

# Homoeopathic Provings

“Proving” is the homoeopathic term for the testing of a substance on healthy human volunteers to discover what symptoms it produces and therefore treats. Today, provings are often called pathogenetic trials. Most provings are carried out using raw animal, vegetable or mineral matter, but chemicals, processed materials and even imponderables, such as radiation or magnetism, can and have been proved.

Homoeopathic ‘provings’, involve giving safe amounts of the substance to ‘provers’ for the purpose of producing symptoms. If people continually take any substance when not needed, or more often than needed, they will eventually experience a proving. These symptoms are then recorded in a homoeopathic materia medica forming a record of substances and the symptoms they produce.

**How is a Proving Conducted:** Substances are tested on healthy volunteers in safe doses. Several pilules (usually 30c) are given each day until the prover experiences symptoms, at which time the doses are stopped and the symptoms recorded. These symptoms disappear at the completion of a proving. Testing substances in potency means that a greater range of symptoms will be produced than if it was tested in its crude form. Provings are conducted on both male and female provers to draw out the full range of effects. For instance, along with its other symptoms, *Lilium tigrinum* can produce ovarian pain and menstrual irregularities, symptoms that would have been lost if the remedy had only been tested on males. Provings are not usually carried out on animals as they cannot provide accurate information on the symptoms they are experiencing.

Provings are only conducted on healthy individuals so that the symptoms recorded will be from the substance alone and not the symptoms of a pre-existing illness. The substance being tested creates symptoms according to the prover’s individual weaknesses and temporarily creates a state of imbalance. Hahnemann stated that the vitality or life force of the prover reacts to restore balance and return the individual to health. In the process, vitality is strengthened, weaknesses are corrected and the person becomes more resistant to the problem in the future.

Provings have been conducted for over 200 years and more recently the “double-blind” method with a placebo control is used. This means that both provers and supervisors involved in the proving do not know what is being tested, or, who is receiving placebo and who is receiving the actual substance. Such measures help to reduce “observer bias” that could influence the reporting or recording of symptoms.

**Supervision:** While the prover has the responsibility of recording each symptom they also have a supervisor whose role is to review the symptoms on a daily basis with the prover to clarify descriptions or to elicit missing information. All symptoms are recorded as raw data without interpretation by the prover and supervisor. When symptoms appear, the prover tests the modalities or conditions that make a symptom better or worse. They check the effect of activities such as lying down, sitting, standing, temperature changes, motion, eating, drinking, touch, times of the day, and so on, on the symptom.

A proving is considered *complete* when no new symptoms can be produced from a substance after numerous tests in a number of potencies over a range of constitutions, ages and genders. To date, more than 5,000 substances have been entered into the homoeopathic materia medica, some having been more fully proved than others.

Not every prover experiences all of the symptoms of a substance during a proving. Some provers develop many symptoms while others experience only a few depending on their individual sensitivity, underlying constitution and areas of susceptibility or weakness.

Next month we will explore **Strange, Rare and Peculiar Symptoms**.