

# What is homeopathy?

BY CLARE LANGAN

**I**F YOU HAD tried for months to get pregnant with no success, you might think about contacting your GP and taking it from there. Similarly, if you suffered headaches, allergies, or hay-fever, or had a child who was a finicky eater and couldn't concentrate at school, your family doctor might be the first person you would turn to. But for thousands of people in the UK – and across the world – their homeopath would be the one to call.

Annie Hall is one of the region's most experienced homeopaths and she is now practising in Stamford as well as holding regular clinics at two other locations in Lincolnshire.

Annie is nothing like her namesake – the nervy, neurotic heroine of Woody Allen's film. She is calm, kind, knowledgeable and utterly convinced of the benefits of homeopathy.

"I deal with the problem which is causing the symptoms," she explained, "whereas often conventional medicine simply deals with the symptoms.

"For example, if someone has had a horrendous cough ever since their husband died, there is a connection there. You are not just treating the cough – it's about treating what lies behind it."

The philosophy of homeopathy, which has been established for more than 200 years, involves treating like with like.

One instance, cited by the Society of Homeopaths, is insomnia. Conventional medicine might treat this by giving drugs which artificially induce sleep. Homeopaths would call this the way of opposites. They, by contrast, would give the patient a minute dose of a substance such as coffee – which would actually cause sleeplessness in large doses in a healthy person, but would allow the insomniac to sleep naturally.

Annie says the treatment is completely tailored to each individual patient, whom she sees for an initial one-and-a-half hour consultation, before prescribing one or more of the 3,000 homeopathic remedies available (she keeps 300 of the more widely used permanently in stock.)



Annie Hall is a homeopath and health counsellor.

"It's almost like tuning someone's radio dial," she explained. "You get rid of all the crackle and static, and get a good strong clear signal going again."



Indeed, the Society of Homeopaths describes it as a system of healing which helps the body's natural tendency to heal itself, and recognises that all symptoms of ill health are

expressions of disharmony within the whole person."

Not everyone is convinced. Some in the medical profession believe any improvement wrought by homeopathy is all in the patient's mind, and that it merely provides a sort of placebo effect – you're

consulting someone you think may help you recover, and so, to a greater or lesser extent, you do show an improvement.

Annie points out that any healing relationship has that kind of effect – if you've been worried about something and you then consult a doctor or surgeon, you always feel better knowing you are in expert hands and something is being done to tackle your problem – but she says that homeopathy does also have real and substantial physical benefits.

She is adamant that if someone turned up with, for example, a suspicious lump, she would immediately dispatch them to their GP to get it checked out, and points out that the majority of people being treated for cancer will undergo complementary therapies such as homeopathy in tandem with conventional treatments.

Annie specialises in treating children with attention deficit disorders and autism, and in 2004 won a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship which took her to France and the United States. "In America they have used the drug Ritalin far longer than we have here to treat ADHD. But what it does is make the child biddable – he will do what he's told while he's taking the drug, but it doesn't solve the problem."

Annie says she has been able to bring about a very real improvement in many children's quality of life, and that they are treated without being labelled as having this or that disorder or syndrome. They are simply individuals.

She particularly recalls one young man who she first treated as a child of 10. Then, his problems were such that he seemed unlikely to succeed in a mainstream school and his parents were discussing whether special schooling might be necessary. Recently she had a letter of thanks – sent from university.

"I adore my work," said Annie. "It's slow and subtle, but gentle, with no side-effects and no nasties."

▲ Annie also runs regular clinics in Lincoln (Tel: 01522 543331 during office hours) and Louth (Tel: 01507 608166 during office hours). She can be contacted in Stamford on 01780 767667.