Introduction to Homeopathic Medicine for the Pharmacy Professional

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be better able to:

1. Define homeopathic medicine and describe essential principles of approaches to treatment
2. Discuss myths and facts about homeopathic medicine as they relate to the practice and delivery of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)
3. Describe current research about homeopathy, including results from randomized controlled trials
4. Evaluate the safety of homeopathic preparations and discuss issues pertaining to drug interactions, safety monitoring, and individual patient response
5. Compare and contrast governmental regulation of homeopathic medicines, CAM products, and conventional pharmaceuticals

Post-test/Rationale

1. Homeopathic medicines are regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration under the:
   A. Affordable Care Act
   B. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
   C. Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act***
   D. Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act

Correct answer: C

In the United States, homeopathic medicines are regulated as drugs under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act regulates products such as vitamins, minerals, and herbal supplements. The Affordable Care Act and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act regulate access to and portability of health care, insurance, and personal information.

2. You are a pharmacist at a community pharmacy. A 32-year-old woman tells you that she will be having surgery next week. Her surgeon has suggested Arnica montana to reduce postsurgical pain and bruising. She asks your opinion. Which of the following would be an appropriate response?
   A. Arnica is never used to relieve those symptoms
   B. Arnica cream can be used on open wounds
   C. Take sublingual tablets as directed, away from meals and strong flavors***
   D. It is made from a honeybee

Correct answer: C

Homeopathic Arnica montana is often suggested by surgeons and other providers for pain, swelling, and discoloration from bruising. The gel and cream forms should never be
applied to an open wound. Tablets can be taken sublingually or placed on the buccal mucosa (dissolved in the mouth); it should not be taken with meals or with strong flavors.

3. Which of the following statements is TRUE about homeopathy?
A. It is a system of medicine that uses serially diluted and succussed (shaken) substances to relieve symptoms***
B. It is a 200-year-old branch of herbalism
C. Most homeopathic preparations are available only from homeopathic practitioners
D. It is the same as vitamin therapy

Correct answer: A
Homeopathy is a system of medicine that uses serially diluted and succussed substances to relieve symptoms.

4. You are a pharmacist at a community pharmacy. A patient has questions about homeopathy: he has heard that homeopathic medicines can help with common, self-limiting symptoms and wants to know more about them. You explain that a basic principle of homeopathy is:
A. Like cures like***
B. Opposites attract
C. Law of dissimilars
D. Laws of hot and cold

Correct answer: A
A basic principle of homeopathy relates the following: a substance that produces certain symptoms in healthy people can cure the same symptoms in the sick when prepared in a homeopathic dose. This is known as the principle of “like cures like.”

5. A patient wants to learn more about the use of *Allium cepa* for her minor hay fever symptoms. A pharmacist tells her that homeopathic *Allium cepa*:
A. Is made from sautéed onions and garlic
B. Can be used for seasonal allergy symptoms of clear, burning, running nose and watery eyes***
C. Should be used instead of other over-the-counter medications
D. Is only indicated for treatment of chronic symptoms in patients who are not taking prescription medications

Correct answer: B
*Allium cepa* (a homeopathic preparation of onion) can cause several common symptoms of hay fever: clear, burning, running nose and watery eyes. The law of similars (the principle of “like cures like”) states that substances that, in large doses, can create illness can, in minute doses, stimulate the body’s nonspecific adaptive healing response.

6. Homeopathic medicines have very little chance of interacting with conventional medications because:
A. They are made from natural ingredients
B. They suppress the body’s own defense system
C. They are expensive
D. They are very dilute – sometimes diluted by a factor of $10^{-6}$ or more

Correct answer: D

Most microdose dilutions of homeopathic medicines are too dilute to have physiological or metabolic interactions with pharmaceutical medications.

7. You are a pharmacist and your patient of 20 years asks you about his arthritis. His friend feels better when taking *Rhus toxicodendron* homeopathic pellets under his tongue. Which of the following would be the most appropriate response?
A. It may help joint pain and stiffness symptoms that improve with heat and movement
B. It should be taken during consumption of the largest meal
C. Arthritis relief only comes from creams and ointments
D. *Rhus toxicodendron* is only helpful in emergency situations

Correct answer: A

*Rhus toxicodendron* may be indicated for arthritis symptoms that worsen when staying still, improve with movement, and improve with the application of heat. In an emergency, seek medical advice and care.

8. Which of the following is TRUE about the difference between 6C and 30C homeopathic medicines?
A. 30C is more dilute than 6C
B. There is no difference between these medicines
C. 6C has a higher potency than 30C
D. 6C is a $10^{-6}$ dilution and 30C is a $10^{-30}$ dilution

Correct answer: A

30C is diluted 1 part in 99 parts 30 times. 6C is only diluted 6 times.

9. Which of the following is most accurate regarding the description of homeopathic medicines?
A. They are another form of aromatherapy from herbs
B. They are given in large doses (often more than 10 grams)
C. They are most effective when given at the onset of symptoms
D. They are ineffective for acute symptom management

Correct answer: C

Homeopathic medicines should be given frequently at the onset of symptoms, and the frequency of administration can be reduced as symptoms subside.

10. Which of the following is most accurate regarding research on homeopathic medicines?
A. Research has shown varied conclusions about efficacy but an overall high safety profile of homeopathic medicines***
B. Clinical studies have been conducted exclusively on animals
C. Research of homeopathic medicines does not exist
D. Homeopathic research was only conducted in Europe in the 1900s

Correct answer: A

Results of homeopathy research are mixed, but this is expected given the need to individualize treatment and because of difficulties understanding nanopharmacology and ultradilutions. Newer methodologies and technologies are being employed in current research.