor Leopold II was bled to death by his doctors, who sliced open his veins four times in 24 hours. Hahnemann was withering in his contempt for Leopold's doctors. “Science pales before this!” he wrote in an article published in Germany.

George Washington met a similar fate seven years later. After developing a severe sore throat and cold, he was bled four times. One young doctor recommended a new procedure, a tracheotomy, which had been successfully used in Europe. It probably would have saved Washington's life. But Washington's senior physicians opted for the conventional treatment, reportedly with Washington's consent.

By this time, Hahnemann had given up medicine in disgust. He believed that a good diet, good hygiene, and good living conditions were essential for good health. He believed patients often recovered on their own. His beliefs were ignored and ridiculed. So he made a living as a translator and chemist.

Then came Hahnemann's first “Eureka!” moment. Translating a medical treatise written by William Cullen, a medical professor at the University of Edinburgh, Hahnemann read about the use of Peruvian bark, also called cinchona or china, for the treatment of malaria. Quinine, which became the wonder drug of the 19th century, was derived from cinchona.

Experimenting on himself, Hahnemann took a dose of cinchona. And he quickly began to develop malaria symptoms. So cinchona could *cure* people who were sick with malaria. And it could *produce* malaria symptoms in healthy people.

Aha! Well, actually, I'm not sure most people, even those as brilliant as Hahnemann, could invent an entire new school of medicine from such a small discovery. But he did. It was based on the Law of Similars: "A substance that causes, in a healthy person, symptoms similar to those of a disease state, can cure a sick person of that disease. Or—"Let Likes Be Cured By Likes."

In some respects, Hahnemann wasn't reinventing the wheel. Hippocrates hypothesized that cures could result from the actions of either similars or opposites. A smallpox vaccine had been invented in England in 1776. Vaccines, which used a small amount of the virus to produce immunity to the full-fledged disease caused by the virus, fit snugly within the parameters of "Like Cures Like." So do modern treatments for allergies, which utilize small doses of the allergens to build up a person's immunity to them.

But Hahnemann took his theory to the extreme. You might even say he ran right off a cliff with it.

Hahnemann's sole focus was on the patient's symptoms. He couldn't care less about the cause of an illness. Causation was simply irrelevant to the theory of "Like Cures Like." The cure would always be found by matching the symptoms induced by a particular remedy in a healthy person with the symptoms displayed by the patient. Hahnemann approached a patient like a jailor carrying a massive key chain. One key—and only one key—would turn the lock and free the patient from the jail cell of his illness. And whenever he encountered a patient with different symptoms, he needed to find a different key in order to unlock the door.

Ingesting small amounts of diluted herbs, plants, minerals, and animals, Hahnemann and some volunteers continued to experiment on themselves, monitoring the symptoms produced by each substance. The results of about 120 of these "provings," as Hahnemann called his experiments, were collected in a book, the *Materia Medica*. Hahnemann also included information from written accounts of accidental poisonings. It was particularly appropriate to do so, since many of the provings involved poisonous substances such as arsenic and belladonna. But Hahnemann believed nothing was toxic if taken in small doses.

This belief led Hahnemann to another "Eureka!" moment. Poisons had to be diluted in order to take them safely. Hahnemann began to dilute all of his remedies. Then he began to "succuss" them, shaking the diluted substance vigorously. Hahnemann believed that homeopathic remedies work by triggering the Vital Spark or Vital Force in the patient, which heals by restoring balance to the body. The shaking of the remedies was aimed at awaking the "slumbering hidden dynamic powers" contained in the remedy.

Weird? You ain't heard nothing yet. Hahnemann believed that remedies become more potent with successive dilutions. Under his theory of "potentization," the "weaker" the remedy, the more powerful it becomes. Remedies often were diluted to the extent that not even a single molecule of the substance remained in the dilution.

As Natalie Robins writes in *Copeland's Cure*, “Homeopaths believed that the very shadows—or memory—of the original substance was enough to effect healing...potentization enabled remedies to touch and effect the energetic realm of the Vital Force—the place where disease arises and cure must take place.” In addition, Hahnemann speculated that long-term diseases were caused by a “psora,” which he defined as an itch produced by a negative spirit.

At this point, critics of homeopathy, not to mention proponents of logic, pull the cord and get off the bus. Invisible remedies? Diluted water that “remembers” what was in it? Who could possibly believe such nonsense?

Millions of people, as it turned out, who were sickened, literally and figuratively, by the conventional medicine of the time. By the early 1800's, Hahnemann was practicing homeopathy and railing against “old school medicine.” In 1810, he published the *Organon Of The Medical Art*, a textbook on homeopathy. The medical establishment called him a “daring revolutionist” and an “eccentric troublemaker”.

The typhoid fever epidemic of 1813 cemented Hahnemann's reputation as a guru of alternative medicine. As thousands perished around the city of Leipzig, Hahnemann treated 180 patients with homeopathic remedies and lost just two of them.

A star was born. The medical establishment fought back. Doctors and druggists harassed Hahnemann. He was charged with selling illegal remedies in 1820 and cast out of the big city. Hahnemann fled to a small town in eastern Germany. But his fame grew and doctors, students, and patients from around Europe flocked to see him.

Hahnemann was the equivalent of a rock star, an anti-establishment bad boy. In the evening, as Amy Lansky writes in *Impossible Cure*, a circle of disciples would gather at Hahnemann's feet. Dressed in a gaudy dressing gown, yellow stockings, and a black velvet cap, Hahnemann would puff on a long Turkish pipe and dispense pearls of wisdom to his devotees.

His made-for-the-movies life featured a particularly happy ending. In 1830, when Hahnemann was 75, his wife died. Four years later, a beautiful, wealthy, socially prominent artist and poet, Melanie d'Hervilly, journeyed from Paris for treatment from Hahnemann after reading the *Organon Of The Medical Art*. She then became his student and much more. The 34-year-old artist and the 79-year-old doctor fell head over heels in love. Hahnemann and d'Hervilly married, moved to Paris, and established a thriving homeopathic clinic, treating luminaries such as Paginini and Balzac.

Hahnemann died in 1843, but his reputation was just beginning to blow up in the United States. In 1844, the American Institute of Homeopathy was founded. Partly in response to the growing popularity of homeopathy, the American Medical Association was established in 1847.

And the battle was joined. In the long, nasty war between conventional and alternative medicine, homeopathy often has been on the front lines.

The AMA wasted little time in going after the upstart. It branded homeopathy as “alien” and as a “delusion,” a form of medicine practiced by imposters who believed in miracles. It also mounted campaigns against other forms of alternative medicine, including naturopaths, chiropractors, and osteopaths.

But the AMA's campaign didn't stop millions of Americans from flocking to homeopathic practitioners. Clergymen recommended homeopathy from their pulpits. Women and children loved the "sugar doctor." (Homeopathic remedies were usually absorbed into sugar water and taken in the form of sugar pellets.) And why wouldn't they? It was a no-brainer. Do I want a doctor to slice open my child's veins and splash his blood into a basin? Or do I want to give little Susie or Timmy a sugar pellet?

Homeopathy became known as the "people's medicine." It was readily available and it was inexpensive. As Robins describes it, homeopathy was "the first worldwide, systematic option to bloodletting. Because of its painlessness, lack of side effects, and relative simplicity, homeopathy caught on like wildfire in America."

By 1900, there were 22 homeopathic colleges and 14,000 homeopathic doctors in America. The war between the medical establishment and the rebels waxed and waned in intensity, but never ceased. Prominent Americans took sides. Oliver Wendell Holmes denounced provings as random experiments devoid of scientific validity. But Mark Twain wrote, "Homeopathy forced the old school doctor to stir around and learn something of a rational nature about his business..." Twain was "grateful that homeopathy survived the attempts of allopaths [conventional doctors] to destroy it." President William McKinley, who used homeopathic doctors, was instrumental in the erection of a statue of Hahnemann within viewing distance of the White House.

One of the most influential advocates of homeopathy was Royal Copeland (1868-1938), the hero of *Copeland's Cure*. An eye surgeon who became fascinated by homeopathy after traveling to Europe, Copeland became the Health Commissioner of New York City. He cemented his reputation as a healer during the flu epidemic of 1918, which ravaged other cities far more severely than New York. He achieved nationwide celebrity status by penning a syndicated newspaper column called "Your Health," which attracted 11 million readers. In 1922, he was elected to the U.S. Senate.

Copeland was a subtle proponent of homeopathy, a skilled politician who walked a tightrope between those who extolled and those who excoriated the practice. He described homeopathy as "one of many methods of treating sickness." Copeland attempted to position it as a medical specialty rather than a distinct and separate practice of healing that had little in common with conventional medicine.

And he was a harsh critic of some practitioners of alternative medicine, branding chiropractors as a "public menace and peril" to both patients and the community at large after some chiropractors "treated" typhoid fever and tuberculosis victims with chiropractic methods, thus exhibiting little or no understanding that such communicable diseases were spread by germs.

Copeland's crowning political achievement was his sponsorship of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938. The bill was sparked by the death of 100 people who had taken a strep throat medication containing diethylene glycol, an ingredient used in antifreeze. Copeland persuaded his Senate colleagues to pass the first bill requiring drug companies to disclose active ingredients and post warning labels on their products. Homeopathic remedies were treated as the equivalent of drugs under the Act, which gave homeopathy a certain stamp of legitimacy. The Act, a forerunner of the modern FDA, remains Copeland's enduring legacy. He died just four days after its passage.

But the heyday of homeopathy was drawing to a close. Conventional medicine was advancing with giant strides. Homeopathic and other of alternative medicine practitioners continued to be besieged by the AMA and other establishment figures, branded as “pseudo scientists,” “freaks,” “unconscionable quacks,” and “fakers.”

The conduct of snake oil salesman within the ranks of alternative medicine also undercut its credibility. Some naturopaths claimed that they could cure cancer “by natural processes without medicine or surgery.” Some homeopaths in New York recommended “autotherapy”—the use of remedies made from bodily fluids ranging from diluted blood to pus to spit to tears, to ear gook.

Homeopaths splintered into competing camps. Unicists, an orthodox sect, preached the original gospel of Hahnemann, who insisted on using only one remedy at a time. Kentians, a reform group, recommended one high potency remedy for mental and emotional symptoms and one low potency remedy for physical symptoms. Pluralists prescribed taking several remedies in a precise order. Complexists prescribed taking several remedies at the same time.

By the middle of the 20th century, homeopathy had almost disappeared in America, although it continued to attract practitioners and patients in other parts of the world. (England has always been a homeopathic bastion, in large part because the Royal Family has employed a homeopathic physician for generations.)

While the 60’s brought a renewed interest in alternative medicine, for better and for worse—Robins writes that “offbeat, unconventional care became increasingly faddish”—homeopathy lingered in the shadows.

A watershed moment for homeopathy occurred in 1985, creating reverberations that continue to this day. French research scientist Jacques Benveniste claimed to have proof that highly diluted homeopathic remedies—so high that not a single detectable molecule of the substance remained—left a “memory” in the diluted water that measurably changed the molecular composition of the water. His findings were written up in the respected journal *Nature*, and they created a furor. When investigators from *Nature* tried and failed to replicate the results claimed by Benveniste, it left homeopathy with a black eye that remains visible.

And it separated the True Believers in homeopathy and the Contemptuous Critics of homeopathy into fiercely antagonistic camps. Call it an ugly fight between the Counterculture and the Establishment. Or, if you’ll indulge me in a bit of hyperbole, a bitter feud between the Hippies and the Squares.

Dr. Murray Gell-Mann, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1969 for his discovery of quarks, says it is “garbage physics” to claim there is a “memory” left in water that no longer contains a single molecule of a homeopathic remedy. True Believers such as Amy Lanksy, author of *Impossible Cure*, cites Benveniste’s experiments as proof of the scientific validity of homeopathy. But the True Believers of homeopathy continued to lose ground. By 2001, insurers were covering chiropractic care in 50 states, acupuncture in seven, and naturopathic treatments in two. Homeopathy wasn’t covered by insurers in a single state. It still isn’t.

Despite the grudging acceptance of some types of alternative treatments, conventional medicine is still spooked by and suspicious of alternative medicine in general. In 2002, Jonathan Quick, director of drug and medicine policy at the World Health Organization, which was described by the *New York Times* as the “global watchdog over unconventional medicine,” pleaded for a truce between “uninformed skeptics who don’t believe in anything, and uncritical enthusiasts who don’t care about the data. We want to convince the skeptics that some things work, and make the enthusiasts more cautious because it can kill them.”

Makes sense. Yet in many cases the Hippies and Squares continue to view each other with fear and loathing.

Consider the flap over the appointment of Dr. James Gordon in 2000 to lead Bill Clinton’s White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine. The purpose of the commission, the first of its kind, was to evaluate “the great potential and possible perils associated with the use of CAM.”

Gordon is a psychiatrist who founded the Center for Mind/Body Medicine in Washington D.C. He’s a faculty member at Georgetown Medical School and the author of 10 books about alternative medicine. But his appointment to head the White House commission sent the Squares into a hissy fit. Steven Barrett’s quackwatch.com blasted Gordon for volunteering at the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic in the 60’s—“helping ease young seekers through their experimentation with drugs.” If cavorting with actual hippies wasn’t bad enough, Gordon was also criticized for his interest in dynamic meditation, a form of dance involving whirling and spinning, and his fascination with U.F.O.s.

An exasperated Gordon fired back at the Squares, accusing CAM opponents of possessing “a McCarthyite mindset—the inquisitor’s mind, not the scientific mind. There’s a lack of thoughtfulness in that approach—knee-jerk is the right word.”

Gordon may be right regarding the reaction of the Squares to alternative medicine in general. But the old school docs have sound reasons to question the validity of homeopathy, with its weird theories and oddball practitioners. Hahnemann completed the 6th edition of the *Organon Of The Medical Art* way back in 1842. It is, writes Amy Lansky, “still the most comprehensive text on the principles of homeopathy to this day.”

Is that something to brag about? Imagine if an M.D. pulled out a 160-year-old text to diagnose and treat a patient who complained of stomach pains or a lump in his armpit. He’d be laughed out of the profession.

“Hey doc, haven’t you learned *anything* in the last century or two? Sure, give me some of those leeches you’ve got in that jar. And slice open a vein or two while you’re at it.”

Lansky claims that Hahnemann was a “scientist in the truest sense of the word.” Maybe in his own time. But today his teachings appear to be the work of a mad scientist. Homeopathy seems mired in the past, lost in a bygone era, suffused with ignorance, superstition and mysticism.

And yet. Fifteen million Americans use homeopathic remedies. The global popularity of homeopathy is steadily rising, particularly in Europe and Asia. Why? For a

very practical reason--many remedies work. Clinical trials in Europe in the 1980's indicated that homeopathy was at least mildly effective for conditions ranging from arthritis to flu to hay fever to gall bladder problems, to fibromyalgia.

You can buy homeopathic remedies at health food stores, of course, but also at Safeway and Walgreens. Asked to recommend some useful homeopathic remedies for everyday injuries and illnesses, Todd Rowe reels off 14.

1. Arnica Montana (from a plant commonly found on mountaintops)
For treatment of trauma, overuse injuries, swelling, post-surgical wounds.
2. Calendula Officinalis (marigold flower)
An antibiotic for cuts.
3. Cocculus Indicus (berry of the Indian cockle plant)
For motion sickness, jet lag.
4. Arsenicum Album (white arsenic)
For stomach flu, diarrhea, vomiting, 1st and 2nd degree burns.
5. Rhus Toxicodendron (poison ivy)
"The one remedy to have if stranded on a desert island," says Rowe. For arthritis, sprains and strains, sore throat, acute diseases such as measles, mumps, chicken pox.
6. Allium Cepa (red onion)
Acute allergies, upper respiratory problems.
7. Bryonia Alba (wild hops)
Coughs, flu, bronchitis, joint injuries.
8. Belladonna (Deadly Nightshade)
Acute high fever, strep throat, ear infections.
9. Pulsatilla (wildflower)
Eye infections, milder ear infections, allergies, coughs that worsen at night.
10. Ignata Amara (Saint Ignatius' bean plant)
Grief
11. Gelsemium Sempervivens (yellow jasmine)
Flu, fatigue, dizziness, dullness.
12. Kali Bichromicum (potassium bichromate)
Sinusitis with strong mucus
13. Ledum Palustre (wild rosemary)
Puncture wounds, insect bites.

14. Symphytum (comfrey)
Broken bones, flu conditions with bone pain.

Other highly-respected homeopathic doctors have their own lists of safe and effective remedies. In the *Practical Handbook Of Homeopathy: Safe, Effective Home Prescriptions for Common Conditions*, British homeopath Colin Griffith recommends “Fifty remedies for a First-Aid Kit.”

Rowe, Griffith, and other responsible practitioners urge people who use homeopathic remedies to exercise common sense. “If your arm has been cut off, go to the emergency room,” says Rowe with a smile. “But for mild to moderate complaints, it’s perfectly reasonable to use a homeopathic remedy as a first-line of treatment. If 24 hours go by and you don’t see any improvement, then go see your doctor.”

Due to the passage of the 1938 Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, homeopathic remedies, unlike supplements, are regulated by the FDA, subject to the same quality control standards for safety, content, and purity as are prescription drugs. So consumers can buy homeopathic remedies from any of the myriad companies that manufacture them with a high degree of confidence that the little white pellets contain the designated remedy, not just sugar water.

In addition, proponents of homeopathy crow about the lack of side effects associated with the remedies. And, generally speaking, they are correct. But Todd Rowe urges a bit of caution. “There are dangers from any form of medicine. Homeopathic remedies can cause aggravations, temporarily worsening the condition.”

Such side effects are minor. But delaying or stopping conventional treatment, when clearly necessary, in favor of homeopathy or any other form of alternative medicine, is potentially deadly. So homeopathy is not risk-free.

However, the critics of homeopathy appear to be off-base when they deride homeopathic remedies as useless, claiming that they work, if they work at all, because of a placebo effect.

That notion is belied by the extensive use of homeopathic remedies on animals. Veterinarians have used homeopathic remedies to reduce birth problems in cattle and to treat certain diseases in horses. It would be nonsensical to argue that Trigger got better because he thought he was *supposed* to get better after the vet stuck a remedy in his feed tub.

Yet the Contemptuous Critics of homeopathy refuse to concede any ground, ripping the European studies of homeopathic remedies as poorly designed and the successful treatment of animals as unpersuasive.

So the war rages on. In 1998, Dr. David Ressler, commissioner of the FDA, told *Good Housekeeping* that homeopathy doesn’t work. In 2005, the highly respected British medical journal, *The Lancet*, declared that homeopathy produces nothing more than a placebo effect.

But in his monthly column in the March 2006 issue of *Prevention*, Andrew Weil dismissed the *The Lancet* study. Asked by a reader whether the *The Lancet* study had changed his mind about the values of homeopathy, Weil wrote,

“No, it won’t. I’ve observed homeopathy’s usefulness in a number of my patients with a variety of conditions, including auto-immune disorders, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, skin problems, and allergies. And over the years, I’ve heard success stories from many other people. I’ve also used it myself with good success...

”[*The Lancet’s*] researchers omitted scores of homeopathic studies with positive results.”

Weil’s column goes on to explain a bit more about the theory and practice of homeopathy, citing an expert in the field—Dr. Todd Rowe.

My own “Eureka!” moment came after I returned to the American Medical College of Homeopathy on May 18 to talk to Rowe. We spoke in the same office where Sophia, Valerie, and Janet had been interviewed. The office is framed by bookshelves, which contain, among its many volumes, Rowe’s two books, *Homeopathic Methodology* and *Homeopathic Journey*. Rowe is wearing his customary outfit, the brown bow tie and dark slacks, but he’s swapped the standard white short-sleeve shirt for a blue model.

After much deliberation, Rowe had prescribed stramonium for Sophia, a remedy made from the thorn apple plant. Stramonium is a common homeopathic remedy for conditions such as attention deficit disorder/hyperactivity, anxiety, and vaccination detoxification. One symptom associated with Stramonium seemed particularly relevant in Sophia’s case—night terrors.

Three days ago, the College had received a phone update from Valerie. Rowe shares the notes from the update:

“Since she started using the remedy, Sophia has been more compliant, not as frustrated, happier. She initiates using the bathroom. She is following instructions, seems like she understands more, but she’s still not talking. She’s sleeping great—has only woken up one night since taking the remedy.”

“I’m generally pleased,” says Rowe. But he’s also a realist. He’s treated about 15 autistic kids, and the results have been mixed. There certainly haven’t been any miracle cures. “About 50% of the kids have shown some improvement,” says Rowe. “I think my results are gradually getting better over time as I learn more about homeopathy and the condition [of autism].” Rowe knows that autism is a tough nut to crack. And he knows this in a very personal way.

Three years ago, Rowe and his wife Thelma adopted Tycho, the biological son of Thelma's sister, who died from cancer. Tycho, now eight-years-old, suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, a relatively mild form of autism. Tycho has been treated with homeopathic remedies and works with a speech therapist. His improvement has been gradual. One of the most helpful "treatments" has been Tycho's participation in Karate For Kids. As Rowe explains, "It's hard for autistic kids to socialize and most sports are difficult for them." Karate serves as an outlet for Tycho's aggression and frustration. The sport also teaches responsibility and respect.

But Rowe is a dreamer, too. Big dreams. On occasion, he reveals a distracted, spacey, head-in-the-clouds element of his personality. For example, Rowe is the only person I have ever interviewed who was stumped by the following question—"How old are you?"

Rowe pauses for a long moment. Finally, he says, "I was born in 1958..." before trailing off as he calculates the numbers in his head. "48," he concludes.

He drifted towards homeopathy as a third year student at Rush Medical School in Chicago. "I began to be disillusioned. It was more about the management of disease rather than a cure. There was a lot of [drug] suppression of symptoms—the symptoms went away for awhile, but eventually the patient got sicker."

Rowe began to investigate various forms of alternative medicine, some 15 or 20 in all. A physics major as an undergraduate, he was particularly intrigued by energy medicine. "Matter and energy are equally important," says Rowe. "Allopathic [conventional] medicine focuses only on the biochemical."

When he read about homeopathy, he was hooked. "I really fell in love with it." In some respects, homeopathy complemented Rowe's interest in psychiatry. "Jungians and homeopaths have a lot in common. Jungians believe archetypes have personalities. Homeopaths believe remedies have personalities."

Rowe began talking to his medical school professors about homeopathy. "I 'came out' in the early 80's," he says with a smile. His professors responded with disdain. "They told me there was no validity to homeopathy, that I'd damage my patients. They didn't want to talk about it. So I went underground."

Figuratively, not literally. After completing his training as a psychiatrist at the University of Vermont, Rowe worked as a public health service psychiatrist. His wife, Thelma, pursued a doctorate in clinical psychology at Antioch. But internships for psychologists were nonexistent in Vermont, so the couple, along with Thelma's two children from her first marriage, migrated to Phoenix in 1992.

During these years, Rowe continued to study homeopathy on his own and attended the Hahnemann College of Homeopathy in California. When he opened his own office in Phoenix, he intended to practice both psychology and homeopathy, but the vast majority of his patients now seek him out for homeopathic treatment.

On a typical day, Rowe sees about 10 patients. "About 50% of them come to me as a last resort. Conventional medicine couldn't help them." These patients include people with multiple sclerosis and fibromyalgia, diseases highly resistant to conventional solutions. The rest of his patients use Rowe as their primary care doctor. In this respect,

Rowe operates a general family practice, with patients ranging from infants to the elderly. The twist, of course, is that Rowe is treating patients as a homeopathic doctor rather than as a medical doctor.

But Rowe regularly consults with and refers patients to medical doctors and other specialists. Unlike some of the True Believers in homeopathy, Rowe understands its limitations. “If you lose a limb, a homeopathic remedy won’t regrow it. If you have diabetes, homeopathy won’t cure it. Although it could help you achieve a reduction in the amount of insulin you need.”

He gets a mixed reaction from the medical establishment. “About one-third of doctors are antagonistic—they tell patients they can’t see them and also see me. About one-third are neutral. About one-third are friendly.”

That’s okay with Rowe, a gentle spirit in a loud, angry world. With his Mr. Rogers-like manner, Rowe doesn’t appear to have an ounce of toughness to him. But he’s definitely a strong-willed individual, an independent spirit with deeply-held principles. When I first interviewed Rowe, I asked if he would mind some blunt questions. “Bring it on,” he said. Well, not really. He mildly replied, “Ask anything you want. I’ve heard it all before.”

Especially during medical school. When his professors harshly ridiculed Rowe’s interest in alternative medicine and homeopathy, Rowe simply side-stepped the assault. Rowe side-steps some of the internal warfare between the Hippies and the Squares as well. He’s something of an agnostic when it comes to the furious debate over diluted remedies.

“I feel that the right remedy is far more important than the potency,” he says. “I utilize extreme dilutions all the time in my practice. I’m not certain about the ‘memory in water’ theory. Until there’s more evidence, one way or the other, I’m not sure. To me, it is not as important that there is a mechanism of action for homeopathic remedies as long as they are effective. Many of the treatments in conventional medicine have no mechanism of action, yet they are effective.”

Asked to describe his most fascinating case, Rowe is stumped for the second time. “All my cases are fascinating to me,” he says. The relationship between homeopathic doctor and patient is much different than between allopath and patient. As Vincent McCabe puts it in *Practical Homeopathy*, “doctor and patient meet as equals and teammates, not as expert and victim.”

“I totally enjoy my patients,” says Rowe, a man who has found his calling. “Even psychiatrists don’t get to know their patients on as deep a level. They’re trying to find a diagnosis. They’re just interested in the psyche. Homeopaths are trying to understand a person on all levels—physical, emotional, spiritual—as deeply as possible. We’re trying to help them put it all together. Sometimes ‘The Interview’ causes patients to see *themselves* differently.”

But Rowe parts company from True Believers who claim that The Interview itself produces the healing response. “That’s not true, because homeopathic remedies work for infants, kids, animals.”

I ask Rowe if he sees himself as something of a detective during The Interview. “True, but detectives analyze a case by deduction. Homeopaths are also doing inductive reasoning. It’s a synthesis of the two.”

It’s more accurate, says Rowe, to view homeopaths as archeologists. Or musicians.

“You need to get to the core of the case, but also hear the music of it, the song of the case, the harmony. Music is a useful analogy because homeopathy is a form of energy medicine, and music is also a form of energy.”

And my “Aha!” moment arrives. The doctor as musician! All at once, I understand the profound appeal of homeopathy. For anyone with a sensitive soul and a desire to help others, for anyone with a predilection for the road less traveled, for anyone with a desire to connect with others in a profound way, for anyone searching for a glimpse of transcendence from the brutally mundane world of sickness and suffering, homeopathy beckons like a symphony, like a jazz combo, like an ancient spiritual, like a Beatles song suffused with the lads’ inimitable energy and joy.

Homeopathy is an utterly swoony form of medicine. What could be more romantic? Knowing the patient on the deepest level, discovering a uniquely personal remedy, unlocking the key to illness, effecting a cure. No wonder 85% of homeopathic students are women. As Rowe puts it, “Conventional medicine is left brain, homeopathy is right brain. Homeopathy is reflective. It doesn’t appeal to a quick fix mentality. You get to know the patients deeply. Intimately. If you want action, you’ll become a surgeon.”

As Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy and an incurable romantic, put it, “When I am in pain, I do not want a practical medicine; I want a miraculous medicine.”

Rowe searches for the miraculous every day. A cure for Sophia. A cure for his son, Tycho. A cure for every patient with intractable pain and chronic illness.

And he’s hoping to help train the next generation of healers. The creation of the Desert Institute of Classical Homeopathy in 1996 (now the American Medical College of Homeopathy) was just a start. By 2009, Rowe intends to open a full-fledged, four-year homeopathic medical school in the Phoenix area. It will teach classical homeopathy and medical science and also provide clinical training for its students. It will be one of the first homeopathic medical schools in the country in over eighty years, and probably the first to become federally accredited.

It’s going to take something of a homeopathic miracle to achieve Rowe’s dream. There’s a chart on the wall of AMCH with one of those fund raising graphs on it. The goal at the top of the totem pole? One million dollars. Way down towards the bottom of the totem pole is a slash mark signifying the funds raised to date--\$40,000. But Rowe presses on.

“Homeopathy hasn’t been a real profession,” says Rowe, acknowledging its cult-like reputation. “It’s on the fringe, for better and worse.” Rowe wants to see a more rigorous practice of homeopathy, better research, new provings of remedies, better training, proper licensing of practitioners. “We’re gradually moving in the direction of more regulation. That’s a good thing.”

Actually, the ebb and flow in the regulation of alternative medicine is a bit muddled these days. Minnesota, Rhode Island, and California have passed “freedom legislation” statutes which allow alternative medicine practitioners, with the consent of their patients, to offer virtually any and every form of treatment. On the national level, The Access to Medical Treatment Act, has been introduced in the House by Peter DeFazio, a Democrat from Oregon. It would allow practitioners to provide, according to quackwatch.com, “any medical treatment that the individual desires” that does not violate licensing laws.

Far out.

Way too far out, according to the Squares. The bill would allow alternative medicine practitioners to run amok, misrepresenting the benefits of worthless treatments and shielding them from liability as long as they had obtained the consent of the patient. You might as well call it The Access to Snake Oil Salesmen Act.

In general, Rowe is firmly in the Hippie camp, a drop-out from conventional medicine. But when it comes to the protection of the patient, the competence of alternative practitioners, and the proper regulation of homeopathy and all other forms of alternative medicine, Rowe’s message, at least figuratively, to his fellow Hippies is simple. Cut your hair.

“Allopathic limits are more carefully defined,” says Rowe. “There are many more gray zones in alternative medicine, so there must be better regulation. The opposite view, the libertarian view, is that no regulation is good. Anyone can do anything because alternative medicine can do no harm. But homeopathy can cause damage. The problem is knowing one’s limits. There was an acupuncturist in Phoenix who took a diabetic patient off insulin and treated him with homeopathy and acupuncture. The patient went into a coma and died.”

I ask Rowe why he is so adamant about teaching and practicing classical homeopathy. He is, after all, a medical doctor as well as a homeopath, a scientist and not a fanatical True Believer, a serious scholar in a profession filled with oddballs. (“We have our share of characters,” says Rowe, when I ask him about the reputation of homeopaths.)

Isn’t he keeping the baby of homeopathy—the remedies that work—with the bathwater, the often kooky theories of Hahnemann and some of his homeopathic descendent's?

“Classical homeopathy is more than just a form of medicine,” says Rowe. “It’s also a philosophy. One of the things that attracts me to homeopathy is that it has a fundamental philosophy. Conventional medicine has no real philosophy or core principles. Ultimately, to teach homeopathy means to fundamentally change your view of your patients, the natural world, and yourself. You cannot go through the educational process and not come out transformed.”

Many of the theories of homeopathy still strike me as absurd; they seem to be little more than witchcraft mixed with wishful thinking. But many of the remedies work, despite the scoffing of the closed-minded Squares. Under the supervision of a responsible practitioner such as Rowe, I wouldn’t hesitate to try homeopathy, or

recommend it to others, in cases where conventional medicine had failed, or for conditions resistant to conventional medicine.

I thought I was coming to bury homeopathy, not to praise it. And I'm still not ready to lead a brass band to trumpet its virtues. But as I leave AMCH and walk out into the blazing heat of Phoenix, I'm softly singing, "Here Comes The Sun." And I say, it's alright.

Sophia returned to AMCH for follow-up interviews on June 16, August 5, September 27, and December 1.

The case notes indicate that Sophia showed improvement after beginning the treatment with Stramonium. "More tolerant, easier, happier. More eye contact, seemed to be understanding more. Decrease in self-stimulation—flapping, spinning. Initiates using the toilet."

In May, Sophia was given amoxicillin, an antibiotic, for a case of strep throat. The notes state, "She regressed after the amoxicillin." A new symptom, licking her hands, emerged.

Treatment: Continue Sophia on Stramonium.

When Sophia returned in August, "she seemed calmer. No increase in vocabulary, but using words to request things rather than pulling people and crying. Less fidgety and agitated at school. More independent, not as destructive. Very interested in numbers and letters in books. Allowed doctor to take blood pressure for first time. Let hairdresser cut hair—never used to let hairdresser do anything. Calms herself faster. Not licking hands or licking mom as much. Independently using toilet. Waking twice a week at 4-5 a.m., stays up, laughs, sounds happy. One night terror, woke up screaming, couldn't calm her down."

Treatment: Continue Sophia on Stramonium.

At her visit in September, Sophia was ill, coming down with a fever on the morning of the appointment. The case notes indicated that Sophia has regressed since her last visit. "Return of old habits, regressing a little with toileting. Pretty hyper again, more destructive. Difficulty getting her to focus at school. Licking hands occasionally. Licking mom more, likes to taste things, put tongue in ashtray at hotel yesterday. Energy increased, way too much."

Treatment: Belladonna for acute illness/fever. Start Cicuta Virosa. Stop Stramonium.

Cicuta Virosa is derived from Northern water hemlock. The resin of the plant contains cicutoxin, which disrupts the central nervous system. A single bite of the root

can result in death. Historians believe that a different variety of hemlock was designated as a state poison in Greece, where it was administered to Socrates at his execution in 399 BC.

Symptoms associated with *Cicuta virosa* include weeping, moaning, howling, vertigo, anxiety, headache, staring at objects, aberration of the mind, vivid dreams, sleeplessness, speech difficulty, muscle spasms, convulsions, and epileptic attacks.

On December 1, Sophia returned for her final visit of 2006. “She’s doing better,” says Dr. Rowe.

The case notes state that Sophia has not been sick lately. “Usually sick this time of year. Potty training, which had regressed, is improved. Not licking mom in the last 4-6 weeks, but licks hands daily. Not licking or tasting strange things. Spinning on swing—not as frequent or long, 15 minutes rather than hours. Language—surprises mom sometimes by saying something new and in the right context, went outside and said, ‘cold’. New symptom—wants door closed in room. Not as destructive, calmer, not getting as tense, not bouncing off walls. Tantrums very infrequent. No night terrors. Not as hyper, more mellow and even-keeled throughout the day.”

Treatment: Continue Sophia on *Cicuta Virosa*.

Are the remedies working? Has homeopathy helped Sophia? Or has she improved because of the intensive and passionate efforts of her family and her school and her speech therapist?

The questions, at this point, are unanswerable. But it’s hard to argue that the remedies have harmed Sophia in any way. And it’s hard to see any reason not to continue the homeopathic treatments. An herb that poisoned Socrates, one of the great philosophers in human history, is now being used to try to help a little girl whose mind is imprisoned in the web of autism. Strange medicine, indeed.

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