

# International Homeopathy Day 2011

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## Homeopathy in Austria

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Dear colleagues, dear friends

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Homeopathy in Croatia is at the very beginning. And although – like Hermann Hesse, the German/Swiss Nobel Laureate, expressed it in his famous poem “Steps / Stufen” - a magic dwells in each beginning, protecting us, telling us how to live, I hope that we can support you as Liga, as ECH and as Austrian Society for Homeopathic Medicine by giving you some advice for your further steps in the development of medical homeopathy in Croatia.

Austria looks back upon a very long history of homeopathy, and I think it is worth while highlighting some historic steps and episodes to understand the current situation and to learn from failures and from good decisions in the past.

Let´s start with the

### Legal Aspect

Homeopathy in Austria is part of medicine and may be practised only by medical doctors. In the past there have been several attempts to open homeopathy also for non-medical practitioners. In 2006, it was the last time that the Supreme Court dealt with that issue and it was the explanation of the decision, in particular, which was interesting.

The Supreme Court stated that the delimitation of the medical reservation depends on whether the practised method is scientifically founded and part of the medical science or not. The concept of “medical-scientific knowledge” is not to be equated with conventional medicine. Scientific founded can also be methods, which have not (have not yet) become established in conventional medicine, like homeopathy and acupuncture. Although homeopathy is still not officially recognised, this decision of the Supreme Court signified a further milestone on the way towards the recognition of homeopathy.

### Homeopathy as additional medical training

In 1994, the Austrian General Medical Council recognised homeopathy as “additional medical training” and authorized the two Austrian homeopathic associations ÄKH and ÖGHM to hold the basic training in “complementary medicine: homeopathy”. At the end of the 3-year-course – according to ECH and LMHI educational standards - the Austrian General Medical Council grants the diploma “Complementary Medicine: Homeopathy” to the graduates.

At the moment there are about 450 medical doctors with diploma, and a lot of medical doctors use homeopathy as additional method without diploma.

## Homeopathic Education

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, homeopathy reached its first peak in Austria. In 1855, there were 51 practising homeopaths in Vienna, 11 in Graz, 8 in Preßburg (Bratislava). This was a lot in comparison to other European towns. However, sufficient possibilities for educating medical doctors in homeopathy were still missing. So this was one reason, why the number of medical homeopaths started to decline from year to year and in 1935 there were only 4 homeopaths left. With the emigration of William Gutmann in 1938 the most important homeopath in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had to leave Austria – and a dark period began.

In 1953, the Union of Homeopathy Interested Medical Doctors was formed and the re-rise of homeopathy in Austria began.

In 1964, Prof. Matthias Dorcsi wrote:

“Our task will be to establish homeopathic schools (...). The principles of Hahnemann have to be confronted and developed with findings and research of modern science. It has to be worked on a Medicine of the Person in all directions. Above all we have to take care of homeopathic provings (...).

In 1973, the first official recognition was granted: on behalf of the Ministry of Science the education programme was analysed by educationalists and a new education concept was designed: a “School” ought to be established.

Two years later, in 1975, the first homeopathic course started in Baden near Vienna based on the new education model. Its reputation and the number of participants increased rapidly. Up to 400 participants came to Baden each time. And after 35 years this 5-day-course still takes place biannually. The successful Austrian education model was adopted by Germany in 1980, the Czech Republic in 1991, Slovakia in 1992 and Slovenia in 1993. Special course blocks have been taken over by several other countries around the world.

This year, in 2011, the Croatian Homeopathic Association will start its first own education programme in cooperation with the Austrian Society for Homeopathic Medicine (ÖGHM). We are very happy to be able to help Croatia with this important step.

## Veterinary Homeopathy

The Austrian Federal Chamber of Veterinary surgeons grants either a Diploma for Veterinary Homeopathy or the title “Fachtierarzt für Homöopathie” (specialist in veterinary homeopathy). For being “Fachtierarzt für Homöopathie” the following requirements have to be fulfilled: Master in veterinary medicine, 120 h of theoretical education in homeopathy, 5 years of work as a vet and 3 years, at the minimum, of personal homeopathic practice, as well as a scientific paper about veterinary homeopathy. To date there are 13 homeopathic vets.

## Homeopathy for pharmacists and midwives

In the basic training courses ÖGHM offers coeducation for pharmacists and for midwives. There has been great demand from both sides and it turned out very positively.

## Homeopathy in Hospitals

Since 1816, when Matthias Marenzeller, medical officer at the “Invalidenspital” in Prague introduced homeopathy in the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire, hospitals have always played an important role for homeopathy. Due to the successful treatment during the cholera epidemic in 1831 and 1836 homeopathy became very popular and several homeopathic hospitals were founded.

Today we have 12 homeopathic outpatient departments in Austria.

### Homeopathy at the University

Actually, homeopathy in Austria started in 1777 when Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann (1755 – 1843), the founder of Homeopathy, came to Vienna as a medical student to spend his third academic year in the capital of Austria.

In that time Vienna, especially the physician Anton de Haen, was famous for bedside teaching, which was unusual at most German and European universities back then. Because Anton de Haen had died some months before, Hahnemann asked Joseph von Quarin, director of the Viennese Hospital of the Brothers Hospitallers, to attend his clinical teaching. Gratefully Hahnemann writes later:

„ ... I owe to the great practical genius, private physician von Quarin all that can be called a medical doctor on me”

Around 1840, a group of medical homeopaths started to orientate themselves more towards the latest findings of natural science . They strived for the recognition of homeopathy by establishing a link with the conventional medicine of that time by means of the exact knowledge of the remedies. The most prominent participant at the gatherings and provings was Joseph von Zlatarovich (1807-1874). Joseph von Zlatarovich came from Agram, from this town, the today Croatian Zagreb. Since 1839, he had been professor for pathology, therapy and pharmacology at “Josefsakademie”. Zlatarovich participated personally in nearly all provings , and he also made experiments with animals in that context.

140 years later, in 1980, Prof. Matthias Dorcsi got a part-time lectureship at the Institute for Pharmacognosy, and finally, in 1985, at the Medical University of Vienna. Since then homeopathy has been present at the Medical University of Vienna.

For several years now, Prof. Michael Frass has been playing a very important role for homeopathy in Austria and also worldwide. He is professor for Internal Medicine at the Medical University of Vienna, an expert for Airway Management and inventor of the Combitube, which is part of every emergency ambulance in the world. He is head of the special outpatient department “Homeopathy with malignant diseases”, and coordinator of the lectures “Basics and practice of complementary methods” and coordinator of the compulsory optional subject “Homeopathy”, which is one of the top 30 at the Medical University of Vienna.

In leading journals he has published important papers about homeopathic treatment of patients at the intensive care unit, e.g with sepsis.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Our report suggests that homeopathy may be applicable even for critically ill patients. We discuss the obstacles encountered, including a dearth of tools for successful homeopathic prescription in these situations, suspicion and lack of cooperation by patients and conventional colleagues, and the highly suppressive nature of concomitant conventional therapies. We suggest the development of algorithms and other tools to aid rapid homeopathic prescription in critical care patients and discuss the importance of familiarizing physicians

and medical students with homeopathy in order to facilitate communication and cooperation between these complementary branches of medicine

Additionally the Students Initiative for Homeopathy (SIH), founded in 1997, offers a training programme for medical students, similar to ÄKH and ÖGHM. 150 hours are recognized for the later Diploma.

There are other lectures on a voluntary level at the University of Vienna and Innsbruck.

There are also two lectures on homeopathy at the University of veterinary medicine of Vienna, on a voluntary level as well.

### Homeopathic Remedies

According to the Austrian Medicines Act (AMG, §1 (10)), the law regulating the manufacture and distribution of medicine, homeopathic remedies are defined as medicines. Also the application of homeopathic remedies to food delivering animals is regulated by law. Austrian homeopathic manufacturers are well-known for the great variety and the excellent quality of homeopathic remedies, which are delivered worldwide.

### Conclusion:

It is evident that a profound basic education in homeopathy is the key for a good development of homeopathy, not losing contact with conventional medicine, with medical universities and with scientific research.

Although the scientific concept of homeopathy on the one hand and of conventional medicine on the other hand is completely different, we may not forget that the main goal of the medical doctor is to cure the patient. And for the health of our patients we have to work together, to understand the different scientific languages, and to “cross the bridge”.

In this sense I would like to close with Ivo Andric, born to Croatian parents in Bosnia, studying in Zagreb, Vienna, Krakow and in Graz, later living in Belgrade, winner of the Nobel Prize of Literature in 1961, 50 years ago, with his famous book “The Bridge on the Drina”, and I am full of confidence that we keep on coming together at the “gate”, the middle of the bridge, in a relaxed mood, without tensions, to get to know each other, to exchange our experiences and to work to the health and benefit of our patients.