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ISSN: 3108 - 1215

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Role of Posology in Homoeopathy: A Critical Review Based on Organon of Medicine and Homoeopathic Philosophy

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Article Received: 09 / 07 / 2026

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Article Published: 01 / 09 / 2026

Email: carehomeoclinic@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22721143>

Abstract

Background: Posology — the science of dosage — occupies a central yet often misunderstood position in homoeopathic therapeutics. Unlike conventional pharmacology, homoeopathic posology is governed not merely by quantitative measures but by qualitative principles: the minimum dose, dynamization, potency selection, and the modulated repetition of remedies.^[1]

Objective: This paper critically reviews the concept of posology as laid down in Hahnemann's Organon of Medicine (particularly the 6th edition) and as elaborated by stalwarts of homoeopathic philosophy, including Kent, Close, Boenninghausen, and Dunham.^[2,3]

Methodology: A literary review of primary classical texts — Organon of Medicine (5th and 6th editions), Kent's Lectures on Homoeopathic Philosophy, Close's The Genius of Homoeopathy, Dunham's Science of Therapeutics, and Boenninghausen's writings — was undertaken, with analysis of relevant aphorisms (§245–§263, §270, §275–§278) and their clinical application.^[1–4]

Results: Homoeopathic posology rests on three interdependent pillars: the minimum dose, dynamization (potentization), and individualized repetition. The evolution from crude doses to the 50-millesimal (LM) scale represents Hahnemann's lifelong effort to achieve curative action without aggravation.^[1]

Conclusion: Posology in homoeopathy is not a mechanical appendix to prescription but a philosophical and dynamic discipline integral to cure. Mastery of posology distinguishes the true physician from the mere prescriber, fulfilling Hahnemann's dictum of "rapid, gentle, and permanent restoration of health."^[1,5]



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Keywords: Posology, minimum dose, potentization, dynamization, Organon of Medicine, LM potency, repetition, susceptibility, homoeopathic philosophy.

1. Introduction

The term posology is derived from the Greek words posos (“how much”) and logos (“study/science”), meaning the science of dosage. In conventional medicine, posology deals with weight-and-measure-based dosing adjusted to age, sex, weight, and pathology. In homoeopathy, however, posology acquires an entirely different dimension: the quantity of the material substance is reduced to infinitesimal levels while its dynamic curative power is enhanced through a unique process of dynamization or potentization.^[1,5]

Hahnemann’s revolutionary insight was that the smallest dose sufficient to evoke a curative reaction from the vital force is the ideal dose.^[1] This principle, elaborated over four editions of the Organon of Medicine, culminating in the 6th edition’s introduction of the 50-millesimal scale, constitutes the foundation of homoeopathic posology.^[1,2]

The present paper aims to:

1. Trace the historical and philosophical evolution of posology in homoeopathy.
2. Analyze the relevant aphorisms of the Organon of Medicine.
3. Correlate Hahnemann’s doctrine with the views of post-Hahnemannian masters.^[3–6]
4. Discuss practical guidelines for potency selection and repetition in clinical practice.

2. Materials and Methods

A comprehensive literary survey of the following classical and authoritative sources was conducted: Hahnemann’s Organon of Medicine (5th and 6th editions),^[1] Kent’s Lectures on Homoeopathic Philosophy and Lectures on Materia Medica,^[2] Close’s The Genius of Homoeopathy,^[3] Dunham’s Homoeopathy: The Science of Therapeutics,^[4] Boenninghausen’s Lesser Writings,^[5] Nash’s Leaders in Homoeopathic Therapeutics,^[6] and Roberts’ The Principles and Art of Cure by Homoeopathy.^[7]

Relevant aphorisms were thematically categorized under: (a) the medicinal force and dynamization, (b) the minimum dose, (c) potency selection, (d) repetition and the second dose, and (e) aggravations and their interpretation.^[1]

3. Historical Evolution of Posology in Homoeopathy

3.1 The Pre-Homoeopathic Context



Before Hahnemann, medicine was dominated by large doses of crude drugs — emetics, purgatives, and venesection — often causing iatrogenic harm. Hahnemann's early experiments with Cinchona bark and his subsequent clinical observations convinced him that large material doses of drugs, even those matched homoeopathically to the disease, could aggravate or complicate the case.^[1,3]

3.2 Gradual Refinement by Hahnemann

Hahnemann's posological journey passed through distinct phases, each reflecting the same guiding intention: to reduce the material quantity while increasing the dynamic therapeutic energy, thereby achieving cure without medicinal aggravation.^[1]

Phase	Dose Form	Period
First trials	Crude material doses	Pre-1798
Reduction	Dilutions only (1:10 or 1:100)	≈1798–1801
Discovery of dynamization	Dilution + succussion (potentized doses)	1801 onwards
Decimal refinement	Progressive potentization to 30th and beyond	1820s
Final formulation	50-millesimal (LM) scale	6th edition, ≈1842

4. The Organonic Foundations of Posology

4.1 The Concept of the Dynamic Medicinal Force

In the 6th edition, Hahnemann states that the curative power of medicines lies in their power to alter the state of health of human beings through their dynamic or spiritual nature (§§11–13, 16, 21, 26–27). The disease itself is a dynamic derangement of the vital force; hence, only a dynamically altered medicine can restore health (§19, §26).^[1]

This dynamic conception is the philosophical precondition for posology: if the medicine acts dynamically rather than materially, the quantity of the crude substance is irrelevant; what matters is the potentized energy and its suitability.^[1,3]

4.2 The Minimum Dose

§275: “The suitability of a medicine for any given case of disease does not depend on its accurate homoeopathic selection alone, but likewise on the proper size, or rather smallness, of



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the dose of it.” Hahnemann warns that an inappropriately large dose, even of the similimum, may produce harm by its very homoeopathicity.^[1]

§276: An excessively strong dose of the indicated remedy acts homoeopathically at first, then may produce inimical, medicinal effects — a “homoeopathic aggravation” arising purely from over-dosing.^[1]

§277: For this reason, the physician should be convinced that the smallest doses — gradually ascending in strength as needed — are sufficient to cure.^[1]

§278: “Now the question arises, what is the most suitable dose (quantum) for the dose-remedy?” — the very heart of posology.^[1]

4.3 Dynamization and the Medicinal Power (§269–§270, §246)

§269 defines dynamization as the process by which the medicinal properties of crude substances are developed and changed into a condition which enables them to act more spiritually upon the vital force. Hahnemann famously asserts that through dynamization, the healing power of medicines is incalculably increased, while the material dose becomes infinitesimal.^[1]

§270 details the technique of potentization on both the centesimal and — newly in the 6th edition — the 50-millesimal (LM/Q) scale, whereby: one part of medicinal substance is dissolved in a mixture of distilled water and alcohol; each successive step involves dilution with 100 succussions against a hard but elastic surface; and the liquid potentization is medicated onto globules.^[1] The LM scale was Hahnemann’s final answer to the posological problem: it allows daily or frequent repetition of the remedy without aggravation, an impossibility with high centesimal potencies.^[1,2]

4.4 Repetition and the Second Dose (§245–§250)

The 6th edition radically clarifies repetition. §245: no dose of a well-selected remedy can act upon the sick part so as to effect a cure except by repetition — but every dose should be modified in potency to avoid over-stimulation.^[1] §246: a medicine may be repeated at short intervals — even daily for days together — provided the potency of each successive dose is changed slightly, especially with the LM scale in chronic disease.^[1]

§247: It is improper to repeat a dose of the same potency; each repetition should be at a higher degree of dynamization to accomplish more.^[1] §248: the dry dose on a globule versus the dissolved dose in water — the dissolved dose is gentler and permits repetition; the frequency of repetition is regulated by the patient’s response.^[1]



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§249: If the symptoms newly appearing after the medicine are those of a different remedy, the first remedy must not be repeated; a new medicine is indicated.^[1] §250: if improvement followed but the same remedy is wrongly repeated on mere assumption, the remission of disease may be converted into another disease (the beginning of a “proving”).^[1]

4.5 Interpretation of Aggravations (§157–§161; §248 footnote)

§161: Small doses in homoeopathic practice may produce a slight medicinal aggravation during the first hours — a “homoeopathic aggravation” of good omen in acute or recent diseases.^[1] Kent’s interpretation refines this into a prognostic tool: aggravation of symptoms without aggravation of the patient is favorable; aggravation of the patient’s overall state is a sign of wrong remedy or wrong potency.^[2]

4.6 Proving Doses (§128)

§128 prescribes for provers an initially empty (or minimal) dose repeated daily — demonstrating that even an empty globule medicated by dilution is capable of dynamic effect, an extreme posological expression of the doctrine of infinitesimality.^[1]

5. Homoeopathic Philosophy on Posology: Views of the Masters

5.1 James Tyler Kent: Posology and Susceptibility

Kent, in his Lectures on Homoeopathic Philosophy and Lectures on Materia Medica, made posology intelligible in clinical terms.^[2] (1) Potency follows susceptibility — the dose must correspond to the sensibility of the patient; (2) the action of remedies is dynamic — the dose is too small to act materially and can only act dynamically, and the quality (similarity) of the remedy matters infinitely more than the quantity; (3) on repetition, Kent held that the remedy should not be repeated while improvement is continuing, though he acknowledged that Hahnemann’s 6th edition (published later in English by Boericke, 1921) modified his earlier practice toward the use of LM potencies with frequent repetition;^[1,2] (4) Kent classified aggravations — by first reaction, secondary action, over-dosing, and wrong remedy — giving the clinician a posological barometer for patient management.^[2]

5.2 Stuart Close: The Philosophy of the Dose

In The Genius of Homoeopathy, Close articulates the law of the minimum dose — “the smallest quantity of a drug capable of producing curative effect” — derived from the law of similia similibus curentur combined with the dynamic conception of disease; the law of the single remedy, insisting posology is inseparable from single-remedy prescribing; and the argument that



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potentization is not mere dilution, since succussion and trituration liberate and multiply the dynamic energy, the curative dose being one that produces “a gentle, imperceptible impression” upon the vital force.^[3]

5.3 Carroll Dunham: Scientific Rigor of the Dose

Dunham’s Science of Therapeutics insists that the value of a homoeopathic observation depends upon the exactness of the dose; hence posology is a matter of scientific accountability, not convenience. He defended the infinitesimal dose by distinguishing between the chemical action of crude substances and the dynamic action of potentized remedies.^[4]

5.4 von Boenninghausen: Practical Posology

Boenninghausen advocated the use of high potencies with confidence, repetition guided by the cessation of improvement, and a preference for the single dry globule in chronic cases. His clinical correspondence with Hahnemann contributed practical validation of the 6th edition’s posological directions.^[5]

5.5 Roberts and Nash: Clinical Harmonization

Roberts synthesized posology with the doctrine of vital energy, stressing that the dose must be gauged against the vital reaction rather than the pathology.^[7] Nash repeatedly observed that “the smaller the dose, the less the aggravation and the smoother the cure,” endorsing individualization of potency.^[6]

6. Principles of Homoeopathic Posology: A Synthesis

6.1 Principles Governing the Dose

1. Minimum dose: the dose must be the smallest that produces a curative reaction — never large enough to provoke medicinal effects (§§275–278).^[1]
2. Infinitesimal dose with enhanced dynamics: reduction of material quantity and enhancement of dynamic power through potentization (§269).^[1]
3. Individualized dosage: the dose is adjusted to the susceptibility, vital force, age, sensitivity, and nature of the disease of the individual patient.^[1,2]
4. Doctrine of the single dose and single remedy: interpretation of posological effects is possible only with one remedy in one dose or a regulated series of doses.^[3]



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6.2 Principles Governing Potency Selection

Factor	Guidance from Philosophy
Susceptibility	High susceptibility (sensitive, acute, vital patients) → moderate-high potency; low susceptibility or collapsed states → gentle potencies (Kent) ^[2]
Disease character	Acute, recent, superficial → low to medium centesimal; deep-seated chronic, miasmatic → high potency or LM ^[1,2]
Vital force	Robust vital force tolerates higher potency; weak vital force demands lower or LM potencies ^[7]
Sensitivity of patient	Hypersensitive patients: LM or low potencies to avoid aggravation (§248 footnote) ^[1]
Pathological tissue changes	Organ pathology with low vital reserve → caution with high centesimals; LM scale preferred ^[8]
Previous treatment	History of suppression or heavy drugging → gradual, cautious posological approach ^[2,6]

6.3 Principles Governing Repetition

1. The watch-word is the vital reaction, not the clock: repetition is regulated by the patient's response, not by a fixed schedule (§§246–248).^[1]
2. Change of potency on repetition: each successive dose should be given at a slightly higher dynamization (§247).^[1]
3. The dissolved dose: preferable in chronic disease and for sensitive patients; permits graded repetition and prevents aggravation.^[1,2]
4. Stop rules: stop when improvement is progressing; never repeat after amelioration without re-evaluation (§245);^[1,2] never repeat a remedy that has produced new symptoms (§249);^[1] do not repeat merely because “the remedy was right” — repetition requires present indications.^[2]

6.4 The LM (50-Millesimal) Innovation

The LM scale resolves the classical dilemma: high enough dynamization for deep action, yet gentle enough for daily repetition.^[1] Key features: prepared with 100 succussions at each of 50 steps (§270);^[1] administered as the dissolved dose — globules dissolved in water, stirred, and



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taken by spoon, with change of potency of each successive dose; and permits repetition even daily for days together in obstinate chronic cases (§246) — the most advanced posological tool in classical homoeopathy.^[1,8]

7. Discussion

7.1 Posology as Philosophy, Not Arithmetic

The literature demonstrates that homoeopathic posology cannot be reduced to a table of doses. Every element — potency, form (dry/dissolved/olfaction), repetition interval, change of dynamization — is a clinical judgment grounded in the state of the vital force. This is why the Organon situates posology (§§245–263) within the discussion of the employment of medicines rather than in a pharmacopeial appendix.^[1,3]

7.2 Resolving the Apparent Conflict: “Wait” vs. “Repeat Daily”

There exists an apparent tension between Kent’s classical teaching (“do not repeat while improving”) and the 6th edition’s permission of frequent repetition. The resolution lies in understanding that Hahnemann’s later instructions presuppose the LM scale and dissolved doses, whose gentle graduated dynamization avoids the aggravations that necessitated waiting with dry high centesimals.^[1,2] Kent himself, upon encountering Boericke’s translation of the 6th edition, conceded that his teaching would have been modified had the 6th edition been available during his lifetime. The clinician must therefore choose a consistent posological system (Centesimal “watch-and-wait” or LM “modified repetition”) and interpret reactions within it.^[2,9]

7.3 Posology and the Evaluation of Cure

Aggravation, amelioration, suppression, and return of old symptoms are all posologically-mediated phenomena. The direction and significance of these events (Hering’s law; Kent’s classification of aggravations) depend upon correct dosing. A wrongly judged aggravation may lead to premature repetition (over-dosing) or premature change of remedy (loss of the curative thread) — both common clinical errors traceable to posological ignorance.^[2,6]

7.4 The Ethics of the Minimum Dose

The minimum dose is also an ethical doctrine: Hahnemann’s rejection of large doses was a rejection of heroic, iatrogenic medicine. Posology in homoeopathy embodies primum non nocere at the deepest level — cure by the gentlest possible stimulation of the vital force (§2: “highest ideal of cure is rapid, gentle and permanent restoration of health... in the shortest, most reliable and most harmless way”).^[1]



8. Limitations of Classical Posology in Modern Practice

While classical doctrine remains normative, modern practitioners encounter situations the Organon only partially addresses: patients under continuous conventional polypharmacy whose vital reaction is altered; pediatric and geriatric posology where susceptibility fluctuates rapidly; pathological end-stage cases where even the minimum dose may provoke distressing aggravations; and variability in standardization of potencies across pharmacies and pharmacopoeias. These demand posological adaptation while remaining within Organonic principles — an area identified for further research and standardization.^[1,8,9]

9. Conclusion

Posology in homoeopathy is the bridge between the selection of the similimum and its realization as cure. The Organon of Medicine — from the single-drop dilutions of the 5th edition to the 50-millesimal dissolved doses of the 6th — teaches that dosage is a dynamic, individualized, and philosophical act. Kent's doctrine of susceptibility, Close's dynamic conception of the dose, Dunham's scientific rigor, and Boenninghausen's clinical fidelity converge on one truth: the right remedy in the wrong dose may fail, but the right dose of the wrong remedy can never cure.^[1-7]

The role of posology is therefore threefold: (1) Protective — safeguarding the vital force from medicinal harm through minimum dosing; (2) Dynamic — liberating and directing curative energy through potentization; and (3) Regulatory — governing the rhythm of treatment through intelligent repetition and interpretation of reactions.^[1]

A physician ignorant of posology, however skilled in remedy selection, remains incomplete. As Hahnemann's organonic structure implies, the healing art is perfected only when the similimum meets its minimum dose, at the right potency, in the right form, at the right time.^[1]

Declaration

This review is based exclusively on published classical and philosophical literature; no patient data were used. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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