

Homoeopathic remedies and drug-regulatory authorities

Silvio Garattini and Vittorio Bertele's pledge to "safeguard the credibility of regulatory agencies and the professional dignity of their scientific committees" lacks references but it is a real issue.¹

In France, homoeopathic remedies are still reimbursed under the mandatory National Health Service scheme (eg, *Ginkgo biloba* homoeo-

pathic remedy, which is only vigorously shaken water, costs €175 per L) whereas the vast majority of primary care trusts in the UK have cut funding.

In 2007, the French medicine agency (Afssaps) issued a national official warning to pharmacists and doctors after a mix-up in the labelling of two homoeopathic remedies by the company.² However, the preparations only differed in terms of the vial's label!

Placebos lack objective clinical effects: if you secretly slip a placebo into a person's drink, it doesn't work. Placebos are marketed by money-hungry quacks, they strengthen medical arrogance and infantilise patients. This has a name: disease mongering.³

Neither drug-regulatory authorities, nor scientific committees, must support this prolonged mess.

I declare that I have no conflicts of interest.

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- 1 Garattini S, Bertele V. Homoeopathy: not a matter for drug-regulatory authorities. *Lancet* 2009; **374**: 1579-80.
- 2 DC's Improbable Science. Attention mes amis! Homoeopathic emergency in France! <http://www.dcsience.net/?p=196> (accessed Jan 6, 2009).
- 3 Brillon A. Placebo is far from benign: it is disease-mongering. *Am J Bioeth* 2009; **9**: 52-54.