

THE LIGA NEWS

Newsletter of the Liga Medicorum Homoeopathica Internationalis • No. 3 • May 2010

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International Symposium on Homeopathy, Ljubljana, 8 April 2010

LMHI celebrates first International Homeopathy Day in Slovenia

On 8 April, the Slovenian Homeopathic Society (SHD), the International Homeopathic Medical League (LMHI) and the European Committee for Homeopathy (ECH) jointly organized an International Symposium on Homeopathy to celebrate the International Homeopathy Day and to promote public awareness of the legal status of homeopathy in Slovenia.



Dr. Milan Jazbec, Moderator; Dr. Zdenka Čebašek-Travnik, Human Rights Ombudsman, and Dr. Irena Gorišek, SHD President and NVP for Slovenia (from left to right)

Due to the legal situation in Slovenia, practice of homeopathy is almost illegal for medical doctors. The Executive Committees of LMHI and of ECH were present at the International Symposium for support, lectures and talks with high-ranking authorities. About 160 participants attended the bilingual conference, held in Slovene and English, that was moderated by Dr. Milan Jazbec, Diplomat and Professor of Diplomacy at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana.

In the opening remarks, the Slovenian Human Rights Ombudsman Dr. Zdenka Čebašek-Travnik

Dear LMHI-Members,
dear Readers,

While the LMHI community is getting ready to meet again at the upcoming Liga Congress in Redondo Beach, California, USA, homeopathy as a medical system is faced with structural difficulties and lobbying campaigns in some countries – especially in the Western world. Criticism of homeopathy is often growing in the same way that the acceptance of homeopathy as a medicine is on the rise. The LMHI provides support for this process of acceptability: The first International Homeopathic Day was celebrated in a country where the practice of homeopathy for medical doctors is almost illegal. The Slovenian Homeopathic Society, the International Homeopathic Medical League and the European Committee for Homeopathy jointly organized the event. It aroused exactly the kind of public attention that is needed in order to achieve changes in the parameters of the national healthcare system. Homeopathy is part of medicine and it is the LMHI's deep desire to participate in a positive relationship with conventional medicine. The International Homeopathic Society will not cease seeking to maintain a constructive dialogue characterized by mutual respect and tolerance – the Liga Congress in Redondo Beach will contribute to this commitment.

Kind regards, Christoph Trapp



LMHI President Ulrich D. Fischer:
The Future lies in the cooperation between homeopathy and conventional medicine.

highlighted the "Synergy between conventional and complementary medicine". Both LMHI President Dr. Ulrich D. Fischer and ECH President Dr. Ton Nicolai gave lectures about the position of homeopathy in the world and in Europe.

The International Homeopathy Day in Slovenia marked the beginning of a new LMHI tradition to support countries where homeopathy is not yet officially accepted as a medical system. The International Homeopathy Day will be celebrated each year on the occasion of Hahnemann's birthday.

Media Coverage

The great success of the joint SHD-LMHI-ECH event was reflected in the positive media coverage: The conference gained national media interest from newspapers and magazines to TV and radio. On April 14, the Slovenian weekly *Nedeljski dnevnik* – with the largest printed edition and a readership of about 300 000 (population of Slovenia

is around two million) – published a whole page report of the event titled *Homeopathy: known for a long time, but not yet recognized*. On April 15, an interview with LMHI President Fischer was published in the review *Polet*, a supplement edition of the largest daily newspaper *Delo* – under the title *The Future lies in the cooperation between homeopathy and conventional medicine*. On April 17, press interviews with LMHI President Dr. Ulrich Fischer and ECH President Dr. Ton Nicolai were published in the Slovenian newspaper *Vecer*.

Homeopathy is part of medicine

During the last 200 years homeopathy has proved itself to be a safe and effective medical method. In addition to that, homeopathy is less expensive than conventional medicine treatment. In 1997, the European Commission established that more than 100 million people, representing more than 22 per cent of European citizens, had availed themselves of homeopathy. The World Health Organisation has placed homeopathy among the five most often used non-conventional medical methods in the world. In a majority of EU Member States (with the exception of Slovenia and Sweden) homeopathy is part of regular medical practice carried out by physicians. In his speech, LMHI President Dr. Ulrich D. Fischer highlighted the role of homeopathy in the world and concluded that homeopathy is a part of medicine. He put emphasis on the LMHI's deep desire to participate in a positive relationship with conventional medicine characterized by mutual respect and tolerance.

Fischer's full speech can be downloaded from the LMHI website at www.lmhi.net, Section „In Focus“.
All presentations of the International Symposium on Homeopathy are available on the SHD website at www.shd.si

In Slovenia, homeopathy is still legally prohibited for physicians with a medical license to practice conventional medicine.

Interview with Dr. Irena Gorišek, President of the Slovenian Homeopathic Society and NVP for Slovenia

The Slovenian Homeopathic Society was founded in 1992. What was the situation in Slovenia like before this date?

Homeopathy has a long tradition in Slovenia. Physicians and some lay practitioners already practiced it in the early 19th century until the Second World War (WW2). There were pharmacies, as well, where homeopathic medicines have been sold. After WW2 we have no available data about homeopathy in Slovenia. Shortly before the Slovenian Homeopathic Society (SHD) was established on 6 May 1992, two physicians began to practice homeopathy, and afterwards, more physicians undertook homeopathic education.

How many homeopathic physicians are there in Slovenia?
In Slovenia, about 20 homeopathic physicians have their



SHD President Irena Gorišek:
Homeopathy is a medical method and should be part of the Slovenian health care system.

own private practices. Since 1992, about 100 physicians have completed basic homeopathic education, but they've never started to work because homeopathy is still legally prohibited for physicians with a medical license to practice conventional medicine.

Do you differentiate between medical homeopathy and homeopathic practitioners?

In accordance with the Healing Practices Act (2007) only a person with a medical diploma and additional knowledge in homeopathy can practice homeopathy. But a physician desiring to practice homeopathy in Slovenia is obliged to return his/her medical licence, so statutorily (in accordance with the General Practitioners Services Act) physicians are prohibited from practicing homeopathy.

Is homeopathy an integrated part of the national Slovenian health care system?

No, homeopathy is not integrated into the Slovenian health care system.

What about the patients – do they ask for homeopathic treatment by physicians?

In the last few years, more and more patients are asking for homeopathic treatment.

How is the advanced medical training on homeopathy organized? Is homeopathy also taught at university faculties?

Since the beginning, the SHD has been in charge of a three-year course of postgraduate education and training of physicians, dentists and pharmacists in compliance with the ECH Medical Homeopathic Education Standards. Lecturers are homeopathic physicians from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and other European countries. Homeopathy is not taught at the Medical Faculties.

Is there any cooperation between conventional medicine and homeopathic medicine?

There is no cooperation between conventional medicine and homeopathy.

Have your expectations for this International Homeopathy Day been fulfilled? Was there public awareness of this event among the general public or among politicians and health care decision makers?

About 160 people attended the International Symposium on Homeopathy that was organized by the LMHI, ECH and SHD to celebrate the International Homeopathy Day and promote public awareness of homeopathy in Slovenia. The symposium was a great success, and raised a lot of interest. Our most important message was spread and that is that homeopathy is a medical method and should be also a part of the Slovenian health care system.

How can the LMHI (the Liga) support you in obtaining official status for homeopathy in Slovenia?

During their visit in Ljubljana, Dr. Ulrich D. Fisher and Dr. Ton Nicolai had meetings with some of the health care decision makers (General Director of the Ministry of Health, President of the Slovenian Medical Association, Head of the Family Medicine Department of the Medical Faculty in Ljubljana, President of the National Medical Ethics Committee, and Chair of Committee on Health in the National Assembly). The atmosphere of the discussions was pretty open, carried out with much mutual respect. We hope that with these talks we lay down the foundation for an open and constructive dialogue between official medicine and homeopathy – and consequently the advancement of homeopathy within the national health care system will follow.

Evidence Check 2: Homeopathy: The British House of Commons Science and Technology Committee rules against homeopathy

Joint Response by the International Homeopathic Medical League LMHI and the European Committee for Homeopathy ECH

In a report published on 22 February 2010, the Science and Technology Committee of the United Kingdom House of Commons (UK S&T Committee) concluded that homeopathy is not efficacious (i.e. does not work beyond the placebo effect), that explanations for why homeopathy would work are scientifically implausible and that further clinical trials of homeopathy could not be justified. According to the S&T Report, the British National Health Service (NHS) should cease funding homeopathy and the Regulatory Agency (MHRA) should no longer license homeopathic medicines. Remarkably, just 4 of the 14 members of the Science and Technology Committee voted on this report: three in favour of and one against it. One of the three signatories had stridently campaigned against homeopathy and continued to do so even in the period

between the hearings and the publication of the report.

The LMHI and the ECH found the conclusions and recommendations of the Science and Technology Committee completely unfounded. They stated, in their joint response, that the report was highly tendentious and fundamentally flawed, consistently misrepresenting the scientific evidence to the detriment of homeopathy and making unfounded and pejorative allegations against those who advocate or practice homeopathy. The report omitted or misrepresented any evidence that challenges the view that homeopathy is a



LMHI President Fischer:
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placebo response. Furthermore, it ignored large areas of evidence that were mentioned in written submissions and oral evidence such as systematic reviews and meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials of homeopathy for specific conditions and groups of conditions, and systematic reviews of biological models of homeopathic responses.

The evidence suggests that homeopathy is effective in a number of specific conditions, and there are a number of reproducible biological models of homeopathy.

The European Committee for Homeopathy ECH and the International Homeopathic Medical League LMHI fully endorse the robust and comprehensive response by the British Homeopathic Association (BHA) to the committee report.

The BHA press release is available on the association's website www.britishhomeopathic.org

Long-running campaigns against Homeopathy in the UK

Well-organized campaigns against homeopathy have been going on for several years – especially in Great Britain. They are being organized by both lobby groups such as Sense About Science (SAS) and individuals like Professor Edzard Ernst who holds a Chair for Complementary Medicine at the University of Exeter. The latest “professional” action – called “10:23 campaign” named

after the Italian chemist Avogadro's number determining the amount of molecules in a given solution – came from a group called the “Merseyside Sceptics Society”: Hundreds of skeptics staged a “Mass Homeopathic Overdose Action” outside Boots, the UK's largest pharmaceutical whole retailer on 30 January 2010 to protest against the chain's continuing sale of homeopathic remedies and to argue that such treatments have no scientific basis. According to a spokesman for the event, the group had been moved to act by the evidence given to the S&T Committee for their report.

Homeopathic physicians in Great Britain did not think that the 10:23 event would advance the argument on homeopathy. The Society of Homeopaths reportedly considered this kind of action an ill-advised publicity stunt in very poor taste, which did nothing to advance the scientific debate about how homeopathy actually works. In general, homeopathic remedies should be taken under the guidance of a registered homeopath, while “over-the counter homeopathic treatments” should only be used as directed on the label. The society did not expect any reaction to the proposed ‘overdose’ by this group unless, by chance, an individual in that group already had symptoms that matched that remedy at the time of taking it.

However, expectations are that there will be more pressure on homeopathic organizations and the government. International homeopathic associations such as the LMHI and ECH will continue to counter such lobby campaigns with well-founded responses.

LMHI News in brief



LIGA Book Project

LMHI countries that are at the beginning of their homeopathic development but have little financial means are offered the possibility to order a certain amount of books via the LIGA. So far, Nepal and Bolivia have benefited from this special LIGA offer. Interested members can turn to the Secretary for Education, Carles Amengual, education@lmhint.net, for more information.

El Diario de la LIGA en Español

LMHI Newsletter now also available in Spanish

Thanks to the initiative and translation work of Bélen Masola from the Biblioteca Paschero and Dr. Gustavo Cataldi, the LMHI's NVP of Argentina, the Liga Newsletter, starting with the 2nd issue of November 2009 is now also available in Spanish. You can download the *Diario de la LIGA en Español* from the LMHI Website at www.lmhi.net



Newsletter contributions welcome

You can help to shape our coverage of news, recent developments and initiatives in the field of homeopathy in LMHI member countries around the world. Tell us about the political situation of homeopathy in your country and about public arguments in favor of or against homeopathy. Please submit your contributions via e-mail to media@lmhint.net.

65th LMHI World Homeopathic Congress, 18-22 May 2010, Los Angeles (USA)

Liga Congress 2010: Final Countdown



Only two weeks left until the beginning of this year's LIGA Congress 2010 in Redondo Beach, California, USA. Titled *2010: A Homeopathic Odyssey*, the congress marks the 200th anniversary of Samuel Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine* and will explore ways in which homeopathy can play a vital role in the future of medicine. It is expected to be a spectacular

event with speakers and researchers from around the world. The conference is open to all persons who by their profession can contribute to homeopathy, such as scientists, researchers, health practitioners and authors. In conjunction with the LIGA Congress, the Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy will be holding its 13th annual conference with a veterinary-specific track. The final program, the list of speaker and program notes and other up-to-date information can be downloaded from the Liga 2010 website at www.liga2010.org.

LMHI Governance Meetings in L.A.: Important topics on the agenda of the Executive Committee and the International Council

Prior to the official conference opening, the LMHI's governing bodies – the Executive Committee and the International Council – will hold their annual meetings on May 17-18 to share impressions, ideas and proposals about the policy and the future of the LIGA.

The most important topics on their agendas are:

- 1) Presentation of a new LMHI information brochure
- 2) Discussion about a draft proposal for a LMHI Foundation
- 3) Adoption of the regulations for the accreditation of international homeopathic medical schools
- 4) Decision on setting up different working committees (e.g. education, research)
- 5) Elections of the Executive Committee.

LMHI Diploma

In Los Angeles, the Executive Committee and the International Council will also decide about a LMHI Diploma that is closely linked to the joint LMHI/ECH Medical Homeopathic Education Standards.

- Both, the LMHI and the ECH Diploma are based on the LMHI-ECH curriculum which has been adopted by ECH, LMHI and all affiliated schools worldwide.
- In consequence, both Diplomas have the same value and importance
- Both organizations recognize mutually their Diplomas
- The fees for the accreditation of schools as well as of the Diploma will be the same in the LMHI and in the ECH
- LMHI and ECH agreed on a system of mutual reference concerning their Diplomas. That means if European countries ask the LMHI for accreditation and Diploma, LMHI will refer those schools first to ECH. If Non European countries ask the ECH for accreditation and Diploma they will be referred to LMHI.
- After the LMHI Congress in Los Angeles corresponding links will be on the LMHI and ECH websites.
- It will be up to every member of the LMHI and ECH to have both Diplomas if they wish to do so.

WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy

Safety issues in the preparation of homeopathic medicines

In mid-February 2010, the World Health Organization (WHO) published „Safety issues in the preparation of homeopathic medicines“. The technical document, drafted in 2009, is a response to requests and recommendations made by relevant World Health Assembly resolutions, by WHO Member States, as well as international conferences of drug regulatory authorities, and is a part of the implementation of the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy and the WHO Medicines Strategy. The document does not address issues of efficacy or clinical utilization.

In its press release, the WHO emphasized that homeopathy is used worldwide, but that the national regulatory framework and the place of homeopathy within the health care system differ from country to country. The document

is therefore aimed at providing guidance to Member States on technical aspects of the production and manufacture of homeopathic medicines that potentially have implications for their safety. According to the WHO, this is of relevance for establishing national quality standards and specifications for homeopathic medicines, as well as for controlling their quality. The publication includes several annexes, such as a glossary as well as examples of national labelling requirements and of national regulatory requirements for homeopathic medicines in selected countries.



The document can be downloaded from the WHO website at www.who.int