

**PRESS RELEASE OF THE PERMANENT CONSENSUS AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE FOR NON-CONVENTIONAL MEDICINES IN ITALY WITH REGARDS TO THE ARTICLE ISSUED BY THE LANCET AND TRASMISSED TO THE ITALIAN PRESS**

Waiting to read the complete text of the article issued on Friday 26th by the prestigious journal Lancet, signed by Aijing Shang and Coll.: Are the clinical effects of homeopathy placebo effects? Comparative study of placebo-controlled trials of homeopathy and allopathy, we find it necessary to make here some brief considerations. First of all the research mentioned in the article is not a new clinical study on the effectiveness of homeopathy versus placebo treatments, but rather a research (meta-analysis) on previous studies carried out in the last few years and published in different field magazines. Of all the studies (110) proved to be sufficiently correct a certain number were selected on account of their higher methodological rigor. The results obtained in the treatment of some pathologies seemed not to be remarkably different from those achieved with placebos. Even if efficacy tests, meeting the criteria of modern evidence-based medicine, can be used to assess homeopathy, it should be reminded that, being a highly individualized therapy – with treatments chosen on the basis of each patient's specific symptoms- it has always been difficult (though not impossible) to use too rigorous/rigid assessment criteria. If such criteria were applied, homeopathy application method would be affected and the efficacy results would be lower. Besides double blind trials are inadequate to assess the response of complex biological systems, such as that of human beings, to homeopathic treatments, as the latter require for their administration highly specific competence and clinical experience.

It is worth reminding, though, that a few years ago (1997) some independent German researchers (K. Linde and coll.) published a similar article on the same prestigious journal "Are the clinical effects of homeopathy all placebo effects? A meta-analysis of randomized, placebo controlled trials. Lancet: 350: 834-843" . It was a meta-analysis of studies carried out on the efficacy of homeopathy by which the authors, as others had done before them (J. Kleijnen and coll. Brit. Med. J. 302: 316-323, 1991), confirmed the opposite, that is a higher efficacy of homeopathic treatments compared to placebos.

It is evident that the situation is constantly updated as every day new clinical trials are conceived to prove the efficacy of homeopathic therapies in the treatment of various pathologies; therefore the idea that the above mentioned research declares the end of homeopathy, as someone believes (and probably wishes) is all the more unfounded. Besides the parameters selected to assess the efficacy of homeopathy are often methodologically correct, as in this case, but come through a scientific cleansing. In other words the study was carried out by allopaths using allopathic criteria. More or less the same as if a wine seller compared his wine with a bottle of water and in the end decided that his wine is much better. New paradigms are needed to develop a humanistic medicine based on science which puts an end to the current widespread reductionism.

What is clear is that today a good share of the conventional pharmaceutical and medical world (the industrial health system, producing most health resources, risks sometimes to affect the ethics, independence and results of the researches, as confirmed by the conditioning of advertising in prestigious biomedical journals) is suffering from the growing use of homeopathic remedies by patients, and by the increasing integration of non conventional medicines, homeopathy ranking first, in the National Health System, in Italy as well as in Europe and in the US. The integration involves the academic world, the regional health systems and the World Health Organization itself. While we are waiting for the non-government bill on the official acknowledgement of non conventional medicines and practices to go through the parliamentary process the opposition to such legislative action is exacerbated.

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