LETTERS

ADVICE ON HOMOEOPATHIC PRODUCTS

Clothing naked quackery and legitimising pseudoscience

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At a time of austerity cuts, when treatments that work should be protected, it was depressing to see the government’s Advisory Board on the Registration of Homeopathic Products advertising for four expert and “eminent members of their profession” who can “assimilate complex scientific information” to advise about the “safety and quality of homeopathic medicines.”1 For this they will be paid £325 a day.

Homeopathy has definitively and repeatedly been proved to work no better than placebo or nocebo. It is, in short, bogus. Professionals with faith based (rather than evidence or science based) beliefs in homeopathy may be recognised as eminent by their peers only in so far as those peers think likewise. Indeed, the job specification specifically precludes proper scientists and sceptical lay people since it requires applicants to take homeopathy seriously. The appointment procedure begs several questions of public policy. The scientific community will be at best bemused and at worst outraged over this ill-conceived process.

What possible purpose does this board serve—other than to clothe naked quackery and legitimise pseudoscience?

Competing interests: All the authors belong to Healthwatch-UK (www.healthwatch-uk.org.uk), a charity that promotes evidence based treatment. NR is the president of HealthWatch and a trustee of Sense About Science, which promotes, well, sense about science.


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