



International Journal of Homoeopathic Sciences

E-ISSN: 2616-4493
P-ISSN: 2616-4485
Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.96
www.homoeopathicjournal.com
IJHS 2025; 9(3): 1461-1468
Received: 06-06-2025
Accepted: 08-07-2025

Dr. Arkaprabha Ghosal
Post Graduate Trainee,
Department of Organon of
Medicine, Homoeopathic
Philosophy, Chronic Diseases
and Psychology, National
Institute of Homoeopathy,
Kolkata, West Bengal, India

The evolution of Hahnemann's posology: From large doses to 50 millesimal potency

Arkaprabha Ghosal

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26164485.2025.v9.i3.W.1847>

Abstract

Posology, the study of dosage in medicine, has been one of the most debated aspects of homeopathy. Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, devoted over four decades to refining his approach to dosage. His journey began with large doses common in conventional medicine and culminated in the development of 50 millesimal potency, a revolutionary concept in homeopathic practice. This study examines the chronological evolution of Hahnemann's posology, highlighting key milestones such as the introduction of infinitesimal doses, the practice of olfaction, and his final modifications in the sixth edition of the Organon of Medicine. By understanding this progression, practitioners can better appreciate the foundational principles of dose selection and their critical role in achieving therapeutic success.

Keywords: Dynamization, infinitesimal doses, Hahnemann, homeopathy, olfaction, posology, psora, 50 millesimal potency

Introduction

Posology is one of the most controversial thing in homoeopathy. Only one simple medicine is to be given to the patient at a time. That is the Hahnemann's fight against the multi-mixtures of his time, but when the correct remedy has been chosen according to the law of similars, only one half of the difficulty of homoeopathic treatment has been overcome. It is often more difficult to decide what quantity of the suitable remedy will be most adoptable to the sick organism and most speedily effective. Hahnemann devoted more than 40 years of his life to the solution of this problem.

Year wise evolution of Hahnemann's posology

1784 ^[1]

Before discovering the law of similars Hahnemann's medicinal treatment of his patients differed very slightly from that of other physicians. His prescriptions correspond in composition, weight and quantities.

In the "Directions for the cure of old sores and ulcers" (1784) he still recommends 5 - 50 grains (0.25 - 2.5 grams) of crude pulverised Antimony to be taken daily for the purification of the blood, and for evacuation purposes 20 - 70 grains (1.0 - 3.5 grams) of Jalap root once a week.

1786 ^[2]

In one of Hahnemann's earliest works, that, namely, "On the Nature and Treatment of Venereal Diseases", published in 1786. In this work, we already find some peculiarities in reference to the doses of medicine he prescribed, especially in reference to the dose of the new preparation of mercury. It is well known that about the time when Hahnemann wrote this work, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the common treatment of syphilis consisted in giving enormous and repeated doses mercury.

Hahnemann's treatment offers a very remarkable contrast to this heroic practice. He tells us that for the complete eradication of lues venerea, he has sometimes not had occasion to give more than one grain of his soluble mercury, and that the average quantity he requires for the treatment of moderately severe syphilis is not more than eight grains. He here talks of half a grain, of one, two, and three grains of this mercurial preparation as large doses, and the doses he commonly employs are a quarter, third, half, three-quarters, and one grain of the remedy.

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Arkaprabha Ghosal
Post Graduate Trainee,
Department of Organon of
Medicine, Homoeopathic
Philosophy, Chronic Diseases
and Psychology, National
Institute of Homoeopathy,
Kolkata, West Bengal, India

These comparatively small doses which he at this period prescribed, show the tendency of his mind to rebel against the enormous doses of ordinary practice, and to adopt a posology more in accordance with that maxim of practice, to give remedy in doses sufficient to produce its curative not its pathogenetic action.

1787^[1]

- In 1787 he recommends *Conium maculatum* (hemlock) in a daily increasing dose of 4 grains up to several quarter ounces.
- *Belladonna* he gave 12 - 15 grains of the powdered leaves and roots every other day.
- Extract of *Aconite* from the fresh sap of the whole plant he gave several times a day - half grain to several grains in quantity.
- *Digitalis* from the juice of the freshly crushed leaves, a half to a full spoonful as an ordinary dose twice a day.
- *Hyoscyamus* was given as an extract, one grain several times a day up to 30 grains, and of the seed 6 - 20 grains.

1789^[3]

In 1789 in the "Treatise on Venereal Diseases" Hahnemann says- "I have sometimes not had occasion to use more than one grain of soluble Mercury in all in order to cure moderate idiopathic venereal symptoms and commencing syphilis, yet I have met with cases in which sixty grains were necessary". For the time this was very minute dosage.

Further on in this treatise Hahnemann says- "Not more than eight grains were required to eradicate a moderately severe syphilis, for a severe case twelve grains".

1790^[1]

Cinchona for nervous fevers was still used in 1790 at the rate of one and half to two and half ounces (45 - 75 grams) in twenty-four hours.

1796^[3]

The essay on the "Curative Power of Drugs" was the first publication on the Homoeopathic principle. In this Hahnemann speaks of giving for dysentery *Arnica* root in powder. Hahnemann also increase the dose daily, more often than is necessary with any other powerful medicine. A child of four years of age got at first four grains daily, then seven, eight and nine grains. Children of six or seven years of age could at first only bear six grains, afterwards twelve and fourteen grains were requisite. A child three-quarters of a year old, which had previously taken nothing, could at first bear but two grains (mixed with warm water) in an enema; latterly six grains were necessary.

- Hahnemann says that he took one grain of extract of *Aethusa cynapium* when distracted and mentally tired from literary work.
- An infusion of ten grains of *Ledum palustre* was given to a child six years old.
- Arsenic in one-sixth to one-tenth of a grain doses was recommended in periodical headache.
- The landlord of a country had an asthmatic affection with loss of breath, constriction of the chest, suffocative attacks with suicidal thoughts, the mania resembling that peculiar to *Veratrum*, the firm fibre of the patient,

etc., induced Hahnemann to prescribe three grains of it every morning, which he continued for four weeks, with the gradual cessation of his sufferings.

- A woman of thirty-five with delirium and convulsions, after parturition, took one-half grain of *Veratrum* night and morning and was cured.

1797^[3]

- In 1797 Hahnemann cured a case of colicodynia with a four-grain powder of *Veratrum album* daily; the patient having taken two in one day, suffered from medicinal aggravation. This is 1st time where Hahnemann mention about medicinal aggravation.
- For asthma he gave five-grain doses of *Ipecac*; four grains, twice daily, of *Nux vomica*.
- This same year of 1797 Hahnemann mentions giving a girl of five years, who was poisoned by Camphor, four-drop doses of tincture of Opium until she had probably taken two grains of Opium. She recovered from the Camphor poisoning under this treatment.
- For the leucophlegmatic cachexias of children Hahnemann says that twelve grains of *Arnica* root can be taken with impunity.
- In poisoning by *Cocculus* Hahnemann gave fifteen grains of Camphor.

1798^[1, 3]

In an article on continued and remittent fevers, published in 1798, Hahnemann says- "St. Ignatius bean produced effects that were truly surprising. I gave it in large doses every twelve hours; children from nine months to three years of age, from one half to two-thirds of a grain; to those between four and six years, from one grain to one and one-half grains; to those between seven and twelve years, from two to three grains. To adults Hahnemann gave eight grain doses".

Hahnemann says- "I accordingly gave Opium in the morning before the fit in the dose of one-fifth of a grain to an infant of five years, three-tenths of a grain to one of seven and another of eight years, seven twentieths to one of ten years. I took myself half a grain".

Hahnemann gave Camphor in doses of fifteen to twenty grains daily, increasing them to doses of thirty and forty grains. He gave a child of twelve fifteen grains a day for a fortnight.

Ledum gave in doses of six or seven grains three times a day.

Cinchona bark was given in drachm and drachm and a-half doses.

The first hints of dilutions are to be found in the translation of the second part of the Edinburgh Dispensatorium (1798). Silver Nitrate was recommended by Boerhaave in doses of 2 grains, worked up into pills with breadcrumbs and sugar; Hahnemann considered that too strong, and suggested a very diluted preparation. In the same year, in the "Apothecaries Lexicon" Hahnemann recommends *Sabina* " in very small doses " and *Hyoscyamus* also " in very small doses. *Stramonium* Hahnemann liked to administer only in the hundredth or even thousandth part of a grain of the concentrated juice. Of *Veratrum album* Hahnemann says that this remedy is one of the most valuable medicines if used in a thousand times smaller doses than those used by the ancients.

1799 [2, 3]

In 1799 Hahnemann suddenly announced without particular explanation very small and so called infinitesimal doses.

In 1799, the treatment of the epidemic of scarlet fever, Hahnemann recommends a paper moistened with tincture of Opium to be laid on the epigastrium of the child until it dries, in cases of convulsions. For internal use the Opium is prepared as follows:

“The tincture is formed by adding one part of crude Opium, finely powdered, to twenty parts of crude Alcohol, letting it stand a week in a cool place, shaking it occasionally. For internal use I take a drop of this tincture and mix it intimately with five hundred drops of diluted Alcohol, shaking the whole well. Of his diluted tincture of Opium (which contains in every drop one five-millionth part of a grain of Opium) one drop given internally was amply sufficient in the case of a child four years of age, and two drops in that of a child of ten years to remove the above state. For younger children I mixed one drop of this with ten teaspoonfuls of water and gave them according to their age, one, two or more teaspoonfuls”. Hahnemann repeated the doses but seldom; every four or eight hours, or sometimes but twice during the entire fever. Larger doses, Hahnemann says, cause medicinal aggravations.

For another stage of the scarlatina Hahnemann says: “I gave, according to the age of the child, *Ipecacuanha*, either in substance in the dose of a tenth to half a grain in fine powder; or I employed the tincture, prepared by digesting in the cold for some days, one part of the powder with twenty parts of alcohol; of this one drop was mixed with one hundred drops of weak alcohol, and to the youngest children a drop of this last was given, but to the oldest ones ten drops were given as a dose”.

Of *Belladonna* Hahnemann gave a girl of ten years, who was sickening with scarlatina, a dose the one four hundred and thirty-two thousandth part of a grain of the extract, which Hahnemann says is, according to later experience, rather too large a dose.

For a prophylactic Hahnemann says: “We dissolve a grain of this powder prepared from well-preserved *Belladonna* extract, evaporated at an ordinary temperature, in one hundred drops of common distilled water, by rubbing it up in a small mortar; we pour the thick solution into a one-ounce bottle, and rinse the mortar and the pestle with three hundred parts of diluted alcohol (five parts of water to one of spirit), and we then add this to the solution and render the union perfect by diligently shaking the liquid. We label the bottle strong solution of *Belladonna*. One drop of this is intimately mixed with three hundred drops of diluted alcohol by shaking it for a minute, and this is marked medium solution of *Belladonna*. Of this second mixture one drop is mixed with two hundred drops of the diluted alcohol, by shaking for a minute, and marked weak solution of *Belladonna*; and this is our prophylactic remedy for scarlet fever, each drop of which contains the twenty-four millionth part of a grain of the dry *Belladonna* juice.

This are the doses of *Belladonna* mentioned by Hahnemann according to the age-

- Less than 1 year- 1 drop
- 1 year old- 2 drops
- 1-2 years old- 3 drops
- 1-3 years old- 4 drops
- 4 years old- 5-6 drops
- 5 years old- 6-7 drops

- 6 years old- 7-8 drops
- 7 years old- 9-10 drops
- 8 years old- 11-13 drops
- 9 years old- 14-16 drops

With each successive year, up to the 20th, two drops more (from the 20-30 years not above 40 drops). A dose every seventy-two hours, well stirred with a teaspoon for a minute in any kind of drink, as long as the epidemic lasts, and four to five weeks thereafter.

Of the tincture of *Chamomilla*, for the after effects of the disease, a grain was to be dissolved in five hundred drops of water and mixed intimately with five hundred drops of alcohol. Of this solution one drop was mixed with eight hundred drops of diluted alcohol, and of this last diluted solution one drop (800-000th part of a grain of the inspissated juice) was given every day to a child a few years old, two drops to one of ten years of age. By its use all tendency to ulceration of the skin was removed, and also the suffocating cough.

1805 [2]

The next work of Hahnemann's was *Medicine of experience* where the subject of the dose is touched upon. Here Hahnemann says-

“A medicine of a positive and curative character may, without any fault on its part, do just the opposite of what it ought, if given in too large a dose; in that case it produces a greater disease than that already present”

Although Hahnemann does not define in this essay what quantity he means by the small doses.

Hahnemann also said that in this essay-

“If a certain quantity of diluted tincture of opium will remove a certain array of morbid symptoms, the hundredth or thousandth part of that quantity suffices almost equally well, and the diminution may even be carried much farther without the medicine losing its effect”.

Here Hahnemann says that medicine is almost spiritual.

1808 [3]

In a paper published in 1808 Hahnemann says that in certain bilious conditions- “a single drop of the tincture of *Arnica* root will often remove, in the course of a couple of hours, all the fever, all the bilious taste, all the tormina”.

In another article in the same year, for a fever then prevailing in Germany, Hahnemann recommends *Nuxvomica* in doses of the trillionth of a grain; *Arsenicum* in doses of a sextillionth. This would be in the ninth and eighteenth dilutions.

1810 [1]

The next work of Hahnemann was 1st edition of *organon*, where Hahnemann did not give any further information regarding doses. In §247 Hahnemann said that- “In order to proceed in a really rational way, the true physician will prescribe his carefully selected homoeopathic remedy only in so small a dose as is adequate to overcome and annihilate the disease present. This smallness of the dose in a case where human weakness may have led the physician to have chosen a very unsuitable medicine, will lessen to a negligible amount the disadvantage of its unsuitability to the disease. This disadvantage from so small a dose is so slight that the vital force and the quick antidote of the now suitably chosen homoeopathic remedy (likewise in the smallest dose) would quickly restore the balance”.

1811 ^[3]

In the first volume of the "Materia Medica Pura" published in 1811, nothing is said of the doses of the medicines: But in the latter volumes the doses of nearly every medicine are given.

1813 ^[2]

In the "Spirit of the Homoeopathic Doctrine" first published in 1813. It is here stated that the smallest dose is sufficient, and that a greater one is not necessary, "because the spiritual power of the medicine does not in this instance accomplish its object by means of quantity, but by quality or dynamic fitness, and a larger dose does not cure the disease better, but leaves behind it a complex medicinal disease".

1814 ^[2]

In an essay published in the 1814, containing instructions for the treatment of a fatal epidemic of typhus or hospital fever, Hahnemann recommends the employment of Bryonia and Rhus toxicodendron, each in the 12th dilution, prepared, not according to the centesimal scale, but in the proportion of one drop to six drachms, or 1 to 360, which would make this 12th dilution equal to between the 15th and 16th dilutions of the centesimal scale. Each dilution Hahnemann directs to be shaken for three minutes at a time. A single drop of each of these medicines in this state of attenuation is directed to be given for a dose. Neither of them, Hahnemann observes, "can be used in a lower dilution or in a larger dose; they are too strong".

Hyoscyamus is directed to be used for some states of this fever in the 8th dilution, which will be about equivalent to the ordinary 10th dilution in point of strength.

Sweet spirit of nitre, which is also indicated in certain conditions of this disease, Hahnemann directs to be given thus- One drop is to be mingled with an ounce of water, and this given by teaspoonfuls, so as to be all taken within the twenty-four hours.

1815 ^[2]

Hahnemann has given us specimens of his practice towards the end of 1815, by detailing the histories of two cases of gastric affections treated at that time. The doses Hahnemann gave of each of the medicines prescribed were very different. To the first, he gave a drop of the pure juice of Bryonia-root, and to the other, half a drop Pulsatilla in the 12th dilution.

1816 ^[2, 3]

In a curious paper published in 1816, On the Treatment of the Venereal disease, Hahnemann advises for the cure of such cases as have been mismanaged by the old treatment, his preparation of mercury to be given until the development of certain symptoms peculiar to the action of mercury, but among which, he says- "neither salivation, nor toothache, nor ulcers of the month, nor pains in the bowels, nor diarrhoea are to be found".

On referring to this work, then, we find that the mercurial symptoms that should be developed, in order that we may be assured of the sufficient action of the metal, consist of what he terms the mercurial fever- a state characterised by symptoms of considerable severity, and which cannot be produced without the administration of mercury- in appreciable doses.

In volume two of Materia Medica Pura, published in 1816, Hahnemann recommends-

- Causticum, a drop of the original preparation.
- Arsenicum is to be given in the twelfth, eighteenth or thirtieth dilution.
- Ferrum, the 1/100, 1/10000 or 1/50000 of a grain is mentioned.
- Ignatia is to be used in the ninth or twelfth potency.
- Rheum, in acute affections in the ninth.

1817 ^[3]

In the third volume of Materia Medica Pura, published in 1817

- China is recommended in the twelfth dilution.
- Asarum in the twelfth or fifteenth.
- Ipecac in the third.
- Scilla fifteenth or eighteenth.
- Stramonium in the ninth.
- Veratrum in the twelfth.

1818 ^[3]

In the fourth volume of the Materia Medica Pura directions are as follows-

- Hyoscyamus is to be used in the twelfth, fifteenth, eighteenth dilution.
- Digitalis, in the fifteenth.
- Aurum the first and second triturations.
- Guaiacum, a drop of mother tincture.
- Camphor drop doses of one part to eight.
- Ledum, in the fifteenth.
- Ruta in the fifth decimal.
- Sarsaparilla in drop doses of tincture.
- Sulphur, Hepar sulphur and Argentum, in grain doses of the second trituration.

1819 ^[1, 3]

In this year Hahnemann gave information regarding doses in three different publications-

1. Fifth volume of materia medica pura

Where Hahnemann recommends

- Euphrasia, Menyanthes and Sambucus, the smallest part of a drop of the juice.
- Cyclamen, third dilution.
- Calcareo acetica, drop of the saturated solution.
- Muriatic acid, drop of the third decimal.
- Thuja is to be given in the thirtieth.

2. Second edition of organon

Here Hahnemann gave information regarding doses in (§300 - 308). In §300 Hahnemann says that-

"The suitability of a medicine for any given case of illness depends not only on a relevant homoeopathic selection, but just as much on the correct quantity necessary or rather the smallness of the dose".

In §302 Hahnemann says that-

"The more its dose descends to the degree of smallness, most suitable for gentle aid".

Hahnemann lays great stress in §303 on the fact that the fixing of the dilution degree for the individual remedies should not be the "work of theoretical assumptions" but can only be determined by clear experiments, careful observation and accurate experience.

3. On uncharitableness to suicides

Here Hahnemann recommends pure gold (aurum) in its 6th potency, whilst, as is known, it had been given a year previously in doses of several grains of the 1st and 2nd triturations.

1821 ^[2, 3]

- In the sixth volume of *Materia Medica Pura*, published in 1821 Where Hahnemann said that-
- Angustura is to be given in the sixth.
- Manganum acet twenty-fourth.
- Capsicum ninth.
- Colocynth eighteenth, twenty first.
- Verbascum tincture.
- Spongia for goitre the mother tincture, and for other uses the higher dilutions.
- Drosera ninth.
- Bismuth, second trituration.
- Stannum, the sixth.

In 1821 Hahnemann advises for the treatment of purpura miliaris, which was then raging epidemically, Aconite in the 24th dilution, and Coffea in the 3rd dilution.

1822 ^[3]

The first volume of the second edition of the “*Materia Medica Pura*” was published in 1822.

- Belladonna thirtieth.
- Dulcamara twenty-fourth.
- Cina ninth
- Cannabis tincture.
- Cocculus twelfth.
- Nux vomica thirtieth.
- Opium sixth.
- Moschus third.
- Oleander sixth.
- Mercurius sol twelfth.
- Aconite twenty-fourth.
- Arnica sixth.

1825 ^[2]

In the third volume of second edition of the *Materia Medica Pura*, was published in 1825, the following are the doses prescribed of the medicines contained in this volumes-

- Digitalis is directed to be given in the 15th or 30th dilution.
- Ledum in the 15th dilution.
- Cham, Chin, Verat, Hyos, Aurum in the 12th dilution.
- Stramonium in the 9th dilution.
- Ipecacuanha in the 3rd dilution.
- Hepar sulphuris in the 3rd trituration.
- Sulphur and Argentum in the 2nd trituration.
- Ruta in a dose equal to ten drops of the 2nd dilution.
- Squilla in the 1st dilution.
- Guaiac and Sarsaparilla in the mother-tincture.
- Camphor in doses of one-eighth of a grain, at short intervals.
- The doses for Hellebore, Conium, and Chelidonium are not indicated; probably the mother-tincture of these was employed.

1826 ^[2]

In the fourth volume of the second edition of the *Materia Medica Pura* published in 1826, where-

- Thuja, Spigelia, and Staphysagria are directed to be used in the 30th dilution.
- Phosphoric acid in the 9th dilution.
- Cyclamen and Muriatic acid in the 3rd dilution.
- Euphrasia, Menyanthes, Calcarea acetica, and Taraxacum in the mother-tincture.

1827 ^[2]

In the sixth volume of the second edition of the *Materia Medica Pura* published in 1827, where-

- Manganese, Cicuta, and Drosera are directed to be given in the 30th dilution.
- Colocynth in from the 24th to the 30th dilutions.
- Asarum in the 12th and 15th dilutions.
- Capsicum in the 9th.
- Angustura in the 6th.
- Ambra, Carbo veg, Carbo anim and Stannum in the 3rd trituration. Of Carbo veg Hahnemann says it is not advisable to go beyond the 3rd and of Stannum, that he formerly used to employ the 6th, but he now finds the 3rd quite sufficient.
- Bismuth in the 2nd trituration.
- Verbascum in the mother-tincture.
- Spongia for goitre, in doses of a drop several times diluted, and for other purposes in the 30th dilution.

1828 ^[1, 2, 3]

After the announcement of psora theory, we notice a remarkable alteration in Hahnemann's idea regarding posology.

Hahnemann now fixed upon the 30th dilution of the centesimal scale as the appropriate dilution for every remedy, and one globule, no bigger than a poppy-seed imbibed with this dilution as the most appropriate dose.

At this period Hahnemann was very much anxious about the over enthusiasm of his students (Dr. Gross, Dr. Schreter, Dr. Korsakoff) regarding high potency. This was also one of the reason for Hahnemann to set a limit. In a letter written to Dr. Schreter, dated September 12, 1829 Hahnemann says-

“I do not approve of your dynamizing the medicines higher (as for instance up to xii and xx). There must be some end to the thing; it cannot go on to infinity. By laying it down as a rule that all Homoeopathic remedies be diluted and dynamized up to x, we have a uniform mode of procedure in the treatment of all Homeopathists, and when they describe a cure we can repeat it, as they and we operate with the same tools. In one word, we would do well to go forward uninterruptedly in the beaten path. Then our enemies will not be able to reproach us with having nothing fixed- no normal standard”.

Nevertheless, in the same volume Hahnemann states that though he had cured recent itch sometimes with one small dose of Sulphur, yet he had once occasion to give half a grain of the 3rd trituration of Carbo vegetabilis, in a family consisting of seven persons and three times a similar preparation of Sepia; these doses he states, were quite efficacious.

It is true, however, that he had already exceeded this limit in 1825, when, as we saw, he recommended Thuja for gonorrhoea; in that case he had described the 60th potency as being particularly efficacious.

These two examples shows that Hahnemann contradicts himself on almost every point of his doctrines and practice.

1832 ^[1]

The next thing about posology Hahnemann says that was olfaction as a route of administering of medicine.

This smelling of the medicine is first mentioned by Hahnemann in his preface to Boenninghausen's "List of symptoms of the antipsoric medicines", where he said-

"It is impossible for me to impart anything to the world unless I am convinced of it. I was convinced of the reasonableness of the contents of this interpolation only quite recently, so that I can not only obtain the mastery of the severest cases of chronic diseases by letting the patients smell - but I can do it in an incredibly short space of time".

In some letter written by Hahnemann to Boenninghausen's, he said-

"Since merely letting the patient smell Sulphur at suitable intervals, I have experienced the immeasurable healing capacity of this substance, of which I had previously no idea" (Letter of December 15th, 1832).

"With us the prevailing influenza can be relieved within eight or twelve hours in the less serious cases, simply by smelling Camphor 30th. In the serious cases the patient must smell Nux vomica in the evening. Smelling Causticum is rarely necessary" (Letter of the end of April, 1833).

On the 21st August, 1834 Hahnemann wrote-

"In the cases of diarrhoea and vomiting and dysentery occurring here I could not do without the smelling of Mercurius corrosivus 30th".

1833 ^[1]

In the fifth edition of organon, published in 1833 in §270 Hahnemann give instructions for preparing potencies-

"Thus two drops of the fresh vegetable juice mingled with equal parts of alcohol are diluted with ninety-eight drops of alcohol and potentized by means of two succussions, whereby the first development of power is formed and this process is repeated through twenty-nine more phials, each of which is filled three-quarters full with ninety-nine drops of alcohol, and each succeeding phial is to be provided with one drop from the preceding phial (which has already been shaken twice) and is in its turn twice shaken, and in the same manner at last the thirtieth development of power (potentized decillionth dilution X) which is the one most generally used".

1837 ^[1]

Upto that time Hahnemann said that two succussions is sufficient for each potency but in the preface to the third part of the second and improved edition of "Chronic Diseases" (1837) he speaks on page 10 "about the technical side of homoeopathy"-

When I used to administer medicines undivided, each taken with a little water, at one dose, I found that potentising in phials with ten succussions often acted too strongly (i.e., their medicinal powers were too strongly developed). I therefore advised only two succussions. But as for several years I have been able to give each dose in a solution which will not deteriorate, distributing the dose over 15, 20 or 30 days and more, now no potency in a vial is too strong if prepared each time with ten succussions. I must therefore take back what I said on this subject three years ago in the first part of this book" p. 186.

1842 ^[1, 3]

The next work of Hahnemann was sixth edition of organon,

which was published after his death (1921). According to Richard Haehl in the final years of his life Hahnemann considerably diverged from his earlier methods of dilution. Hahnemann changed his method due to unusually nervous excitability of a large number of his Parisian patients. Even after using the 30th centesimal dilution troublesome aggravations were said to have occurred very frequently. Therefore, in order to guard against these harmful symptoms "these homoeopathic aggravations" he used this new method.

In this kind of dynamisation the material part of the medicine was said to be decreased 50,000 times for each degree of dynamisation, and yet, says Hahnemann, the medicine increased tremendously in power. His new preparations were considerably milder in their action and yet, after many painstaking experiments and counter-experiments, they had proved to be the most powerful and the most perfect ("Organon", 6th edition, note to §270). Potencies obtained in this new way were described by Hahnemann as "Medicaments au globule" as distinct from "Medicaments a la goutte" prepared by his former method, the potency degrees of which he had always expressed by Roman figures. The new preparations from globules he described with Arabic figures surmounted by a circle (0/1, 0/2, 0/3, 0/4, etc). Hahnemann says in §270 of the sixth edition of the "Organon"-

"Of these thus perfected medicinal preparations, small doses of the lowest degrees of dynamisation - even of medicines of long continued action (e.g. Belladonna) - may be repeated at short intervals in acute fevers. In the treatment of chronic diseases it is best to begin with the lowest degrees of dynamisation and when necessary advance to higher, even more powerful but mildly acting degrees".

According to Mr. Everest -

"Hahnemann was so entirely satisfied with the gentle and kindly actions of these preparations that they would, I think, almost have superseded with him all other preparations. I possess many of the medicines so prepared for him; most of them are complete series from 0/1 to 0/10. I do not recollect that any were carried beyond 0/10, unless it was Phosphorus, which I think he made up to 0/15.

Observations by Rima Handley ^[4]

In an article called "Classical Hahnemannian homoeopathy or what Hahnemann really did" - Preliminary Observations by Rima Handley. The information it contains is based upon a study of the 17 Casebooks held in Stuttgart which Samuel and Melanie wrote in Paris between 1835 and 1847. It appears from Handley's studies that Hahnemann did all sorts of things in his Paris practise which previously he had in his writings expressly forbidden others to do. These include-

- Most cases are opened with Sulphur - some 90% of chronic cases. Sulphur was often repeated frequently in the early stages until symptoms of another remedy appeared and then that was given. Sometimes only Sulphur was used throughout.
- He also prescribed for anything that came up in the course of treatment e.g. some cough or symptoms of an acute nature.
- He treated the return of old symptoms in the same way. In every case he regarded the return of old symptoms with delight and saw a new symptom as an indication of the next new remedy.
- He also commonly used two remedies at the same time.

- He frequently prescribed one remedy by mouth and another by Olfaction, which he maintained.
- The 50 millesimal potency he used in many different ways and asserted that they could be repeated very frequently without aggravation or harm and maintained continuous stimulation of the vital healing force. The 50 millesimal potency appear therefore to be mainly a product of his impatience with slow cases!
- In his early days in Paris he mainly used 3, 6, 9, 12, 18, 24 and 30 potencies. He then progressed to using the 200 and the 95. These remedies were often repeated frequently every day sometimes twice a day, or more up to a max of 6 times a day! He often used widely different potencies in the same case, going lower for acute conditions and higher for chronic work. He tended to use 50 millesimal potency for chronic and the centesimals for any acute symptoms that emerged.
- He often repeated remedies very frequently. He abandoned the centesimal potencies mainly because of their power to produce aggravations. He suspected that the higher dilutions (above 30) would increase aggravations and he was very cautious about them. He used two remedies at once when he felt it necessary. He treated most symptoms as they came up.

Observations by R.E. Dudgeon ^[2]

- Before he had any idea of the homoeopathic principle, he gave one medicine, mercury, in one disease, syphilis, in doses very much less than those usually prescribed.
- For some years after his discovery of the homoeopathic principle his doses did not differ from those used in ordinary practice.
- Apparently quite suddenly the doses of some medicines he prescribed fell down to a point where they ceased to be cognizable by the senses or by chemical tests.
- As he extended the law to the treatment of all diseases, his doses became all small, but not uniformly so; for he allowed himself a range between a drop of the pure tincture or a grain of the 1st trituration, and a portion, of a drop of the 30th dilution of the centesimal scale.
- After his invention of the psora-theory he fixed the uniform standard for the dose of all remedies at a globule of the 30th dilution. Almost the only exception to this is in the case of camphor for cholera, which he advised to be given in drops of the saturated spirit.
- In the last years of his life he again allowed himself a greater range of dose, chiefly by extending the scale of dilutions upwards as high as the 60th, 150th, and even 300th dilutions, but also downwards to the 24th, and occasionally also much lower.

Observations by Adler UC ^[6]

Quantitative systematic review of Hahnemann's Parisian casebooks kept in the Archive of the Institute for History of Medicine of the Robert Bosch Foundation, looking for records of 50 millesimal potencies and C-potencies prescribed in the time frame of January 1st 1843 and June 30th 1843.

Results: 743 prescriptions were identified: 582(78%) of 50 millesimal potencies, 142(19%) of C-potencies and 19(3%) of unidentified potencies.

At the end of his career Hahnemann used centesimal potencies, mostly C30, but also C24, C18, C12, C8 C6. These potencies were prescribed mostly in a descending sequence when he used more than one C-potency of a given

medicine for the same patient. However these C-potencies comprised only 19% of Hahnemann's prescriptions in the last semester of his life, while 78% of them were of 50 millesimal potencies. If there was a trend towards a scale use, this also would be toward the 50 millesimal potencies, which was even more frequently prescribed by Hahnemann from April 1843 on, up to 85% of his prescriptions in June. Among Hahnemann's centesimal preferences, it's remarkable the return to his traditional C30 and to series of C-potencies similar to his well-known sequence, considering the fact that a few years before he had experienced higher C-sequences, close to C200, which action he probably found out to be too strong.

Repeating the C-potencies in descending degrees might have been a precaution to moderate possible homeopathic aggravations, as Hahnemann had described an direct association between higher C-potencies and those aggravations. The 50 millesimal potencies, on the contrary, were used by him in an ascending order, what is consistent with the instructions of the 6th edition of the Organon. Handley's findings, that Hahnemann would also prescribe 50 millesimal potencies in descending sequences must have been based on scattered records, which are almost inexistent in his 1843 prescriptions.

Observations by David Little ^[7]

If we analyse Hahnemann's Paris casebooks from the Robert Bosch Institute in Stuttgart, Germany, during the years 1840 to 1843 we see that Hahnemann commonly used the 7 tablespoon medicinal solution for both the C and 50 millesimal potencies in his cases. He mostly used between 6c to 200c and a full range of LM potencies on his patients. He seemed to use his centesimals for the most acute diseases, crisis, or as acute intercurrents during the disruptions of chronic treatment. Hahnemann used his 50 millesimal potencies mostly for chronic miasms, suppressions and degenerative states. This pattern is followed throughout his casebooks until he left for in his Heavenly Abode at 88 years old.

In the 5th edition of Organon Hahnemann states that the centesimal potencies are quick in their onset and tend to aggravation in the beginning of chronic treatment. In the 6th edition Organon Hahnemann states that the 50 millesimal potencies are gradual and tend to aggravate at the end of treatment. This offers a clue to the differences of the remedial powers of the centesimal and 50 millesimal potencies. Acute disease, crisis, and acute-like exacerbations of chronic pathology all have the same qualities of quick onset and rapid crisis much like the aggravations of the centesimal potencies. The pattern of chronic disease is slow and gradual and it reaches its crisis toward the latter stages of development much like the aggravation of the 50 millesimal potencies. The pace, progression and termination of the remedial powers and the acute and chronic states are similar. This the reason for which Hahnemann was testing the centesimal remedies in acute disease, acute-like exacerbations of the chronic miasms or crisis and 50 millesimal potencies on the miasmatic and constitutional states because they are more similar to the chronic disease process.

Observations by Richard Hughes ^[8]

Hahnemann's views on dosage (posology) evolved over time and his earlier works present a more subtle and

moderate approach than the strict standardization seen in later editions:

1. Early editions (1st-4th)

- Dosage principles were flexible and practical, without prescribing a single uniform potency for all medicines.
- Smaller doses for homeopathic remedies compared to antipathic or allopathic treatments to avoid unnecessary aggravation or collateral suffering.
- Doses should be minimized so that any primary aggravation (a short-lived worsening of symptoms) would be slight and tolerable.
- The optimal degree of dilution varied depending on the medicine, with recommendations found in his *Materia Medica Pura*. These ranged from mother tinctures to higher dilutions, with the 30th dilution as an exception rather than a rule.

2. Later editions (5th and after)

- In 1829, after the 4th edition of the *Organon*, Hahnemann proposed the 30th centesimal dilution as a standard for all remedies, seeking uniformity in practice.
- This strict standard is reflected in the 5th edition and subsequent homeopathic texts.

3. Reasons for shift to dilution

- The increased sensitivity of diseased bodies necessitates smaller doses to avoid overstimulation.
- Dilution does not proportionally reduce power; rather, it refines and enhances the therapeutic effect of the substance.

4. Criticisms toward dose

- Critics often focus on the rigid 30th dilution standard in later editions, ignoring the pragmatic and adaptable principles outlined in earlier versions.
- Hahnemann's earlier guidelines align with experimental evidence and clinical experience, offering a rational and balanced approach to dosage.

Conclusion

Hahnemann's views and practice in relation to potency are very important as they relate both to how homoeopathy has developed since his time and also in relation to how people have viewed and interpreted his teachings. As a result of which many dogmas have arisen.

Hahnemann was always practical and his experimental mind always looked for some new things, whenever he was not satisfied. That's why he changed his concept regarding doses from large dose to 50 millesimal potencies. So, it is necessary for us to know what is the right dose of medicine as cure is only possible by right dose with the correct similimum.

References

1. Haehl R. Hahnemann: His Life and Work. Vol. 1. London: Homoeopathic Publishing Co.; 1900.
2. Dudgeon RE. Lectures on the theory and practice of homoeopathy. New Delhi, India: B Jain; 2019.
3. Bradford TL. The life and letters of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann. New Delhi, India: B Jain; 2016.
4. Morrell P. Hahnemann and Homoeopathy. New Delhi: B Jain Publishers; 2003.

5. Hahnemann S, Boericke's W, Dudgeon RE, Singh M, Singh S. First corrected, re-translated & redacted English edition of *Organon of Medicine*: 6th & 5th editions with an appendix & word meaning of each aphorism: Aude Sapere. Kolkata, W.B.: Homoeopathic Publications; 2015.
6. Adler UC, Adler MS, Padula AE. Hahnemann's late prescriptions. *Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte*. 2009;27:161-172.
7. <http://www.simillimum.com/education/little-library/the-works-of-great-homoeopaths/ham/article08.php>
8. Hughes R. The Principles and Practice of Homoeopathy. B. Jain Publishers Pvt. Ltd.; 1902.

How to Cite This Article

Ghosal A. The evolution of Hahnemann's posology: From large doses to 50 millesimal potency. *International Journal of Homoeopathic Sciences*. 2025;9(3):1461-1468.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.