



Australian report misrepresents clinical research evidence in homeopathy

Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the country's leading medical research body, is conducting systematic reviews of existing systematic reviews to formulate formal position statements on the efficacy, cost-effectiveness, safety and quality of complementary therapies, including homeopathy.

The British Homeopathic Association (BHA) actively encourages all serious scientific studies into homeopathy and other complementary therapies. In anticipation of the publication, however, the organisation's Research Development Adviser, Dr Robert Mathie, had expressed reservation about the nature of the research being conducted by the NHMRC. "A review that relies solely on the evidence contained in published systematic reviews is wholly dependent on the scope, focus and quality of those published reviews", he said. "Given that a review of reviews is two stages removed from the original clinical trial evidence, it has the potential to misrepresent the totality of the relevant research".

With a draft of the [NHMRC's report now in the public domain](#), Dr Mathie's concerns have proved to be well founded. The report's overarching conclusion is problematic: *"There is a paucity of good-quality studies of sufficient size that examine the effectiveness of homeopathy as a treatment for any clinical condition in humans. The available evidence is not compelling and fails to demonstrate that homeopathy is an effective treatment for any of the reported clinical conditions in humans."*

The NHMRC report does not adequately reflect the original research, its intrinsic quality, its context or the type of homeopathy studied. Moreover, the absence of meta-analysis on the original studies means that the magnitude and significance of treatment effect is not addressed. The currently available evidence may not be compelling overall, but it does **not** fail to demonstrate that homeopathy is an effective treatment: [it indicates a positive balance of evidence in a number of medical conditions](#), and equivocal or negative conclusions in others. In order to clarify matters, including the impact of trial quality on results, the [BHA is currently conducting its own systematic reviews of randomised controlled trials](#) in homeopathy.

British Homeopathic Association