

UK House of Commons Science & Technology Committee Homeopathy Evidence Check

Introduction

On 20 October 2009 the UK House of Commons Science & Technology Committee announced a new inquiry entitled “Evidence check: Homeopathy”. The purpose was to assess the Government's use of evidence in policy-making, in order to **consider Government policy on funding of homeopathy through the National Healthcare Service (NHS)**.

The Committee invited short written submissions to respond to three areas:

- A. Government policy on **licensing** of homeopathic products
- B. Government policy on the **funding** of homeopathy through the NHS
- C. The **evidence base** on homeopathic products and services

The deadline for submission of written responses was set to 6 November, 17 days after the announcement of the enquiry.

ECCH's submission

ECCH handed in a 2 400 word response by the deadline (see attached). It contains evidence on licensing of homeopathic products (including referral to EU regulation), Government funding on homeopathy through the NHS, and documentation to support the evidence base for homeopathic products and services. The last point included information on the efficacy, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and safety of homeopathic medicinal products and homeopathic treatment. The documentation was supported by 64 references.

Other submissions

In total 66 submissions were handed in, from individuals and organisations, from practitioner and patient organisations, from Governmental and non-Governmental bodies. All submissions may be found at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmsctech/memo/homeopathy/contents.htm>

Was this a fair process?

Although all interested parties were invited to put forward a written submission and good documentation was presented showing the evidence base of homeopathy and showing that **homeopathy is efficacious, effective, cost-effective and safe**, the following are reasons why we are unhappy about this process:

- A **very short deadline** was set, giving the different stakeholders little time to put together a thorough response
- The hearing was **insufficiently announced** as e.g. most homeopaths were unaware of it for many days, giving them even less time to respond
- The **selection process** used to select the individuals invited to make oral submissions was **not made clear** beforehand
- The **panel of individuals** who were invited to the first oral hearing was **skewed** by inviting a majority of people who are clearly sceptical or opposed to homeopathy
- **Patient representatives** were **not invited** to give an oral presentation
- Representatives of **UK homeopathy practitioner organisations** were **not invited** to participate in the oral hearing yet they were referred to critically in the hearing

- The **Chairman** of the Committee was **not neutral** in the manner in which he chaired the hearing, but showed **clear bias and opposition to homeopathy**
- The hearing **focused** on **randomized controlled trials** and **meta-analyses**, and did **not** take into consideration the wide range of documentation showing the **effectiveness** and **cost-effectiveness** of homeopathy, particularly that shown by data from two **UK hospitals** where homeopathy is provided and a one year pilot project funded by the **Northern Ireland Health Department**
- Overall this hearing process was **not neutral** and had all the hallmarks of a ‘kangaroo court’¹, set up to produce a verdict that had already been decided before it went through its process

The full hearing may be downloaded from

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmsctech/uc45-ii/uc4502.htm>

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Or seen at

http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/Player.aspx?meetingId=5221#tab_captions

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¹ A ‘kangaroo court’ can be understood as a court characterised by dishonesty or incompetence