

TO: NIGEL WALSH - ATHLETICS WEEKLY
FROM NORRIE WILLIAMSON

HOMEOPATHY - AN ALTERNATIVE MEDICAL SOLUTION -

At some stage every athlete, no matter what ability, looks to the medical profession for assistance, even if it is only to overcome the annual bout of cold or flu. This normally results in the prescription of some allopathic remedy. Many of these, including the widely advertised "over the counter" remedies not only fall foul of the IAAF banned drug list, but also, particularly for endurance runners, have potential damaging side effects.

Homeopathy offers a viable alternative to many sports related injuries and illnesses, but promotion of these are frequently restricted to the "smalls" in the classified sections. There are a few reasons why this is so.

Homeopathic companies tend not to have the lavish promotional budgets of the multinational pharmaceutical companies who manufacture the medications. This partly explains why generic drugs can be substantially cheaper than their brand name "patented" equivalents. Homeopathic remedies are "natural" and hence tend to have a limitation in pricing.

Homeopathic remedies often have Medical Council restrictions on advertising. Then there is the problem that Homeopathy is based on principles that many of us find difficult to understand, and even seem illogical or mystical. All of this tends to lend support to the case for allopathic, ("normal") medicine.

The purpose of this article is not to deride "normal" medicine, but rather to indicate a number of homeopathic remedies offer great benefits in the prevention and cure of everyday sports injuries and in the process do so without the side effects or endangering the athlete in terms of the banned drug list.

Consider some basic principles of homeopathy in non scientific terms.

The word Homeopathy means to "treat like with like". The remedies are developed by finding substances that produce symptoms in healthy adults similar to those that you wish to treat. Treatment using these infinitesimal doses triggers a response from the bodies own system to counter the symptoms being experienced.

This is not the case with "normal" medicine which makes use of chemical drugs to alleviate the symptoms.

As previously stated homeopathic remedies are made by diluting solutions. If a solution is continually diluted there must come a time when the original substance is no longer present in the dilution.

If for instance we compared this to diluting an orange drink, then pouring half into another glass, topping up with water, and shaking vigorously, the second glass would be more dilute than the first. If we repeat that each successive glass would be more dilute and lighter in appearance. After we had achieved a dilution of 1 part orange to 100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (Scientifically expressed as 10^{23}) we could be sure that there were no molecules of orange in the glass and the solution would look like pure water.

The same process has been tested by comparing homeopathic remedies with a solution of ethanol and water. Each has been diluted in the same way and each shaken vigorously after dilution. After numerous dilutions to the point greater than 10^{23} the solutions were examined under Nuclear Magnetic Resonance. Theoretically both solutions are now so dilute that they only contain water. The NOR Spectrometer

however showed that the homeopathic remedy differed to the ethanol water solution. It is not exactly clear why this should be or how it occurs but the fact is it does.

Furthermore, it has been found that for different substances the molecular activity of the solution is greater at higher levels of dilution. In other words a more dilute solution tends to be more "powerful". This is attributed to the vigorous shaking between dilutions and results in peak activity at certain dilutions.

Homeopathic remedies can either be simplexes, or combinations. The simplexes comprise of only one substance and thus the person prescribing has to have an in depth knowledge of the symptoms promoted by each remedy. Combinations, as the name implies, comprise of a spectrum of substances in varying quantities and dilutions and thus can be more easily prescribed.

Typically the remedies come in the form of small pills which are sucked under the tongue. These may be taken several times per day, with the more frequent dosage being used for more severe symptoms. They should not be taken after meals or brushing your teeth, as both processes reduce the absorption of the remedy.

Some homeopathic products also come in liquid drops, creams, and even injectables. The injection ampules may also be diluted into a glass of water, and sipped throughout the day. Rarely do they have any taste and this again would promote the thought that they are a waste of time, but the reality is different.

It is perhaps the seemingly "mystical" properties and the lack of media hype, that makes generates a resistance to homeopathy for the average person. However, for over 8 years athletes in South Africa have been making use of some products to combat the muscle damaging effects of marathons and Ultra marathons. In addition other products have helped to control colds and flu, and still other assist in recovery from injury and overtraining. Indeed there has also been some success with people who have suffered from the viral fatigue syndromes similar to M.E.

In the next article we shall look at some of these experiences.