

Mr A Etukudo
Division of AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (ATM)
WHO Africa

1st June 2009

Dear Mr Etukudo

Homeopathy and serious diseases in the developing world: an open letter from early career medics and researchers

We are calling on the WHO to condemn the promotion of homeopathy for treating TB, infant diarrhoea, influenza, malaria and HIV. Homeopathy does not protect people from, or treat, these diseases. Those of us working with the most rural and impoverished people of the world already struggle to deliver the medical help that is needed. When homeopathy stands in place of effective treatment, lives are lost.

Examples of homeopathy being promoted for these diseases include:

- In Kenya, the largest homeopathic supplier, the Abha Light Foundation sells homeopathic medicines for malaria, diarrhoea and influenza. It now runs 20 health centres, 25 mobile clinics and five HIV/AIDS clinics.
- In Tanzania, Jeremy Sherr and Sigsbert Rwegasira run three homeopathic clinics and claim to have government support to establish a school of homeopathy. Rwegasira claims to treat “no less than 100 malaria patients per day.” According to Sherr’s promotional material, “conventional medicine only supplies temporary relief, often at a great cost financially, and with many severe side effects”.
- In Ethiopia, the Amma Resonance Healing Foundation, run by Peter Chappell, offers to treat AIDS patients with “resonance healing in the form of homeopathy”, as “an ideal alternative and complement for the treatment of HIV/AIDS in developing countries” because of “the very low costs of producing the remedy” and because it has “no side effects”.
- In Ghana, the Senya/Tamale Homeopathy Project treats malaria patients with homeopathy.
- In Botswana, the Maun Homeopathy Project offers homeopathic treatment in several locations and mobile clinics for HIV related complaints such as herpes and diarrhoea “for those people who are HIV+ but who are not taking anti-retroviral drugs”.

Many people in developing countries urgently need access to evidence-based medical information and to the most effective means of treating these dangerous diseases. The promotion of homeopathy as effective or cheaper makes this difficult task even harder. It puts lives at risk, undermines conventional medicine and spreads misinformation.

We are sure that you will recognise these dangers and ask that you issue a clear international communication condemning the promotion of homeopathy for treating TB, infant diarrhoea, influenza, malaria and HIV. We are sure, too, that you will recognise the urgency of our request, and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wilson

On behalf of the Voice of Young Science network
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Our call for a communication is also supported by the following experts and organisations:

The AIDS Care Watch campaign (ACW)

www.aidscareswatch.org - a civil society partnership of over 400 organizations

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Signatories are on an individual basis unless otherwise stated