

EDITORIAL

100 years of Homeopathy

This issue of Homeopathy is volume 100, number 1, our centenary issue! Numerate readers may wonder why, since the first volume, published in 1911, was volume 1, this is not volume 101. The reason is that, only once in the last century, has the journal failed to publish four issues in a year. That was in 1955, when it published only one issue, the 1955 and 1956 volumes were amalgamated as volume 45. The journal itself is terse on the reasons for this, referring only to ‘extraordinary delays in publication’.

Launched in January 1911 as the *British Homœopathic Journal*, under the Editorship of Giles Forward Goldsborough and Thomas George Stonham. In their opening editorial note they stated ‘The aim of this Journal is not dogmatism but an exhibition of practical experience illustrating the rule (of similars)’. After slight modifications of the spelling to Homoeopathic and Homeopathic, the title changed to Homeopathy in 2001.

This centenary issue of the journal features three editors, who between them account for over half its history. Sadly one of them, Ralph Twentyman, Editor from 1958 to 1981 makes an appearance in his obituary. My predecessor Anthony Campbell, editor from 1981 to 1986 contributes a piece reflecting on its history.¹ And for me personally, this volume is a milestone: the journal is 100 and I have been its Editor for a quarter of that time – I took up the post in 1986! That makes me the longest serving Editor, although not by a large margin. Ralph Twentyman, who apart from being a distinguished Editor was an influential clinical mentor for me, held the post for 21 years as did the first editors, Goldsborough and Stonham who served from 1911 to 1932.

On the brink of the abyss

To mark our centenary most of this issue consists of selected papers, including at least one from each of our 10 decades. The earliest is George Burford’s short report from 1913 on the work of the International Homoeopathic Council for the coming year.² This was written 12 years before the foundation of the Liga Medicorum Homeopathica Internationalis, and at the end of an era of blissful innocence. Little did Burford, with his optimistic view of international relations, anticipate how the year of which he wrote would end: in the ‘War to end wars’ (which did anything but). Or of the maelstrom of horrors of the 30-odd years to follow: world wars claiming tens of millions of lives, global economic collapse, genocide of unimaginable cruelty, deportations on industrial scale and whole cities with their

entire populations instantaneously vaporised. The following several decades, although less violent, lived in mortal fear of MAD (mutually assured destruction). Rarely has an acronym been so apt.

Some of these terrible events are reflected in our pages: Otto Leeser, by all accounts a formidable intellect, was a refugee from Nazi persecution, coming to the UK soon after the rise of the Nazi regime and returning to his native Germany in the 1950s. WE Boyd’s classical work on the effect of mercuric chloride on starch diastase was inspired by the work of Professors Ginsburg and Persson of Leningrad (now again St Petersburg) in Stalin’s USSR.³ Boyd was in contact with them in the 1930s, but nothing seems to have been heard of them after 1936. Given the grim spirit of the time and place, one wonders if their work on this ‘non-materialist’ form of medicine earned them a one-way trip to the Gulag. We publish just one sample of Boyd’s experiments, which originally were published in the Journal over 15 years. Attention to detail was meticulous and the results showed consistent and statistically highly significant, stimulation of diastase by dilutions of HgCl₂ in the range 10⁻⁶¹–10⁻⁷¹ with $n > 1000$. The Nobel Laureate Frederick Gowland Hopkins commented that ‘the precautions... seem quite perfect.’

The heroic ‘Mustard Gas’ experiments of Paterson *et al.*, published in 1943 were prompted by fear of a gas attack.⁴ Paterson wrote to the Ministry of Home suggesting the experiments, and after consulting their scientific advisers, the ministry provided a supply of mustard gas solution for the experiments. Nearly 300 volunteers were involved, the experiments were double-blind and controlled, though not randomised. The results showed a statistically significant prophylactic effect of *Mustard Gas 30* and *Rhus toxicodendron 30c*.

Constitution

Leeser’s 1934 Constitution and Constitutional Treatment⁵ plays a counterpoint to the views of another of our great minds, Anthony Campbell who, nearly 50 years later provided a bracing critical perspective on the concept of constitution, as he did for various other cherished homeopathic notions.⁶ Campbell describes constitution as ‘a confused residue of ideas, part mystical, part philosophical, part pathological, and part pharmacological... any justification it has must therefore be empirical and clinical’, although he takes care not to reject it entirely. While Leeser characterises constitution as ‘the great mediator, receiving,

transforming and answering each stimulus in an individual manner’.

Together these papers challenge us to think what we really mean by this ancient idea which remains very much alive in homeopathy, but is largely neglected in contemporary western conventional medicine. An evolution of discourse is apparent, from Leeser’s didactic approach which assumes the existence of constitution through Campbell’s questioning to Davidson *et al.*’s 2001 paper (which space prohibits us from reprinting in this issue) which provides objective and empirical evidence in support of constitution.⁷ Will we, in the next century, see the concept of constitution revived as a result of the explosive growth in understanding of the human genome? If so will homeopathy have something to contribute?

Chronologically our second paper is John (later Sir John) Weir’s 1915 paper on ‘Homoeopathic Philosophy: its importance in the treatment of chronic disease’, it shows the influence of the Kentian ‘new wind from Chicago’ which blew through British homeopathy in the early years of the 20th century. His conclusion remains fresh: ‘So we may yet hope for many of the strange things that actually do occur in our practice being fully understood some day, but we must not wait until then before we utilize their messages’.⁸ The next paper, Charles Wheeler’s fragrant 1922 piece on Ambergris, Crocus and Tiger Lily represents the poetic side of our tradition.⁹

Homeopathic pathogenetic trials and tragedy

The 1950s are represented in John Raeside’s report of the double-blind, placebo-controlled homeopathic pathogenetic trial (proving) of the sea snake, *Hydrophis cyanocinctus*.¹⁰ Some of the provers developed such severe symptoms that they withdrew and could not be persuaded to start again! One of the rationales for the choice of the substance is interesting: memories of the London blitz of 1940–1941 and of ‘crush syndrome’ were still fresh. Some of the immediate survivors of crush injuries developed renal failure from massive myoglobinaemia due to muscle crushing, and it was thought that *Hydrophis* might cause myoglobinaemia. Raeside died tragically, aged 45, in the air crash of 18 June 1972. This terrible blow to British homeopathy is movingly recalled in his friend Ralph Twentyman’s Memorial address.¹¹

Twentyman is the only author to feature more than once (three times if one counts his obituary, which is part self-written), in this issue. But his influence on British Homeopathy in the latter half of the 20th century and importance to the journal justifies this. The sentiments underlying his essay: *The Recovery of Man in Medicine* are more relevant now than when they were published in 1962, even if the specifics are dated.¹² He concludes ‘Homoeopathy leads the way to an understanding of disease as a human phe-

nomenon, and impels the physician to be active in his full personality and not only intellectually’.

The 1990s are represented by the transcript of a debate on single or multiple prescribing, organised by Victoria Blackstone and which I chaired.¹³ It made for an interesting and memorable evening, but it is an anachronism in being a transcript of oral proceedings. Much of the material in earlier volumes of the journal consists of transcripts of lectures given to the British Homoeopathic Society or, from 1943, the Faculty of Homeopathy. These often included discussion, which, in the interest of including as much material as possible we have omitted from the reprints published here. By modern standards they are long, unstructured and didactic. But by the 1990s this was very much the exception; nearly everything published was in the form of structured scientific or clinical papers.

The last decade is represented by Michael Frass and collaborators’ double-blind, randomised, placebo-controlled clinical trial in critically ill intensive care patients.¹⁴ Adding homeopathy improved the 180-day survival from 50% to 75%; a remarkable result which begs to be reproduced.

Recent developments

My first hand, behind the scenes, knowledge of the journal begins in 1986. I took up the post in April and the first issue to bear my name as Editor was July. The first major decision I took as Editor was the most important I ever made – to introduce peer-review. We have steadily built up our panel of peer reviewers of the years and it now includes over 300 names with a wide range of expertise. Subsequently we formally divided the journal into sections: original research, clinical, social and historical, debate, etc. and floated off Simile (the name was my invention) to carry lighter, topical material: news, views, case reports, etc.

Since 1998 we have published in partnership with a commercial publisher, initially Stockton Press then, from 2002, Elsevier, the world’s largest publisher of medical, scientific and technical literature. These changes had an impact on the journal’s status: in the Journal has been indexed in Medline since 1998, and in 2009 received an impact factor; the second, 2010 impact factor, showed modest improvement. Homeopathy remains the only journal dedicated to homeopathy indexed in Medline/Pubmed and to have an impact factor. In recent years the journal has become international, I hope the international journal of reference, for homeopathy. I fostered this trend long before we dropped ‘British’ from our title in 2002.

In selecting these historic papers I have had to make many invidious decisions on what to exclude. I could easily fill an entire volume with fascinating material and have had to omit many worthy and fascinating articles. Among the many famous names whom we could not squeeze in are Stonham, the two Dr Neatbys, Margaret Tyler, Margery Blackie, Foubister, Kennedy, Bodman, Borland, P Sankaran, Leary and many others.

There have been embarrassments too, for instance the Emanometer. This was an instrument devised by WE Boyd which used sensors applied to the abdomen. It was claimed that ‘abdominal wall changes are actually giving definite detection, by trained percussion, of energy due to the presence of specimens or drugs, especially in asuccussed and attenuated form’.¹⁵ Homeopathic medicines were classified in 12 ‘Emanometer Groups’. The Emanometer was the subject of 14 articles between 1925 and 1949, but then vanished without trace. On the whole, however the journal has a solid record of avoiding transient fads, gurus and nostrums. For those who wish to read these papers themselves, our 1945–2001 archive is online at: www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/00070785

...and the future?

What of the next century? To speculate would be presumptuous, not to say rash. Perhaps we are standing, like Burford in 1913, oblivious on the brink of an abyss. Perhaps catastrophes, perhaps of an ecological nature, will ambush us in the near future. Yet I am more optimistic. It may be that the process leading to an understanding of ‘the strange things that actually do occur in our practice’, hoped for by John Weir 96 years ago is now underway; over 200 years into the history of homeopathy scientific methodology is at last developing the means to understand the therapeutics discovered by Hahnemann, while respecting its humanism. This is not mere wishful thinking: recent developments, many of them reflected in our pages recently, particularly in the special issues on Memory of Water and biological models which suggest that a tectonic shift is underway in respect of the action of ultramolecular dilutions. While clinical work, notably that of Rutten and his Dutch colleagues (assisted by the Rev Thomas Bayes!) opens new avenues in improving clinical practice.

Other trends are easier to call, for instance it is safe to predict that the journal or its descendants, if it still exists in 2111, will not appear in print form, although the form it will take is not so easy to guess. But it is certain that whatever that form, it will be more widely accessible, truly worldwide (and who knows, perhaps even extra-terrestrial) and interactive. Another safe forecast is that Editors will continue to rely heavily on their assistants. I want to take this opportunity to thank the three assistants with whom I have worked: Anna R Meuss, Anna

Irwin and Sharon Clark for their indispensable support which has saved me from many a looming disaster and deadline.

Ultimately the journal is yours: the community of its readers, authors and reviewers. The safest prediction of all is that *Homeopathy* will continue to welcome your contributions to advance homeopathy.

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- 12 Twentyman LR. The recovery of man in medicine. *Homeopathy* 2011; **100**: 84–86.
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Editors of the *British Homoeopathic Journal/Homeopathy* 1911–2011

1911–1932

Giles Forward Goldsborough
Thomas George Stonham

1932–1936

Harold Fergie-Woods
Francis H Bodman

1937–1939

William Lees Templeton

1939–1943

Douglas Kenyon

1944–1947

William Lees Templeton
John M Paterson

1948

James D Kenyon
G Ruthven Mitchell

1949–1950

W Ritchie McCrae
G Ruthven Mitchell

1951–1952

W Ritchie McCrae
James Campbell Mackillop

1953–1954

James Campbell Mackillop
Duncan Campbell Russell

1955–1956

Margery Blackie
Duncan Campbell Russell

1957

James D Kenyon

1958–1979

Llewellyn R Twentyman

1979–1986

Anthony Campbell

1986–2011

Peter Fisher