One of the unique characteristics of homeopathy as an evidence-based medical system is the conduct of provings on healthy volunteers. Provings are sometimes compared to conventional phase 1 clinical trials in which the safety and pharmacokinetics of new chemical entities are investigated. While the conduct of a clinical experiment on healthy volunteers as part of the early stage of drug development is a common factor, from that point onwards, homeopathic drug provings are a »drug development pillar« unique to homeopathy.

Homeopathic provings were introduced by Hahnemann, and have been conducted for over 200 years. It is fair to say that David Riley has been one of the most prolific late 20th century modernizers of homeopathic provings, and this is duly reflected in the 1st edition of his book, which was published in 2012.

During the last 5 to 10 years, we have seen what could be described as a »21st century revolution« in the domain of proving methodology and conduct. For instance, the Homœopathic Pharmacopœia Convention of the United States (HPCUS) published its first detailed and extensive proving guideline in 2012. In recent years, the HPCUS proving committee, the European Committee of Homeopathy (ECH) proving committee and the Liga Medicorum Homœopathica Internationalis (LMHI) proving committee held several joint meetings, resulting in giant steps forwards towards a global harmonization of proving guidelines. Much more detailed guidance is now available for all aspects of the conduct of provings, ranging from personnel qualifications and training, description of the investigational proving substance, design, data collection and record keeping, safety assurance, data analysis as well as legal and ethical aspects.

This significantly revised 2nd edition of Riley’s book is therefore particularly useful, because apart from incorporating many improvements as well as some additional substances, it also reflects the most recent developments in the domain of drug provings. This is immediately evident in the first chapter of the 2nd edition by the more contemporary use of language: for instance, explicit reference is made to the need for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of protocols, as well as the Guideline for Good Clinical Practice (GCP) issued by The International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH)\(^1\). Also, explicit reference is made to the regulatory context in that homeopathic provings may be viewed as a special type of phase 1 clinical trials. The important topic of clearly defining mild and transient proving symptoms as specific for provings, while acknowledging the need for adverse event reporting and handling compliant with modern clinical

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research standards, is mentioned from the onset. This effectively sets the tone for this 2nd edition: while provings are specific and unique to homeopathy, at the same time, provings are experiments on human subjects which need to be embedded within the regulatory and legal framework of modern, evidence-based medicine.

The layout of the book has been improved further, and some change made in the way how the remedy pictures are reported. Notably, ›dream‹ symptoms are now listed under a separate header instead of being included in the ›mind‹ sections, and the ›generalities‹ now appear at the end of each chapter.

With regard to the listing and indexing of the provings, all substance names have now been consistently latinized. These are followed by the commonly used synonyms. As a useful new feature, the synonyms are also listed in Appendix 2 ›Register of synonyms‹ at the end of the book, enabling easy identification of the appropriate Latin names.

In terms of content, 7 substances have been added: 2 provings conducted in the 1990s (Acidum fumaricum and Manganum phosphoricum), as well as 5 more recent provings conducted between 2002 and 2011 (para-Benzochinonum, Pelargonium sidoides, Levothyroxinum, Magnesium gluconicum, Magnesium oroticum).

Apart from these new provings, the materia medica of 12 provings published in the 1st edition have been updated and extended (Acidum cis-aconiticum, Adenosinum triphosphoricum dinatrium (ATP), Anthrachinonum, Arteria suis, Baryta oxalsuccinicum, Embryo suis, Glandula suprarenalis suis, Hydrochinonum, Mucosa nasalis suis, Naphthochinonum, Placenta suis, Trichinoylum). The significant advances in proving conduct and methods made during the last 5–10 years include improvements in the methods for ›symptom extraction‹ based on the ›raw data‹ in the prover diaries. Reassessing and reworking the original diary data has enabled the extraction of a ›sharper‹ symptom picture for these substances. So, whilst the overall ›remedy picture‹ of these substances has remained the same, the ›resolution‹ has increased significantly. This is an important advance because the successful individualization of prescribing in homeopathy hinges on matching the symptom picture of the patient with the ›remedy picture‹ of the homeopathic substance.

While some homeopaths argue that there are enough substances already available in the homeopathic materia medica, I am firmly convinced that the success of homeopathy will be determined by its continuing innovation, which includes the introduction of new substances in the materia medica. New substances will hopefully prove to be clinically useful for both existing and new medical challenges we are facing in this day and age. Riley’s book is therefore an example of how we can pave the way for homeopathy’s continued and increased success in the future.

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