Can quality in Professional Education and Training be characterised by three opposing pairs of core categories? Findings from a qualitative, single case study of the education quality at a small private complementary medicine college in Switzerland

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Background: Public desire for complementary medicine in Switzerland is highly evident with over two thirds of the population voting in a national referendum in May 2009 in favour of complementary medicine being included in the Swiss constitution. Education for complementary medicine practitioners in Switzerland is undertaken in the private sector with wide variation in pedagogical approaches and quality assurance procedures. However, the public interest in complementary medicine necessitates an assurance of public safety and professionalism of service.

Objectives: This study sought to investigate how the college defines its aims and objectives for homeopathy training and to what extent those objectives are realised in practice.

Methods: The study was conducted between September 2009 and August 2010. It utilised a qualitative, single case study approach to examine a college offering part time professional education and training for practitioners in complementary medicine in Switzerland. Grounded Theory was used as a methodological framework for collecting and analysing the data.

Results: The results of this study appear to empirically confirm previous findings which, for quality Professional Education and Training, have emphasized the importance of aligning a teaching programme with the aims and objectives of an education: Coherence, effective and transparent communication: Transparency, and taking into account the Student-interest.

Conclusions: Consideration of the emergent themes of this study has resulted in formulation of a tentative hypothesis, that three opposing pairs of core categories (or dimensions of quality):

- Separateness — Coherence,
- Opaqueness — Transparency, and
- Self-Interest (of the course provider or institution) — Student-interest,

are able to characterise quality in Professional Education and Training.

A review of use of enantiomers in homeopathy

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Many molecules in nature have geometry, which enables them to exist as non-superimposable mirror images, or enantiomers. Modulation of toxicity of such molecules provides possibility for therapeutics, since they target multiple points in biochemical pathways. It was hypothesized that toxicity of a chemical agent, could be counteracted by a homeopathic preparation of the enantiomer of the chemical agent (Patents applied for: PCT/AU2003/000219-PCT/**AU2008/001611).

A diverse body of data, including controlled laboratory studies using several species and compounds, supports...
the conclusion that toxicity of optical isomers may be inhibited by homeopathic enantiomer preparations. These data were obtained with minimal or no pre-testing to determine optimal test solutions suggestive of a robust hypothesis. Inhibition of the excitotoxic neurotransmitter L-Glutamic acid with homeopathic preparations of D-Glutamic acid, indicates the latter may be of use for amelioration of symptoms of disturbances of mood. This is an example of hypothesis driven research using homeopathy. Potency chords seem more stable in action than simplexes.

The abstract presentation will touch on recent work summarized in the review article at http://www.hindawi.com/issn/toxicology/2012/575292/, and also point to some of the numerous scenarios where it may be possible and relevant to investigate action of enantiomers in homeopathy.

Assessment of a new decision support expert system in headaches cases

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Continuous advancements in Information and Communication Technologies along with the consequent massive adoption of Web services provide today, exciting and effective decision support tools for many professions. The vital need for high levels of accuracy and effectiveness in homeopathic prescribing was the driving force behind the development of a new online expert system.

VithoulkasCompass is a web-based decision support tool, designed to aid the homeopathic practitioner in finding the individual correct remedy, by inputting relevant symptoms. Calibration and refinement of the algorithms and mechanisms that lead to the proposal of the correct remedy by the expert system are the key areas of continuous, on-going research, always confirming new developments against a very large number of real world cases from the archives of the International Academy of Classical Homeopathy (IACH).

A statistical assessment of VithoulkasCompass expert system platform has been performed on chronic headache cases. The methodology included two phases.

1. It analysed the performance of the software on cases already solved by homeopathic experts (and specifically Professor’s George Vithoulkas), comparing the remedy provided by the human expert with the corresponding proposal of the system.
2. It assessed the support that the software provides live — in front of the patient - on cases solved by less experienced homeopaths. This evaluation process is based on statistical analysis of success rates derived from the assessment of the follow up on patients’ cases, according to the principles of classical homeopathy.

The first phase was initiated with the selection of successful cases from highly skilled expert homeopaths. Successful cases are cases where follow ups clearly indicate that the remedy acted curatively. After repertorisation of the cases an assessment process was performed on how accurately the proposed, software-generated remedies, successfully matched the human-prescribed remedies.

The second phase was about reviewing cases solved by homeopaths with the support of VithoulkasCompass expert system. After the initial input and the analysis of symptoms, a first set of proposed remedies was provided by the system. If the case was clear, the homeopath proceeded with the appropriate prescription. If the case was not clear, the differential analysis functions of the software were utilized in order to suggest symptoms not revealed by the patient and to finally single out the correct remedy. Along these lines, the contribution of the differential analysis function was also effectively assessed.

A team of scientists guided by Prof. Vithoulkas of the IACH and the Aegean University evaluated the results of the system and the curative effect of the consequent administered remedies.

Statistical analysis demonstrates that VithoulkasCompass expert system, has a very high accuracy in proposing appropriate remedies for treating patients suffering from chronic headaches, as well as showing high efficiency on individually prescribed homeopathic remedies, in many headache cases.

Homeopathic research in palliative care (PC) - A review of modern studies concerning the field of PC

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Introduction: Homeopathy, with a tradition of use without discontinuity in nearly all over the world longer than 200 years, stands as one of the complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) that could offer effective alternatives of treatment in palliative care, not yet fully explored or investigated. Observational studies support its use in the field of PC to reduce anxiety, depression, and to improve quality of life, also to reduce hot flashes and breathlessness.

Objectives and method: Review of indications and possibilities that homeopathic treatment offers in the field of PC from modern investigations, confirming somehow classical homeopathic authors tips. Review of bibliography of Encyclopaedia Homeopathica, review of summaries of searches in PubMed, Medline and Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews.

Results: Homeopathic treatment offers effective alternatives of symptoms control in several clinical situations that appear in persons at the end of life.