

# Project “Homeopathy for L’Aquila”: Classical Homeopathy applied in the case of earthquake as a medical assistance plan

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The project “Homeopathy for L’Aquila” was developed in order to provide humanitarian and professional assistance to the people of L’Aquila, who were the victims of a devastating earthquake during the night of April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009. This project was promoted by the Federazione Italiana Associazioni Medici Omeopati (FIAMO) and supported by the governmental organization for Emergencies (Protezione Civile).

**Aim:** This paper is the report of that experience in the state of absolute emergency, which lasted 17 months. It aims to be a feasibility study as well as a model for further emergencies.

**Methodology:** A medical office was located in a container of 60 square meters which was open from Monday to Friday, beginning in August 2009 and lasting until December 2010. This was provided by Protezione Civile with all the basic equipment, including a reception with a secretary. There were 16 homeopathic physicians and 2 acupuncturists, coming from all over Italy. Every month they rotated to offer free consultations of Classical Homeopathy, as well as Acupuncture and Neuraltherapy. Only people coming from the earthquake area were admitted: all of them signed an informed consent. An operational protocol was defined for the data collection. Each consultation was reported in a special register. The follow-up period lasted 17 months. The protocol consisted of the first consultation and at least 3 control visits, when possible at 30, 60 and 120 day intervals. As a primary outcome the main complaint of the patient was considered in its relation to the quality of life. This evaluation followed a slightly modified criterion of a qualitative scale: Outcome in Relation to Impact on Daily Living (ORIDL). A statistical analysis with some non parametric tests was carried out (Kolmogorof,  $\chi^2$ . Even the most frequently prescribed homeopathic medicines were taken into consideration.

**Results:** 674 patients were visited from August 2009 to December 2010. In total 1,542 medical visits and treatments were carried out (1,070 as Homeopathy; 280 as Neuraltherapy; 192 as Acupuncture). 366 patients received Classical Homeopathy. The most frequently treated syndromes were of the “psychiatric” type (162 cases=44%), prevalently due to the consequences of the earthquake, such as sleeping disturbances, phobic states, anxious-depressive syndromes, etc. The drop-outs were 235 out of 366 (=64%). 107 patients presented for a minimum 3 follow-ups. Here are the results: cured (52%), major improvement (33%), moderate and slight improvement (12%), no change (3%), deterioration (0%). The statistical analysis ( $D = 51 > 1,949$ ;  $\chi^2 = 48,039 > 10,83$ ) showed a significance higher than 1%. Within this group, 68 patients suffering from psychiatric syndromes, who came for a 3<sup>rd</sup> follow up, showed a similar trend: cured (50%), major improvement (24%), moderate and slight improvement (19%), no change (7%), deterioration (0%). Also in this case the statistical analysis indicated a significance higher than 1% ( $D = 30 > 1,949$ ). The most frequently prescribed medicines were Pulsatilla, Sepia, Arsenicum Album, Argentum Nitricum and Lycopodium.

**Discussion:** The numerous inconveniences due to the emergency certainly did not permit the usual control visits. Moreover a strict observance of the protocol was not always possible, which could explain such a high number of drop-outs. Those patients who completed the therapy had an incremental improvement in their health between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> follow-up visit. In the final analysis a series of “strengths” and “weaknesses” in the project were noted. This knowledge could be helpful for future emergencies.

**Conclusions:** The project “Homeopathy for L’Aquila” allowed, for the first time in Italy, an official implementation of Homeopathy in an emergency plan of great impact, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, made a precious human and professional experience possible. Moreover the results obtained have demonstrated that Homeopathy can play an important role socially as well as therapeutically. To the present date there have neither been internationally recognized guidelines nor publications with similar data concerning emergencies. Therefore this project could represent an important reference point for similar events.

**Keywords:** earthquake, L’Aquila, Classical Homeopathy, free consultations, Protezione Civile

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