

Gender-specific health advice in German journals for homeopathic patients (1880-2000)

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Abstract

Gender-specific approaches to health advice literature are not yet very common in research into alternative forms of medicine. The present article describes the first results of an explorative study of a sample of German journals for homeopathic patients. The results point to need to replace the thesis suggesting an all-time critical attitude of organized laypeople towards physicians by a co-competence of patients and doctors. Also the belief in one-sided medicalization of the women's bodies and minds ought to be put into question, as much of the health communication discussed here concerned men and women alike. Nevertheless, women did play a preferential role in the health discourse along the last 120 years.

Keywords

Alternative medicine; Journals for patients; Health advice; Gender

Conselhos em saúde segundo o sexo em periódicos alemães para pacientes homeopáticos

Resumo

Abordagens especificamente focadas em questões de gênero referida à literatura sobre conselhos em saúde não são muito frequentes em estudos sobre medicinas alternativas. O presente artigo descreve os resultados preliminares de um estudo conduzido com uma amostra de periódicos alemães para pacientes homeopáticos. Os resultados apontam para a necessidade de substituir a tese que sustenta a existência de uma única atitude entre as organizações leigas a respeito dos médicos por aquela de co-competência de médicos e pacientes. Também a crença na medicalização unilateral do corpo feminino precisa ser revista, porquanto grande parte da comunicação em saúde discutida aqui se refere a homens e mulheres por igual. No entanto, é fato que as mulheres tiveram um papel privilegiado no discurso da saúde nos últimos 120 anos.

Palavras-chave

Medicina alternativa; Periódicos para pacientes; Conselhos em saúde; Gênero

Introduction

A gender-specific approach to health advice literature is not yet very common in research into alternative forms of medicine.¹ Nor is it usual to consider women and men in equal measure.² Too often, “gender” is used as a synonym for “women” – adding involuntarily to the wrong idea that men are the general, women the particular case.³

In this article I present the first results of an explorative study of a sample of German journals for homeopathic patients. The two most important journals were published by a pharmaceutical company to disseminate knowledge about homeopathy, and by the umbrella organization of the homeopathic lay associations, respectively. I have chosen the latter, because it seems to me it expressed in a more direct way the interests of the patients, unbiased by the commercial interests of a medicine manufacturer.

Homeopathy and the lay public

The homeopathic lay associations were founded mainly after 1870.⁴ I shall just stress one point here: the collective self-help, which was the reason to found those

¹ There are publications on health advice for women in general journals. Especially in dissertations on medical history, medical advice in a strict sense is quite exclusively considered. The state of research in homeopathy is better concerning gender specific illnesses and therapy, see Sabine Brehme, *Krankheit und Geschlecht: Syphilis und Menstruation in den frühen Krankenjournalen (1801-1809) Samuel Hahnemann* (Marburg: Tectum, 2006). Explicitly on gender, see Martin Dinges, “Men’s Bodies ‘Explained’ on a Daily Basis in Letters from Patients to Samuel Hahnemann (1830-1835),” in *Patients in the History of Homoeopathy*, ed. Martin Dinges (Sheffield: European Association for the History of Medicine and Health, 2002), 85-118; and Bettina Brockmeyer, *Selbstverständnisse: Dialoge über Körper und Gemüt im frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009). On systematic research on treatments of patients approaching the statistical aspects of gender distribution at least, see Reinhard Hickmann, *Das psorische Leiden der Antonie Volkmann: Edition und Kommentar einer Krankengeschichte aus Hahnemanns Krankenjournalen von 1819-1831* (Heidelberg: Haug, 1994); Christian Gehrke, “Die Patientenbriefe der Mathilde von Berenhorst (1808-1874): Edition und Kommentar einer Krankengeschichte von 1832-1833” (dissertation, University of Göttingen, 2000); and Jens Busche, *Ein homöopathisches Patientennetzwerk im Herzogtum Anhalt-Bernburg: die Familie von Kersten und ihr Umfeld in den Jahren 1831-1835* (Stuttgart: Haug, 2008).

² The exception is Andrea Weigl, “Geschlechterbilder und geschlechtsspezifische Therapien in deutschsprachigen Patientenratgebern der Homöopathie und Naturheilkunde (ca. 1870-1930),” *Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte* 30 (2012): 207-28. On natural healing, see Osamu Hattori, *Das Familienbild in der Naturheilkunde* [n.p]. See also Christopher David O’Shea, “Visions of Masculinity: Home-health Advice Literature, Medical Discourse and Male Sexuality in English-Canada, 1870-1914” (Doctoral dissertation, University of Guelph, 2003).

³ See, e.g., Cheryl K. Warsh (ed.), *Gender, Health, and Popular Culture: Historical Perspectives* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2011.)

⁴ Pioneering was Eberhard Wolff, *Gesundheitsverein und Medikalierungsprozess: der Homöopathische Verein Heidenheim/Brenz zwischen 1886 und 1945* (Tübingen, 1989); cf. also Dörte Staudt, “[...] den Blick der Laien auf das Ganze gerichtet [...]”: homöopathische Laienorganisationen am Ende des 19. und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts,” in *Homöopathie: Patienten, Heilkundige, Institutionen: von den Anfängen bis heute*, ed.

associations. To understand this, one must imagine Germany in the 1870s: people have been reading about homeopathy as one of the contemporary medical systems in papers for the cultivated classes since the 1820s.⁵

Those readers might have had also in hand a copy of a health book entitled *Homeopathic Home Physician*, which was one of the many books on health at that time, and that was full of practical advice on how to use homeopathy in case of illness. If these readers were willing to give homeopathy a try, however, two problems remained, especially when they lived in small towns. The first was how to get hold of the medicines, when they were not available at the local pharmacy, as it was often the case. This problem could be solved by buying a homeopathy chest containing all the standard medications by mail order.⁶ As such a chest was quite an investment, it was a good idea to put the money of various persons together, and buy a larger chest, which was cheaper in comparison. Once the medicines arrived, the more experienced users could introduce them to the ones who were new to such medicines. This might also avoid frustration, which could lead people to turn away from homeopathy.⁷ The second problem was how to find a homeopathic physician, or an experienced lay healer at a time when they were still rare.

Considering this situation one can easily imagine that there were good reasons for founding an association. Such institution would make it possible to organize individual self-help, help each other in the choice of medicines by studying health guides together when necessary, and to improve the overall general knowledge on health and homeopathy by listening to guest lecturers. Journals were particularly helpful in keeping the interest in homeopathy alive, getting actual information for oneself, and about the public debate about this medical system. Thus, they might be considered as means for empowering laypeople.

The lay associations had regional strongholds. They worked quite publically, organizing health conferences and other activities, such as training courses in wound dressing or field trips to collect herbs as raw material for some of the homeopathic medicines. The associations also played an important role as lobbyists for the public recognition of homeopathy.

Martin Dinges (Heidelberg: Karl F. Haug, 1996), 86-101; "The Role of Laymen in the History of German Homeopathy," in *Culture, Knowledge, and Healing: Historical Perspectives of Homeopathic Medicine in Europe and North America*, ed. Robert Jütte, Guenter B. Risse, & John Woodward (Sheffield: European Association for the History of Medicine and Health, 1998), 199-215; Bertram Karrasch, *Volkshelkundliche Laienverbände im Dritten Reich* (Stuttgart: Hippokrates, 1998), 123-47. For the wider context, see Cornelia Regin, *Selbsthilfe und Gesundheitspolitik: die Naturheilbewegung im Kaiserreich (1889 bis 1914)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1995).

⁵ See most recently, Florian Mildenerger, *Medizinische Belehrung für das Bürgertum: medikale Kulturen in der Zeitschrift "Die Gartenlaube" (1853 - 1944)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2012).

⁶ On the early history of lay associations, see Marion Baschin, *Die Geschichte der Selbstmedikation in der Homöopathie* (Essen: KVC, 2012), 211 et seq; 232.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 245 et seq; 254 et seq.

The history of these associations after 1870 was that of a generation and a half of constant growth until the World War I. Thus, at that moment there were hundreds of associations all over the German *Reich*, with tens of thousands of members. The growth of the homeopathic associations slowed down slightly during the Weimar Republic, when women's lay associations were founded in the larger cities as an expression of the newly found self-confidence of the "modern German woman"⁸. During the Nazi period the associations were brought into line, to experience a period of survival after World War II.

But times were changing. Conventional medicine was triumphing, and as consequence homeopathy and the patients' associations declined. As now there were pharmacists and homeopathic doctors almost everywhere, the initial reason for founding lay associations no longer existed – apart from the need for self-medication in a group. Therefore it is all the more interesting that a certain renaissance of the associative movement can be observed during the later 1980s. The interest in the associations aimed at a certain empowerment of patients in the light of the criticism of the power of specialists. From that decade onwards, the main task of associations consists in informing the wider public about the possible contributions of homeopathy to healthcare. Memberships peaked during the first decade of the 21st century – with well over 5,000 members, mainly in Southern Germany.

The abovementioned data should suffice to give a basic idea about the readership of the journal I have chosen. A copy was given to every member of the homeopathic lay associations in Southwestern Germany, where *Hahnemannia* was the active umbrella organization for many lay associations. I further selected years 1880, 1920, 1960, and 2000 for the purpose of comparison. The sample includes ordinary years only, i.e., when there was no any particular political turmoil. The 40-year interval between the selected should afford us a first impression relative to continuity and change in health advice.

General – not gender-specific – trends of journal *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* during its first 120 years

Let us now try to understand some general trends in the content of the journal over 120 years. In 1880, the subjects dealt with were epidemics, vaccination, public health – and a good number of actual cases from the homeopathic practice to prove the efficacy of homeopathy. The latter is discussed at a quite high professional level for the lay readers. Articles on dietetics concerned the right balance between work and leisure.

⁸ Ibid, 229 et seq.

In 1920, sexually transmitted diseases and their social background play a more important role – as in the public debate during this period as a whole. Theoretical developments of homeopathy are also discussed – again at a high level. Articles on dietetics focus more on cases of illness. The reader envisaged in those first two investigated years was very much a competent lay person, well informed about homeopathy and its non-acceptance by the medical establishment, ready to defend the interests of the homeopathic physician.

In 1960, concrete naturopathic and homeopathic advice, with reports from the practice, and dietary recommendations move to the foreground. They partly address healthy persons who want to lose weight. The case reports exhibit less professional detachment, but show more empathy with the patients' suffering. They take the importance of the psyche as a cause of illness into consideration. In 1960, the envisaged reader was the family, the women in particular, especially in connection with the responsibility for cooking the family meals, as persons interested in homeopathic and naturopathic health advice. The political element of the earlier years - e.g., debates on the social background of epidemics, public health, or the refutation of homeopathy by conventional doctors – had all but vanished. These findings agree the fact that by then, homeopathy had become acknowledged as a medical specialization by the Medical Council (*Ärztammer*).⁹

In the year 2000, the recommendations focus on naturopathic and homeopathic medications for minor ailments, but also as adjuvant treatment to very invasive therapies such as vasectomy. The medical details given are less precise – for instance, with regard to doses – than they had been in earlier times. Instead, there is more emphasis on the importance of consulting a physician. Illness is mostly seen as a result of mental problems, and recommendations for water cures and the diet are systematically included. Criticism of conventional medicine, and of the lack of communication between physician and patient come to expression. The addressee is now a reader interested in all kinds of alternative medicines, and an additional interest in the diet – not to say lifestyles. Not all the readers were necessarily members of medical lay associations.

Sources and sample

Let us now have a look at the sources and our sample. *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* was published monthly, and had 180 pages in 1880. In 1920 it had 116 pages, and additional 60 pages with internal news relative the associations, and

⁹ Martin Dinges, "Professionalisierung homöopathischer Ärzte: Deutschland und Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika im Vergleich," *Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte* 14 (1995): 143-72; Jütte, Risse, & Woodward, ed., 173-98.

advertising. In 1960, it had 198 pages. In 2000, the title had changed to *Natur und Heilen*, as a result of the merger with another homeopathic journal for patients during the period of decline homeopathy from 1950 until 1980s, and the golden age of conventional medicine. At the turn of the millennium this newspaper had 792 pages and was sold across the entire country. Articles became longer and more diverting. They were less “scientific”. The first three sampled years have approximately the same number of pages, while the last one is much more comprehensive. Unfortunately, it cannot be established how many copies were sold.

The content of all the articles and adverts giving health advice and/or referring to gender to some extent was included in a database. Advertising was an important function of these journals, and a source of information for the patients.¹⁰ Therefore, I rated important to take both into account, while distinguishing between the two categories (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of articles and adverts over time

	1880	1920	1960	2000	Total
Articles and ads	48	34	105	260	447
Articles only	47	22	84	220	373

Of the articles analyzed, 153 were taken from *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* and 220 from *Natur und Heilen*. Thirty-four adverts were published in *Homöopathische Monatsblätter*, and 40 in *Natur und Heilen*. The number of adverts is significantly lower, because only the ones with patent references to gender were included. The proportion of adverts is quite irregular from one sampled year to the next. This is due to the fact that there was much less advertising in the early years, and gender played a much less visible role.

In both categories, the larger numbers in the last sampled year are evident. We have to keep this in mind in any quantitative statement, and distinguish between earlier samples and the last ones to avoid biased outcomes.

A form was designed for both categories of texts (articles and adverts) listing their author, title, and place of publication, as well as many other data described below.

¹⁰Edda Christine Hoffmann, “Eine Untersuchung der Anzeigenwerbung in populärmedizinischen Zeitschriften von 1900 - 1930 am Beispiel der Homöopathischen Monatsblätter, Eine Untersuchung der Anzeigenwerbung in populärmedizinischen Zeitschriften von 1900 - 1930 am Beispiel der Homöopathischen Monatsblätter” (Dissertation, University of Tübingen, 2013).

The professional background of the authors is not easy to find out. Often “Redaktion” or just initials are given, in many cases a name without any professional addendum. An academic title (Dr. or Dr. med.) without a name has been counted as a physician, as also when just a name is given with an academic title, and with persons qualified as physicians inside the text. The results show that the participation of physicians in the popularization of gendered information in our sample is significant, particularly during the first two sampled years, when they wrote between half and nearly all the articles. In 1960 their part becomes significantly smaller, falling to one third. This tendency is even much more visible in 2000, when it goes down to less than a fourth. During the second half of the 20th century popularizing medicine increasingly became a competence not necessarily linked to the academic qualification of physicians, but gradually passed to the hands of the new profession of journalist (table 2).

Table 2. Articles written by physicians compared to the total

	1880	1960	1960	2000	Total
Physicians	27/47	20/22	23/48	11/220	81/373
	(57.42%)	(90.9%)	(47.91%)	(5.0%)	(21.71%)

The authors’ gender might have had some influence on the content, even when one concedes that the medical ideas of the time tended to produce a certain standardized “scientific” discourse. The latter is expressed in quite a similar manner in the writings of men and women up to the time when a conscious gendering process set in – very gradually along the 1970s, and eventually also during the 1980s. The gender of most authors is unknown (243 cases). For the rest, most authors of articles were male - as one would expect: 73 male compared to 48 female authors. The first seven articles written by woman-authors make a timid appearance in 1960, followed by 41 articles in 2000. However, further 81 authors are categorized as “physicians”, and probably at least two thirds of them were male, because 62 wrote before 2000, when women made the first noticeable impact on the gender balance of our sample.¹¹ These findings lead to a rough estimate of 140 male and about (or over?) 50 female authors, most of them publishing as late as in 2000. From this point of view, health competence in the public debate was a clear prerogative of men, at least until the 1960s.

¹¹ Number of physicians writing: 1880: 28; 1920: 21; 1960: 23; 2000: 12.

A gendered concept of health and a gendered audience?

We tried to categorize the main focus of the articles and the adverts to get a better idea of the authors' implicit idea of health, and the distinction they made among body, soul and sex.¹² It was definitely the physical state of the body that had the priority in 431 of 447 cases, the psyche was mentioned in 31 cases, and sexuality only in three. The total is higher than the "statistical population" (*statistische Grundgesamtheit*), because in 26 cases, body and soul were equally addressed. On the whole, illness was mainly seen as a physical problem, while the psyche played a very minor role, with something like 10% of all items referring to it.

Table 3. Body, psyche and gender

The "psyche" as gendered category	
Man	Woman
5	8
"Body and psyche" as gendered categories	
Man	Woman
4	8
Boy	Girl
1	1
Old man	Old woman
-	-

I wondered whether the "psyche" was used in the articles as a gendered category (Table 3). As expected, the women were definitely more often addressed in this context. If we take into account the articles that addressed both, body and soul, the gender gap repeats. Interestingly enough, this is not the case with boys and girls, which are written about in equal measure. The psychological problems of the elderly, men and women, were never a topic, despite the incidence of old age depression, which was a phenomenon well known to the general public, certainly in 2000.

I also sought to approach the health resources that the patients had at hand to strengthen autonomously their health, i.e., bodies of knowledge, but also practices such as nutrition, physical exercise, and hygiene. For this purpose, the main focus of the articles and adverts was differentiated based on whether it primarily concerned

¹² On implicit anthropologies, cf. Susanne Hoffmann, *Gesunder Alltag im 20. Jahrhundert: geschlechterspezifische Diskurse und gesundheitsrelevante Verhaltensstile in deutschsprachigen Ländern* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2010), 75 et seq.

illness or health. Again, most of the items are nonspecific, and the remainder of the source material does not produce a true result, when the content of the articles is taken into account. The fact that more articles about illness concern women than men (260 unspecified; 48 relative to women; 34 relative to men) does not make much sense. Contrariwise, the fact that the articles with health as their primary focus address women three times more often than men indicates that women were seen as more competent and/or were credited with more responsibility in this field when personal or family affairs were considered (197 unspecified; 31 relative women; 11 relative to men).

Let us now have a look at the overall gender distribution of the addressees of articles and adverts. It is not easy to answer even simple questions such as: How many articles addressed women, and how many addressed men? Most articles are not explicitly gender-specific: 114 articles concern just "patients", whose gender specificity could not be established; 55 articles are about "children", eight about older adults, and 213 do not indicate any definable addressee presenting the same problem. Some texts address gender only implicitly. We did integrate these findings in decision-making about categories (Table 4).

Table 4. A gendered audience: addressees of articles

	Total	1880	1920	1960	2000
Women	76	15	10	19	32
Men	43	8	7	17	11
Girls	15	3	2	4	6
Boys	18	5	4	7	2
Old women	2	-	-	1	1
Old men	3	-	-	3	-

Total females: 93. Total males: 64

As a result, in the remaining 118 articles and adverts women were addressed nearly twice as often as men. Adding girls, boys and older adults together, who were isolated as particular age groups, the gender gap shrinks to an advantage of 1.5 times favorable to women. Incidentally, all articles about older men date from 1960, however, they are specific relative to the medication, not to the old age of men.¹³ Interestingly

¹³ Anonym, "Zwei Rhus-toxicodendron-Fälle," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 3 (1960): 34; F. Rummel, "Aus altem homöopathischem Schrifttum. Ketzereien," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 7 (1960): 100-2; Chr. Von Hartungen, "Noch einiges über *Arnica montana*," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 12 (1960): 184-6.

enough, boys are mentioned more often than girls. This finding does not agree with other evidence indicating that boys are, and were, taken less often to physicians than girls.¹⁴ Sometimes male babies were taken more frequently to doctor, which might have been due to the boys' greater vulnerability – at a very early age, and during childhood and adolescence due to accidents, but also because their mothers were more aware of their state of health. All in all, once again the women were considered more responsible in this regard than men.

Competence for health

Another key issue relative to readers from lay associations was their degree of independence in healthcare, and their relationship with the physicians. Particularly in the 1970s, medical historians argued that lay associations were supposedly very critical of physicians. Our evidence indicates a different result (Table 5).

Table 5. Ascriptions of competence for health

	Total	1880	1920	1960	2000
Physician and patient together	122	36	24	34	28
Physician	15	3	0	2	9
Female patient	16	0	0	4	12
Male patient	2	0	1	0	1

The articles ascribe the competence to solve health problems to both patient and physician together. Only in less than 10% of the cases the physician alone or the female patient alone is mentioned. Special issues for women in 1960 were the health risks of housewives and the children's health, and in 2000 contraception, pregnancy, menstruation, menopause, and the children's health.¹⁵ It seems like the medicalization

¹⁴ Marion Baschin, *Wer lässt sich von einem Homöopathen behandeln? Die Patienten des Clemens Maria Franz von Bönninghausen (1785-1864)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2010), 188 et seq. (much less male babies and boys than girls); cf. Alois Unterkircher, "Männer als Patienten. Krankheitsverhalten von Männern im ländlichen Raum in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel der Privatpraxis des Südtiroler Arztes Franz von Ottenthal" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Innsbruck, 2012), 155; 206 (more male babies, less boys than girls).

¹⁵ Karl Fischle, "Wichtige aktuelle Mitteilungen. 2. Gefährliche Reinigungsmittel," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 11 (1960): 171; Redaktion (Die Rose), "Extra-Kost für Klaus und Inge," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 6 (1960): 95f Susan S. Weed, "Frauenheilkunde. Verhütungspflanzen statt Pille?," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 12 (2000): 36-40; GL, "Folsäurebedarf in der Schwangerschaft," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 9 (2000): 55; Ortrud Weinzierl, "Frauenheilkunde. Lebensmittel Wechseljahre. Die Hormone. Fluch oder Segen," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 11 (2000): 18-25; g+e, "Soja gegen Hitzewallungen," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 12 (2000): 7.

of the female body had become more significant at the switch of the millennium, following a stronger focus on the housewife's role at the beginning of the restorative 1960s. Male patients alone occur last, being 1.3%, with the very specific suggestion to avoid extramarital sex to escape sexual transmissible diseases in 1920, and fertility issues in 2000.¹⁶ We might deduce that, as a whole, the authors imagined the readers as a population very much used to consulting doctors, accepting their role as competent physicians, while at the same time claiming a certain degree of co-competence in managing care.¹⁷ The physician is not seen as an unquestionable authority. Women are seen as being more capable than men with regard to managing care, even on their own.

Let us have a closer look into the relationship between patient and doctor. A critical attitude towards physicians starts as early the 1880s based on the reproach made to a doctor of having a too complicated diet for everyday life. This critical view of difficult diets is based on the idea that a specific homeopathic diet is less relevant than an overall healthy lifestyle. That argument is applied also to Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843), the founder of homeopathy himself.¹⁸ Another reproach formulated by a homeopathic doctor at that time is that physicians use evil substances taken from ill persons in vaccinations, thus putting the life of children at risk.¹⁹ Vaccination as a controversial topic is mentioned in our sample from 1880 (eight times), and again in 2000 (twice) – however not in the intermediate sampled years. Hasty prescriptions – this time antibiotics – are a subject of criticism against physicians in 2000.²⁰ The article claims that patients should be sufficiently informed by the physician to use such dangerous drugs in the proper manner. In 1960, patients' self-monitoring is proposed for all cases where cancer is a possibility, while medical advice is advocated in doubtful cases as a second step.²¹ Lay literature is advertised with the explicit advice to use it in milder ailments, and in the more severe cases only until the physician finds the appropriate homeopathic medication. The same applies to well-meant advice given to neighbors, but only until the arrival of the specialist.²² The limits to parental self-

¹⁶ Dr. Haedicke, "Ein offenes Wort über die Geschlechtskrankheiten und das ärztliche Berufsgeheimnis," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 45, no. 10 (1920): 97; Dr. M. Möll/Naturheilpraxis, "Fertilitätsstörungen - eine Frage der Zinkversorgung," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 10 (2000): 7.

¹⁷ On becoming used to the doctor, see the evidence from bourgeois autobiography in Jens Lachmund, & Gunnar Stolberg, *Patientenwelten: Krankheit und Medizin vom späten 18. bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert im Spiegel von Autobiographien* (Opladen: Springer, 1995), 67 et seq; Hoffmann, *Gesunder Alltag*, 361 et seq.

¹⁸ Redaktion, "Etwas über Diät," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 5, no. 1 (1880): 5.

¹⁹ U. Zöppritz, "Schattenbilder aus dem Württembergischen Impfwesen," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 5, no. 6 (1880): 81-8.

²⁰ Gerhard Leibold, "Antibiotikaresistenz," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 2 (2000): 82-5.

²¹ Redaktion, "Sieben Warnzeichen zur Früherkennung von Krebs," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 1 (1960): 13.

²² Paracelsus Verlag, "Homöopathisches Laienbrevier (Werbetext)," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 7 (1960): 107.

medication of their children are addressed by a physician.²³ At the same time, the patients are advised to have patience, good will, and confidence in their doctors.²⁴ Another article from 1960 discusses the limits of the self-help in a man living under constant stress: were a light diet (*Schonkost*) and taking time for meals not be helpful, the person should consult a doctor.²⁵ In 2000 criticism of the lack of communication between doctor and patient became more explicit. The self-healing capacity of the patient is emphasized – and even hypnosis is considered as a possibility – possibly to strengthen the relationship of trust between both. On the other hand, the medical competence of the doctor is stressed within the context of prescriptions of more than one kind of drugs, such as contraceptives and antibiotics.²⁶ The conclusion on this point is that the image of the doctor remains ambiguous throughout the entire sample.

Health behavior

Probably the most important aspect of a patient's possible contribution to his or health is his or her behavior. We had some hypotheses regarding the gendering of suggestions concerning certain features relevant to health. Suggestions concerning nutrition with explicit gender reference, for example, were expected to be mostly addressed to women. In fact, 11 of the 13 cases concern women, one men, and one both genders (it deals with the avoidance of cholesterol). They all date from 1960 and 2000. Interestingly enough, before then, it was apparently not necessary to address such articles explicitly to women.

We expected that the recommendation to “take it easy and to look after oneself” (*Schonung*) would be given more often to women, as they were considered to be the “weaker sex” in the anthropology of that time. In fact, in 24 cases the recommendation is “to take it easy”, but in most cases the gender is unspecified. From the remaining six cases, women were exclusively addressed in four, a man once, and both genders explicitly once. Health advice in this field is mostly kept general, and only gendered to a limited degree, focusing more on women than on men.

Avoidance of dangerous or risky practices may help improve your health. This is suggested seven times. In the 1960s, avoidance of alcohol in children is recommended – even for external use.²⁷ Smoking in the sick room in hospitals, which

²³ Dr. Bethmann, “Erfahrungen mit China-Zwittersamen, ‘Wurmsamen’,” *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 5 (1960): 71.

²⁴ Redaktion, “Geduld und Wille gehören zum Gesundwerden,” *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 7 (1960): 108.

²⁵ Redaktion, “Mißhandeln Sie nicht Ihren Magen,” *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 8 (1960): 132.

²⁶ G+e, “Schwanger trotz Pille,” *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 77, no. 4 (2000): 8.

²⁷ Redaktion, “Alkohol ist für Kinder gefährlich,” *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 4 (1960): 64.

was seemingly a current practice in 1960, should also be avoided.²⁸ In 2000, a general warning against smoking is published - for the sake of the skin.²⁹ In one case, girls are addressed with regard to the self-destructive practice of eating their hair.³⁰ This is interpreted as a sign of mental illness, which necessitates consulting a physician. Mothers are mentioned once mothers with regard to cooking, pointing out the dangers of getting lung cancer caused by the smoke from oil in the kitchen while preparing meals according to the Chinese manner.³¹ In another case, women are addressed regarding the dangers of nail polish.³² The only warning that concerns both genders is directed against the excessive use of mobile phones, which are supposed to cause tumors as a result of electrosmog.³³

In Germany, where physical exercise with bare chest in the cold morning hours was a commonly advised practice, advocated in various forms of gymnastics and sports training inside the movement of life reform (*Lebensreformbewegung*). We expected to find suggestions for self-hardening (*Abhärtung*) also in the homeopathic journals.³⁴ However, one single mention to hardening – as a pedagogic measure - could be found, in an article on the necessary hardening of children against cold weather and psychological stress published in 1960.³⁵ Playing outside disregarding the weather conditions, and wearing warm cloths should be the rule, and a hardening cure sought to be performed twice per year, consisting of gym in the morning, dry brushing of the body, and evening baths. The only other piece of advice is a reference to daily walks – particularly indicated for individuals with sedentary professions.³⁶ It was published late, in 1960, and must be understood as a compensation for the long periods sitting

²⁸ Redaktion, "Vom Rauchen im Krankenzimmer," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 7 (1960): 108 et seq.

²⁹ Der Kassenarzt, "Geräucherte Haut," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 12 (2000): 7.

³⁰ G+e, "Wenn junge Mädchen ihre Haare essen," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 5 (2000): 7.

³¹ "Leben und Gesundheit, Lungenkrebsrisiko in der Küche," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 11 (2000): 8.

³² "Öko-Test-Magazin, Nagelprobe," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 1 (2000): 6.

³³ AZ, "Dringende Warnung vor Handys," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 11 (2000): 7.

³⁴ On various practices for body exercises of the reform movement, which served partially for hardening, see, 198; 204–7; 210 et seq; Robert Jütte, *Geschichte der alternativen Medizin: von der Volksmedizin zu den unkonventionellen Therapien von heute* (München: Beck, 1996), 117 et seq; Maren Möhring, *Marmorleiber: Körperbildung in der deutschen Nacktkultur (1890 - 1930)* (Köln: Böhlau, 2004), 141 et seq; Uwe Heyll, *Wasser, Fasten, Luft und Licht: die Geschichte der Naturheilkunde in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2006), 76 et seq; Bernd Wedemeyer, "Der Körper des Reformers. Zwischen Leibesübung, Lebensstil und Religion," in *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, ed. Kai Buchholz (Darmstadt, 2001), 399-401; Bernd Wedemeyer, "Der neue Mensch": *Körperkultur im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 354 et seq.; s.a. Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreiber, *Aerztliche Zimmergymnastik: oder System der ohne Geräth und Beistand überall ausführbaren heilgymnastischen Freiübungen als Mittel der Gesundheit und Lebenstüchtigkeit für beide Geschlechter, jedes Alter und alle Gebrauchszwecke entworfen*, 10th ed. (Leipzig 1877, originally from 1855 several times enlarged edition).

³⁵ Prof. Dr. med. K. Hofmeier, "Wie kann ich mein Kind abhärten?," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 10 (1960): 161.

³⁶ Redaktion, "Der tägliche Spaziergang," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 7 (1960): 107; Redaktion, "Gesundheitserzieherische Empfehlungen für 'Schreibtischmenschen'," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 8 (1960): 131.

down, which considered harmful. Jogging is advised very cautiously – and mentioned only in connection with men!³⁷

Since the turn of the 18th century, prevention had always and primarily targeted women within the context of giving birth, childrearing or household hygiene, the exception being the sexually transmitted diseases, where men were sometimes addressed. Among the 62 indications regarding all sorts of prevention, only seven were explicitly gender-specific, five of them concerning women, and two children.

Suggestions for healthy lifestyles are given 26 times, without gender specification gender. The seven explicitly gendered cases addressed only women, and date from 1960 onwards. They included the recommendation to stay at home to look after the children instead of taking up paid work.³⁸ In 2000 the women were advised to cultivate a good relationship with their own body during menstruation.³⁹ Pain in the course of menstruation was supposed to be caused by an unnatural lifestyle. Suppressed wishes to become pregnant, or an unnatural attitude towards sex are named as reasons for feeling bad. Menstruation is supposed to be a period of elimination/excretion, cleaning of the body, and regeneration. Peace, physical exercise such as Yoga, taking baths with lotions, appropriated nutrition, healing plants, and homeopathy would support that natural process. It is evident how the contemporary discourse on alternative ways of life and sexuality was hybridized with psychology and older ideas stemming even from humoral pathology.

General health information is given 58 times. It addressed the packaging of medications, the impact of vaccinations, and many other topics. In five out of six cases, the women are explicitly warned about personal health risks, for example, relative to contraception, and one warning against a dangerous cleaning agent appeals to their role as housewives. The only warning for men concerns the lower quality of sperm associated with ingredients used in packaging (*Verpackung*) and in their habitual diets.⁴⁰

Ninety-seven recommendations concern household remedies. As expectable, seven of eight explicit references target women. Men are advised just once, in 2000, to add zinc to improve the quality of their sperm.⁴¹

Medications are suggested 106 times, while gender references are made eight times, five of them targeting women. The men are advised twice in adverts to take certain medications to become physically fitter, and strengthen their nerves,

³⁷ Prof. Dr. C. Diem, "Soll ich laufen?," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 4 (1960): 62-4.

³⁸ Redaktion, "Mutti, wir warten auf Dich!," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 6 (1960): 95.

³⁹ Heidi Brand, & Dr. med. Anja Maria Engelsing, "Frauenkrankheiten naturgemäß behandeln, 1. Teil: Menstruationszyklus und Dysmenorrhoe," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 1 (2000): 38-45. For the context, see Angela Stascheit, & Karin Uecker, *Archiv der Münchner Frauengesundheitsbewegung 1968 – 2000* (München: Frauenakademie, 2011).

⁴⁰ UGB-Forum, "Umweltgifte: Spermienqualität sinkt," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 5 (2000): 8.

⁴¹ Dr. M. Möll/Naturheilpraxis, "Fertilitätsstörungen - eine Frage der Zinkversorgung," *Natur & Heilen* 77, no. 10 (2000): 7.

liver, and gall bladder. The single article targeting men, reports on a saxophone player who was healed from an allergy to the instrument's mouthpiece.⁴²

In conclusion, it might be said that the advice given relative to healthy behavior is mostly very general, and does not address gender specifically. The explicitly gendered articles contributed systematically to construct women as the more concerned, and more competent agents within the household and family setting in this regard. Although the women were certainly seen as the primary agents, it would be wrong to conclude that the field of health was and is marked exclusively by women. Most health advice was not addressed to any particular gender, neither explicitly or implicitly.

Conclusion

All in all, the present analysis of the journals for patients invites a modification, first, of the thesis suggesting an all-time critical attitude of organized laypeople towards physicians. Instead, we should prefer the idea of the co-competence of patient and physician – with all the ambiguities and tensions this might involve.⁴³

Second, we should modify the idea of one-sided medicalization of the women's bodies and minds.⁴⁴ Health was never as one-sidedly marked by the female gender as a part of the feminist criticism of medicine has suggested since the 1970s. Much of the health communication discussed here concerned men and women alike. Nevertheless, it also confirms to a certain extent what was to be expected: women played a preferential role in the health discourse of the last 120 years.

It will be the task of further research to give more plasticity to this general picture by analyzing more thoroughly the content of the 447 articles and adverts included in the present sample.

⁴² "Salusan. Auch Ihr Kreislauf braucht eine echte Kreislaufpflege (Werbetext)," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 12 (1960), backside of back cover; "Salusdynam, Für Leber und Galle. Salus schützt (Werbetext)," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 10 (1960), backside of back cover; Ein Arzt, "Ein Fall von Isotherapie," *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* 85, no. 12: 194.

⁴³ Eberhard Wolff, "Alternativmedizin und Gesundheitsgesellschaft – kulturelle Hintergründe einer anhaltenden Popularität," in "Neue" Wege in der Medizin: *Alternativmedizin – Fluch oder Segen?*, ed. Raymond Becker, Serkan Sertel, Isabel Stassen-Rapp, & Ines Walburg (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010), 177-85.

⁴⁴ Concerning the medicalization of the male body cf. Christoph Kucklick, *Das unmoralische Geschlecht: zur Geburt der negativen Andrologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008).