What is homeopathy?
Homeopathy is a complete system of medical treatment that makes use of substances normally found in nature, which are prepared into remedies by a process of serial dilution. In use for over two centuries, it continues to be an effective means of curing disease and palliating incurable illnesses. Homeopathy makes use of plants, minerals and animal derivatives, although the solutions from which remedies are made are diluted so many times that there is little or nothing left of the original material. This results in its unique safety features: no side effects, no toxicity. Examples of homeopathic medicines are Chamomilla (Chamomile), Natrum Muriaticum (salt) and Apis (bee). St. John’s Wort, Echinacea, Ginseng and other herbs are not homeopathic unless they are prepared by the unique process of serial dilution.

How did homeopathy get its name?
Homeopathy comes from the Greek words “homeo” (similar) and “pathos” (suffering). The founder of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) coined this term because his medicines worked on the principle of “like cures like” – in other words, medicines which produce effects on the (healthy) human body that are similar to the disease itself will cure someone suffering from that disease. Thus, insect stings can be treated with Apis (bee) and insomnia can be treated with Coffea (coffee).

If there is nothing of the original substance in the remedy, how can it do anything?
The mechanism of action of homeopathic medicine is still unknown. Rather than acting directly on the cells and tissues of the body, it appears to work by an energetic process, “jump-starting” the body’s healing powers into eliminating disease. Energetic healing may seem to be strange or “new-agey”, but in fact, it has become a part of mainstream medicine in a variety of widely accepted treatment modalities: e.g., cold for swelling, heat for muscle stiffness, light for seasonal affective disorder, radiotherapy for cancer, and pacemakers for arrhythmias. When homeopathic medicines are made, the molecular arrangement of the water solution is altered into patterns unique to the dissolved substance. In this way, the substance appears to confer a distinctive energy stamp onto the water, which remains, in spite of the absence of the substance itself.

How does homeopathy differ from regular medicine?
Homeopathy works by strengthening the body’s healing powers, which are then better able to fight off illness, rather than by trying to counteract the forces of illness. Homeopathic treatment is free from toxicity and side effects. Remedies are taken on an intermittent basis, until the problem is resolved, rather than indefinitely. Homeopathic physicians decide upon remedies based on what is unique about an individual, not on the presenting symptoms alone.

If homeopathy really works, why isn’t it more popular?
Homeopathy is actually quite popular abroad, particularly in Europe, South America, and India, where a large percentage of the population chooses to make it their primary
treatment modality. Its lack of popularity in this country is largely attributable to ignorance, which grows from the high degree of disregard held by most traditional medical training institutions for most unconventional treatments. Fortunately, this trend is changing, and homeopathy is achieving more widespread acceptance in the United States as more and more research appears demonstrating its effectiveness.

**What types of health problems can be treated with homeopathy?**

Virtually all ailments treated by conventional medicine are treatable homeopathically. Surgical illnesses still require surgery, although homeopathy may be useful pre- and post-operatively to promote recovery. Both personality and physical characteristics of the patient must be understood whether the primary problem is of a physical or psychic nature. Although usually incurable by conventional medicines, homeopathy can cure or help many people with multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, autism, lupus, bipolar disorder, heart disease and cancer. More common illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, headache, flu, ear infections, allergies, anxiety and colds can also be successfully treated homeopathically.

**How can homeopathic medicine cure serious illnesses without any risk of side effects or toxicity? This is hard to believe.**

Homeopathy is an extremely powerful treatment, even though little is understood about its mechanism of action. It is particularly difficult in our culture, which places such a big emphasis on material explanations, to accept the validity of homeopathy. Yet its effectiveness has vast empirical support, gleaned over more than two centuries of clinical successes, and its methodology is grounded in the science of empiricism (nothing is accepted as valid unless it is proven by experiment or consistent experience).

Homeopathy is not a panacea: it can not cure 100% of the time, and certain illnesses which have progressed to more advanced stages can only be palliated at best. Up to 80% of people who try homeopathy experience some benefit, if not total cure.

**Why would one choose homeopathy over conventional allopathic treatment or other alternative therapies?**

The greatest attraction of homeopathy, for both the patient and the homeopath, is the possibility of cure. With the exception of some infectious diseases, and some cancer, most medical illnesses, particularly chronic illnesses, cannot be cured with allopathic treatments. Even the cures of infectious diseases are not untainted, because the frequent use of antibiotics, while it cures some, it exposes others to more serious harm by creating antibiotic resistance. Cancer treatment has many complications, including serious side effects, disability, and even death. Other significant benefits of homeopathy include the absence of toxicity and side effects, the low cost of the medicine, and the convenience (it does not need to be taken daily in most cases). Children find remedies easy to take, since they need not swallow any pills. Homeopathy is also completely non-stigmatizing.

Homeopathy is perhaps the quintessential “holistic” medicine in that the person as a physical, emotional, spiritual, and social being must be understood in order to find the correct remedy. Homeopaths thus need to get to know their patients quite well. The close relationship that develops between the homeopath and the patient is welcome to many people in these times when impersonalism is often the price of advanced technology.