

Homeopathy for attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder or hyperkinetic disorder

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Abstract

Background

Homeopathy is one form of complementary/alternative medicine which is promoted as being a safe and effective form of treatment for children and adults. Within the UK homeopathy use is estimated at 1.9% of the adult population (Thomas 2004), and around 11% for children under 16 years (Simpson 2001). There has been increased interest in homeopathy's potential as a non-pharmacological intervention for attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder as an alternative to the use of stimulant medications such as Ritalin. Homeopathy is a system of medicine based on the principle of treating "like with like" using various dilutions of natural or man-made substances. Homeopathy focuses on the unique characteristics of each patient's experience and symptomatology and uses this information to determine the appropriate prescription for each patient.

Objectives

To assess the safety and effectiveness of homeopathy as a treatment for attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Search strategy

We searched a wide set of databases from their inception to March 2006 including: CENTRAL, MEDLINE, AMED, BIOSIS, CISCOS, CINAHL, Dissertation Abstracts, ECH (European Committee for Homeopathy thesis database), EMBASE, ERIC, HomInform (Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital Library), LILACS, PsycINFO, Science Citation Index, SIGLE, GIRI - International congress on ultra-low doses, Liga Medicorum Homeopathica Internationalis.

We contacted experts in the field about ongoing or current research.

Selection criteria

All studies where individualised, clinical or formula homeopathy had been used to treat participants with ADHD or HKD who were randomly or quasi-randomly allocated to either true treatment or a control were selected. Control groups could include wait-list, no treatment, medication, placebo homeopathy, educational or behavioural interventions.

Data collection and analysis

Data from four eligible studies (total n = 168) were extracted and entered into RevMan. Results were synthesised and estimates of the effect sizes were calculated and presented as appropriate (using standardised mean differences) in both graphical and narrative form (narrative only was used where no effect size calculation was possible).

Main results

The forms of homeopathy evaluated to date do not suggest significant treatment effects for the global symptoms, core symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity or impulsivity, or related outcomes such as anxiety in Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

Authors' conclusions

There is currently little evidence for the efficacy of homeopathy for the treatment of ADHD. Development of optimal treatment protocols is recommended prior to further randomised controlled trials being undertaken.

Plain language summary**Homeopathy for ADHD**

This review aimed to assess the evidence for homeopathy as an intervention for attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Four trials were retrieved and assessed with mixed results. Overall the results of this review found no evidence of effectiveness for homeopathy for the global symptoms, core symptoms or related outcomes of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.