

Summary of the 2nd ANME- SYMPOSIUM - Nov.11th, 2006

- ***Evidence Based Medicine is now an end of range model and does not serve consumer protection***
- ***2nd European symposium on naturopathy requires more understanding and a better sense of proportion of a European, consumer-oriented, health policy***

The 2nd ANME symposium showed once more very clearly that it is still vital to provide German health politicians and MEPs with information on naturopathy. In the European context its official name is Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM).

Just some months ago the European Commission reduced the European health budget radically by 60%. This led to the European Forum of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (EFCAM) not being able to make natural medicine an integral part of a European programme on public health even though EFCAM received support from parliamentarians.

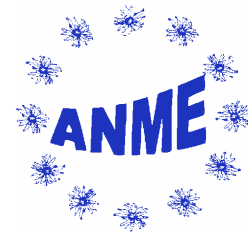
On November 11, 2006, the **Association of Natural Medicine in Europe (ANME)** hosted a symposium with the title "Natural Medicine in a United Europe – Quo Vadis?" in Frankfurt. Acclaimed representatives in the field of naturopathy – researchers, experts from the industrial sector and practitioners - from Germany and throughout Europe came together. The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) helped us financially with money from the EU-Commission designed to establish a European community in public health.

During the symposium that was intended to exchange opinions and create new partnerships within the European field of naturopathy, all participants (nearly 60) realised quickly that there were still many open and unexplained questions concerning patient and consumer protection, naturopathic research and the quality of therapies and health in general in Europe.

As a preliminary remark Monika Gerhardus, ANME's chairperson, stated, "Naturopathy or complementary medicine is a highly complex issue that has to be considered individually. In a European context there is no panacea for it yet".

Evidently there is need for research of naturopathic treatments and naturopathic medicine. However, the research budget is quite restricted. This has to be taken into consideration when critics argue that there is a lack of scientific evidence for complementary medicine. Therefore, one objective of all groups dealing with naturopathy in Europe is to receive more research money so that naturopathy will eventually not be considered as freely interpretable seen from a scientific angle anymore. "Europeans trust natural medicine which shows the acceptance and efficacy of CAM. That requires increased research activities also at international level", Monika Gerhardus concluded.

Many polls and scientific analyses from the last 15 years lead to the conclusion that the absolute majority of Germans and relatively seen as many other Europeans use CAM medicine and its methods regularly to improve health or if deemed necessary. Self



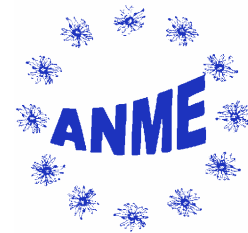
medication in Europe is becoming increasingly popular due to cost concerns. When money is limited then CAM represents a cheap and effective alternative for the European health care system. Compared with chemical drugs, herbs have a long tradition in popular medicine. Cinnamon for example has been known as a herbal remedy for 5000 years. In the late medieval times, it was consumed in incredibly high doses. Today, however, the public is warned of eating cinnamon cookies since they contain coumarins that can theoretically be toxic (in its pure form and just in certain types).

This has never been observed in practice or in toxicological studies, but it does not matter. What does matter is to protect consumers against cinnamon cookies – and other things. During our symposium Evidence Based Medicine, EBM, was the key word. EBM refers to the scientific provability of the efficacy of methods and remedies, also complementary medicine. Dr. Mathias Schmidt, a scientist and member of the European Forum of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (EFCAM), pointed out that an exaggerated interpretation of EU-regulations through national authorities is not acceptable any longer. He made use of different examples to illustrate his point. “EBM was created to enable CAM and phytotherapy to acknowledge therapeutical experiences that could be observed for decades. However, rigid and formalistic aspects of the safety of use counteracted this.” According to Dr. Schmidt, well controlled herbal drugs should not be driven out of the market due to exaggerated requirements; even less so when it is argued about consumer safety. A possible alternative: badly controlled preparations that are ordered online and a resultant deterioration of consumer safety.

Dr. Konstantin Keller, a member of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) agreed with that. He gave a talk on chances of complementary medicine in Europe. “The European drug law,” he commented, “is first of all a law to protect consumers. Patients are not very interested in EBM. The establishment of herbal monographs that are supposed to accelerate the admission of naturopathic products at EU level will be delayed indefinitely due to a lack of money and central problems regarding EU-copyright, Dr. Keller stated.

In the UK, homeopathy is facing fierce public debates because of lacking scientific proofs of efficacy. Kate Chatfield from the University of Central Lancashire spoke about this problem. “Conventional study methods cannot be applied to the holistic approach of homeopathy. Homeopathy should not try to prove its efficacy but rather show how it works,” Chatfield explained. About 25% of all EU citizens use homeopathy. This makes homeopathy one of the most used CAM methods which have to be further improved in practice.

Georg Ivanovas, a homeopath, also specialised in naturopathic treatments and psychotherapy, from Greece posed the question “How do EU consumers profit from EBM?” Ivanovas stated that, “To me patients are not merely consumers but partners within the period of convalescence. I suppose that doctors and scientists alike who think of patients as consumers have a different understanding of EBM. We are dealing with far more essential questions than just EU consumer protection.” Often patients come to his office with numerous EBMs that they have taken for several without their illness being cured. If now a patient undergoes a naturopathic therapy for a year, gets well again and does not need to take any medication any longer, then this is not necessarily a proof of the efficacy of naturopathic treatments. “But it is at least a proof of efficacy controls having problems.



Eventually the concept of EBM will not be sustainable and we will have to find new ways and systems to research efficacy.” This was Ivanovas’ conclusion.

Although EU countries themselves are in charge of regulating general health care provision, EU legislation is increasingly affecting national health care policies. Jointly national health care authorities are developing an integrated health care strategy. For this a simplified exchange of information and a competent network between NGOs like ANME or EPHA and consumer representatives at EU level is becoming more and more important. Lara Garrido-Herrero, a member of EPHA and also co-organiser of this symposium states, “The results of lobbying however cannot be measured instantly since it takes EU regulation up to 15 years to be put into practice.”

About ANME: More than 40,000 people, individuals and organisations alike, are a member of the Association of Natural Medicine in Europe, ANME. Since 2001, ANME has been working towards ensuring that naturopathic treatments are sold permanently on the EU market. Coordination and safeguarding the common interests of European naturopathy (CAM) are two issues that are at the heart of all political activities and initiatives. ANME is an active member of the European Coalition on Homeopathic and Antroposophic Medicinal Products (ECHAMP), the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), and the European Forum of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (EFCAM).

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