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Mind-gut connection and the scope of homoeopathy: An integrative review

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Abstract
The microbiota-gut-brain (MGB) axis represents a bi-directional communication system linking the central nervous system, enteric nervous system, immune pathways and gut microbiota. Dysregulation of this axis contributes to functional gastrointestinal disorders, particularly irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Psychological stress alters motility, permeability and microbial composition, while dysbiosis influences neuroinflammation and mood. Emerging studies suggest that individualized homoeopathic treatment may improve quality of life and symptom severity in IBS, potentially through modulation of stress response and neuroimmune pathways. While initial findings are encouraging, methodological limitations in existing studies necessitate more rigorous research. Strengthening evidence in this area may support the inclusion of homoeopathic approaches within integrative management of gut-brain interaction disorders.

Keywords: Dysbiosis, microbiota-gut-brain axis, mind-gut connection, psychoneuroimmunology, irritable bowel syndrome, homoeopathy, holistic medicine, neuroendocrine regulation, stress physiology

Introduction
The mind-gut connection has gained prominence with research on the microbiota-gut-brain (MGB) axis, which describes dynamic communication between the gastrointestinal tract and the central nervous system. Stress, emotions and cognitive processes directly influence gastrointestinal physiology and gut microbial imbalance is associated with psychological symptoms [1]. Functional gastrointestinal disorders such as IBS exhibit strong neuro-gastroenterological and psychosomatic interplay [2].
Homoeopathy, with its individualized and holistic approach, has been used in managing chronic conditions that involve both emotional and gastrointestinal components. Although its mechanism remains debated, emerging evidence suggests beneficial effects in IBS [3]. This review synthesizes current knowledge on the mind-gut axis and evaluates the scope of homoeopathy in disorders involving gut-brain dysregulation.

The Microbiota-Gut-Brain Axis
- **Neural pathways:** The vagus nerve is a major route through which sensory and motor signals travel between the gut and brain. Altered vagal activity is associated with visceral hypersensitivity and anxiety-related gut symptoms [4].
- **Endocrine and immune interactions:** Stress activates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, increasing gut permeability, altering motility and promoting dysbiosis [5]. Pro-inflammatory cytokines generated in the gut can influence central neurocircuitry, contributing to abdominal discomfort and mood disturbances.
- **Microbial metabolites:** Gut microbiota release short-chain fatty acids and neurotransmitter precursors that influence gut barrier integrity, enteric neurons and brain function [6]. These metabolites play a central role in IBS pathophysiology.
- **Clinical relevance:** IBS patients frequently show disturbed microbiota, increased permeability and altered serotonergic and inflammatory activity. The therapeutic benefit of psychological interventions and probiotics underscores the importance of the MGB axis.

Homoeopathy in gut-brain disorders

Clinical evidence

A double-blind randomized trial in 2022 reported significant improvement in IBS Symptom Severity Score (IBS-SSS) and quality of life with individualized homoeopathic medicines versus placebo [7].

A pilot study from Mexico using LM potencies showed symptom improvement in all participants, with major improvement in 63% [8].

Reviews in 2024 identified commonly used remedies such as *Lycopodium clavatum, Nux Vomica, Pulsatilla nigricans* and *Argentum nitricum*, suggesting potential therapeutic relevance [9].

Possible mechanisms

Although direct molecular effects of ultra-diluted remedies remain hypothetical, several plausible explanations exist:

- **Stress reduction:** Individualized consultations and improved coping may dampen HPA-axis activity.
- **Neuroimmune modulation:** Reduced stress may improve vagal tone and decrease pro-inflammatory cytokines.
- **Holistic behavioural influence:** Lifestyle modifications encouraged during homeopathic consultations may benefit the gut-brain system.

Future research should evaluate homeopathy as an adjunct to conventional gut-brain therapies.

Integrating homoeopathy with current understanding of the MGB axis could enhance patient-centred care.

Conclusion

The MGB axis provides an important framework for understanding functional gastrointestinal disorders. Homoeopathy may serve as a complementary therapeutic option for conditions such as IBS, particularly where emotional factors play a major role. Although encouraging, current evidence is insufficient to draw firm conclusions. Well-designed clinical trials and mechanistic studies are essential to establish the therapeutic role of homoeopathy within the broader domain of gut-brain health.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

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