

Summary of the I. European Symposium
„Natural Medicine in a United Europe – quo vadis?“
hosted by ANME
(Association of Natural Medicine in Europe e.V.)
on Saturday 13th November 2004
„Le Méridien Parkhotel“ Frankfurt/Germany

*Glossary: NGO – Non Governmental Organization; CAM – Complementary and Alternative Medicine; EPHA – European Public Health Alliance; EFCAM – European Forum for CAM; NCHC – Non Conventional Health Care; OMC – Open Method of Coordination RCT - Randomized Clinical Trial; ECHAMP – European Coalition on Homeopathic and Anthroposophic Medicinal Products; HMPC – Herbal Medicine Product Committee; AESGP – Association Européenne des Spécialités Pharmaceutiques Grand Public; EMEA – European Medicines Agency

Opening Speech from the first chairperson of ANME, Ms. Monika Gerhardus.

Ms. Monika Gerhardus describes ANME as a young NGO*-organization that's goal is, to stand up for the preservation and also the further development of natural healing medicines and methods in a Europe growing together. Meanwhile, a whole lot of different forums and platforms have emerged which have committed themselves to this purpose and are organized in the umbrella organization „EPHA“ which AMNE also belongs to. Nevertheless, EPHA represents the field of „Public Health Services“ in the „Open Forum“ of the EU-Commission for Health and Consumer Protection.

In connection with this, the AMNE Chairwoman also draws attention to the dilemma of a slowly developing european sense of awareness in the minds of the EU-Citizens.

Against this background, it can be explained why the majority of nature healing oriented therapists don't have the slightest idea which restrictions are threatening to gain entrance through Europe's doors and which could put nature medicine, with regards to individuality, tradition and inter-cultural treasures of experience, under considerable pressure. Nature Healing must be accordingly protected from demolition, which is euphemistically described with the slogan, „harmonizing measures“ from the current european political realism!

That's why the envisaged goals of AMNE plan among other things, to install a CAM-Network on a european level and through improved human relations, inform/sensitize decision-makers in politics, industry and professional representations. Finally, Ms. Gerhardus calls on all participants to stand unitedly for the affairs of Nature Medicine in Europe.

There then follows opening words in the name of the Frankfurt town council from the Mayor, Petra Roth, which were expressed by the town councillor, G. Weissenseel.

After this, the deputy of ANME, chairwoman Alexandra Hodgson, gave a short summary of the most important organizations and expressions of Nature Healing in the EU; (CAM*, EPHA*, EFCAM*, NCHC*, OMC*). Besides that, she explains the possibilities, chances and limitations of political work on a european level.

There then follows a review of the last health services reforms and an outlook over the development in the EU from the point of view of medicine laws, presented by the lawyer, Mr. Matthias Talib.

H. Talib draws attention to the restricted freedom of choice of administer and therapy procedures in the statutory health insurances, which is mainly generated through use of the principles of economics and effectivity and hence imposes itself as the main problem for nature healing procedures.

While neither a legal definition for nature healing procedures nor for complementary medicine exists as yet, the statutory health insurances still speak of „outsider methods“. According to the German Federal Social Court, the statutory health insurances are not allowed to reimburse nature healing treatments. On the other hand, the private health insurances, which is the most important reference for alternative medical practitioners, allows more open space for alternative methods (abolishment of the EBM-hurdle for standard services).

-2-

It is true that the additional title „nature healing procedures“ and „homeopathy“ are found in medical advanced training arrangements but, the verbalized definitions are vague and very woolly.

The constellation, „**EU versus Germany**“ quite frequently develops in jurisdiction because national laws often deviate from EU-Regulations. The Constitution and respective federal laws still often break EU-laws as well as regional laws. The European Justice Authorities can be called up, after all inner-state process possibilities have been exhausted. By varying law interpretations, EU-Regulations must be verified, eventually per „Broken Agreement Process“ against national jurisdiction. Since Nature Healing is not regulated(defined) under federal law, favourable perspectives definitely arise for the enforcement of EU-Regulations concerning this matter. However, it remains to be seen, if this depicts an advantage.

with regard to EU-Competences, a community competence exists for the prevention of dangers; that means, issues which affect European public health interests as a whole, can be classified over so-called „flanking fields of politics“, (eg., BSE, anti-tobacco campaign).

In addition to its free lance occupation fields, the health care sector naturally comes under the services directive. Due to the fact that the medical professions are already busy trying to qualify themselves as the prime persons to contact for medical services, everything should be done to prevent a one-sided information autonomy of the „Federal Doctors' Board“, otherwise the professional competence will, in a short time, be completely transferred to mainstream medicine.

Research in Homeopathy from Dr. Wilfried Stock (ECHAMP*)

In the last 20 years interestingly enough, in addition to traditonal drug tests in homoeopathy, increasingly more clinical test models such as double-blind studies and cohorts-studies as well as the so-called application observations from orthodox medicine have been adopted. Homoeopathic drugs seem to be clearly suitable for these tests, in spite of the individualized application principle.

Dr. Stock explains that the breakthroughs are indeed still being waited for but, there are still some very promising first signs from research nevertheless. In this context, he quotes the modernized forms of drug tests through Riley from Santa Fé, the study-group surrounding Prof. Süss from the University of Leipzig who are attempting to measure potentiations by means of bio-chemical methods and the group surrounding Prof. Harisch in Hannover who verify differences between potentiated and unpotentiated substances through experiments.

All these efforts certainly show that Homeopathic Medicine is still not recognized in full scope as an „equivalent scientific medication“. Meanwhile one can observe that more and more doctors as well as patients are convinced of the effectiveness of homeopathic remedies. Homeopathic remedies are at least classified at level I b = RCT in the external evidence of effectiveness hierarchy

Research in Nature Medicine from Mrs. Prof. Karin Kraft (Chair at NHK- Uni Rostock)

Prof. Kraft refers to the increasing problematic position, which Nature Medicine is exposed to through quality assurance measures. If it doesn't want to lose its mandate to treat the sick, more substantial efforts must be made to prove the consistency of CAM.

Germany has meanwhile fallen behind with regards to the available resources and procedures of CAM and stands clearly in third place, far behind the USA and Great Britain.

The immense popularity of CAM which is due to an intensive state research sponsorship in the named lands, is taken into account. The great demand for complementary medicine in Germany is reflected through the number of providers, among other things. There are 35.000 Doctors with additional titles for Nature Healing Procedures, Homeopathy and acupuncture. Circa. 30,000 doctors without an appropriate professional advanced training certificate, occasionally use CAM procedures. There are on the other hand, 7,500 alternative medical practitioners.

-3-

All groups who are working with CAM should therefore emphatically stand up for EU-Research-Funding.

Nature Medicine – Available for everyone? Mr. Dr. Uwe Peters from the Hufelandgesellschaft

The speaker emphasizes that Nature Medicine should of course be available for everyone. Numerous questions must be explained however, in the run-up to such a demand. Firstly, all essential terms that are associated with Nature Medicine must be obligatory universally defined. Many promising attempts are already recognizable. The appropriate additional title for doctors or the pharmaceutical commission are mentioned as examples.

The interaction of a greater readiness to further education by the therapists, through reinforced demands of patients, must be moved towards the centre of political considerations. Nature Medicine should acquire a higher „ranking“ in the competition with other consumer goods.

On the one hand, the legally defined general conditions should no doubt give high priority to patients' safety and consumers' safety, but on the other hand, thin out the jungle of complicated permission handicaps and make things clearer.

From the background of such thoughts one can recognize many common interests that could be enforced more efficiently with a closing of ranks between Doctors' Associations, Science and (additional) Insurances.

Which position would alternative medical practitioners have in such a scenario? (Question from the author)

On the Future of Nature Medicine in Europe ,from Mr. Dr. Bernd Eberwein, General Manager of the German Federal Association of Pharmaceutical Producers (BAH)

Dr. Eberwein points out that Natural Pharmaceuticals are only established in a few EU-States. This means that many states, contrary to Germany, have no tradition in the

production and use of phytopharmaceutics. The European Market for phytotherapeutika is clearly dominated by Germany (43%) and France (25%). The market shares for all other countries range in the area of one-digit percent.

With regard to our coming authorization process, Germany and France would have only had two votes from 25, despite their overwhelming market share! A serious question must be asked; how can the required majority be achieved, if there turns out to be a critical climate for Nature Medicine?

A study of the AESGP with regards to authorization criteria for drugs has in the meantime been realised by the European Commission. As harmless as the contents of this investigation seem to be, there is considerable danger hidden in it, if this text is now to be moulded into laws and action instructions.

What it's really all about is; for which indications should a medicine be authorized for? If for example, a drug is only authorized for vague health disturbances, one can expect that the prescription frequency will be dramatically reduced. England has already indicated that it will only authorize phytotherapeutika in a few cases.

According to the suggestions of the AESGP study, the authorization of medicine should be arranged as follows; Authorization for „well-established-used“ medicines with verified evidence of effectiveness as the highest standard. Registration procedures for „traditional-used“ medicines with clearly lower indication barriers. Create a committee, which will be located next to EMEA and is responsible for the authorization or registration of phytopharmaca. In this connection, note that registered homeopathica will not be affected by this problematic.

It is in the interests of all therapists, that as many Nature Medicines as possible are located in the authorization zone and attain, through better evidence of effectiveness, the more interesting indications.

Roundtable – Diskussion , leadership by Mr.Dr. Mathias Schmidt, ANME e.V.

With regards to pharmaceutical changes in drugs. A representative of the pharmaceutical industry (Phönix) warns administrators to explain things better. Modifications are only made according to specifications of legislators and not voluntarily. A battle is still waged for every substance of the contents.

The demand was formulated again; work on clear definitions for Nature Healing and Nature Healing Procedures.

Ms. Hodgson suggested collecting application and experience reports in order to build a meaningful information pool. Authorities and insurances would then have a convincing instrument at their disposal with which they could recognize certain procedures or reimburse them.

The expression „Natural Medicine“ is problematic and should be avoided. (Dr. Eberwein).

Principles such as „holistic“ etc. should be used instead of definitions. (Hodgson)

Dr. Eberwein draws attention to the importance of a profound command of the language, with which one can keep his head above water in difficult negotiations. For this reason, English representatives have enormous advantages in influencing decision-making boards, because of their mother tongue.

The language should also be suited to the respective recipient. (Dr. Peters.)

Result

One could sense the admirable readiness for constructive cooperation among the 40 participants of the event. A harmonic atmosphere prevailed which was characterized through the simultaneously intensive and inspired collaboration.

The organization and preparation were remarkably professional and adequate for the occasion. The speakers were excellently chosen and corresponded professionally and rhetorically to the high demands of the event

The „Deutsche Ärzteblatt“ (German Journal for Doctors) regarded the event as important enough to send one of their own reporters.

The international claim turned out to be smaller due to the fact that some of the foreign participants cancelled.

Fortunately, alternative medical practitioners were represented numerously in the auditorium. On the other hand, medical professions were only represented by the speakers. It's certain that AMNE conveyed a positive impulse and will, from now on, be a contact partner who can be taken seriously on a european level.

Helbronn 25TH November 2004

Mr. K.R. Schübel
Member of ANME e.V.