Drug proving is the systematic process of acquiring knowledge of the instruments intended for the cure of the natural diseases. Drug proving is a method, unique to homoeopathy where the pathogenesis of a drug is evolved through its trials on apparently Healthy Human Volunteers (Provers) of different age and both the sexes. Provings are an important part of homoeopathic theory and a mainstay of its practice since the first proving of Cinchona officinalis by Hahnemann in 1790. Based on the pathogenesis, a drug picture is evolved, on the basis of which prescription is made. This provides a necessary tool to find the most appropriate remedy for the patient.

**History of Drug Proving**

Previous experiences of clinicians, like Hippocrates, Paracelsus and Stahl (1738) in their writings, have also advocated the existence of Law of Similars. But, none of these proceeded systematically to offer an experimental proof. Hahnemann was the first clinician who noted that the drug selected on the basis of their similarity to the disease brings about the cure. While Hahnemann was translating Cullen’s Materia Medica from English to German, he came across Cullen’s remark on the curative power of Cinchona-bark in marsh ague and decided for testing its positive effects on himself. He was surprised to note that there was similarity of the symptoms of ague with that produced by Cinchona-bark. He then hypothesised in his mind that the specific curative powers of drug lies in its power of producing similar symptoms in a healthy individual, that is, disease producing power is the disease curative power.

In the beginning, Hahnemann applied the principle of Similia with drugs in substantial doses because the materia medica had been compiled by collecting symptoms of poisonings on healthy individuals and therapeutic overdoses in sick individual.

In 1799, Hahnemann used the diluted and potentised success doses to decrease the pathogenetic power and avoid aggravation.

Hahnemann continued his researches and experiments from 1790 to 1796 and wrote about 50 drugs which specifically cured the diseased conditions. He then suggested a new way of ascertaining the specific curative powers of drug. It was published as an article in Hufeland’s journal with the title ‘An Essay on a New Principle for Ascertaining the Curative powers of Drug’.

Hahnemann, also called the ‘Father of Experimental Pharmacology’, laid the foundation of drug proving and detailed the process. He tested 99 drugs on himself, his family and his colleagues, to discover the effects of drugs on healthy individuals.

In this context, he stressed the need of proving drugs on healthy persons, which is the best way to obtain an unadulterated picture of the drug. In his ‘Organon of Medicine’ (Aphorism 105–145), Hahnemann gave detailed instructions regarding the method of homoeopathic drug proving in healthy subjects.

**Current Scenario**

The standardisation of proving process including the design methodology and outcome reporting is a major cause of concern. A systemic review on homoeopathic pathogenetic trial from 1945 to 1995 was published in 2007, but results were inconclusive. There has been a sea change in homoeopathic pathogenetic trials (HPTs) conducted in the last two decades, but the variations in design, conduct, participants and outcome reporting are still observed.

**Way Forward**

Proving is not a casual activity that can be conducted according to anyone’s own rules or ideas. Various standardised protocols and procedures have been designed by reputed National and International organisations like Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy, Liga Medicorum Homoeopathic Internationalis, European Committee for Homoeopathy and Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of United States so that uniformity can be maintained.

In this issue, we are publishing two homoeopathic pathogenetic trials on *Australian acacia* and *Asclepias curassavica*, conducted in Australia and India by researchers of repute.
References


