

How We Work



Meet Nancy Gahles

National Champion of Homeopathy

Told to JUAN HENG, CCH, JUNE 26, 2018



This is the fifth in a series of interviews with homeopathic practitioners who are expanding the reach of homeopathy by providing integrative care for clients. Get a peek inside the practices of these remarkable individuals who are using homeopathy to improve lives, one at a time. Find out how they work, what motivates them, and how they stay inspired.

Nancy Gahles, DC, CCH, RSHom(NA), OIM, is a chiropractor, certified classical homeopath, certified Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction practitioner, and Ordained Interfaith Minister specializing in stress-related diseases and pain management. She integrates the best of the mind/body/spirit disciplines in her practice, the Health and Harmony Wellness Education and Center for Integrative and Holistic Healthcare.

Dr. Gahles is a member of the Board of Directors of the Integrative Health Policy Consortium (IHPC) and is IHPC Partner for Health for the Council for Homeopathic Certification. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the Integrative Healthcare Symposium and is also a President Emeritus of the National Center for Homeopathy (NCH). In 2018, she received the Julian Winston NCH Service Award for her service to the homeopathic profession.

She is a freelance healthcare journalist who contributes regularly to various newspapers and the Integrative Practitioner blog (integrativepractitioner.com). She wrote *The Power of Self Care: A Common Sense Guide to YOUR Wellness Solution*. She is also a TEDxTalk presenter.

(www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6bZB-wl636s)

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Nancy Gahles was an aspiring medical student in college when an accident derailed her. Suffering from a whiplash and soft-tissue injury that her doctors could neither diagnose nor treat properly, she found healing in the hands of a chiropractor. Fascinated by this healing modality, which unites a scientific understanding of anatomy and physiology with a vitalistic understanding of the body, Nancy enrolled in chiropractic school as soon as she could. That was September 1975.

Her career as a healer took another turn when she became a mom, and her baby son had colic.

“When you have a colicky child, nothing, but *nothing* works. I got Hyland’s Colic Tablets ... put some on his tongue and, instantly, he stopped crying. ‘Oh my God, I killed him!’ I thought. But indeed, he was better. So I knew homeopathy was something that I needed to investigate further and so I did—and it’s wonderful.”

When her son was two years old, his asthma tugged at her to revisit homeopathy.

“As a chiropractor, I would adjust him, and his asthma symptoms would go away but they’d always come back. In the daytime, he’d have just a little runny nose. But in the middle of the night, it would be full blown asthma. What does a mother hate most? Middle of the night crises! Oh my God, what am I going to do? Take him to the ER? I wasn’t going to do that. I did what I knew how to do with chiropractic ... Finally, it came to a point where the doctors wanted to put him on a cromolyn [inhaled asthma drug] mask that he would wear all day everyday. I was not going to do that—psychologi-

cally he’s going to think he has a problem. What else? That’s when homeopathy came in—I took him to a professional homeopath. And when my son got better, I realized I have to study it.”

Like many a mom who has signed up to study homeopathy so that she can help her family, Nancy found herself drawn in, little by little, until there was no going back.

“It’s like falling in love. You’ve got to shout it from the rooftops! You’ve just got to tell everybody.”

She integrated homeopathy into her healing work and started a separate homeopathic practice alongside her chiropractic practice.

The September 11, 2001 terror attacks in New York City brought many deeply traumatized patients into Nancy’s practice. She started writing about those cases, of bringing light back into the lives of those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. It led to her specializing in this area of care.

One of her patients at the time was on the board of directors of the National Center for Homeopathy and encouraged Nancy to apply for the position that she was about to vacate. Nancy put her name in the hat, was elected, and started a parallel career as a policy advocate for homeopathy and integrative health care.

“I realized that we needed to move out of our silo of just being ‘little homeopathy’ that nobody knew about and move out into the world ... That was where my advocacy efforts began. Sitting on committees, networking, reaching out to other areas, and presenting at conferences about homeopathy.”

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After she became President of the National Center for Homeopathy's board of directors in 2007, she immersed herself into getting homeopathy on the national health-care policy agenda. Under her leadership, the National Center for Homeopathy and the Council for Homeopathic Certification joined forces with the Integrative Health Policy Consortium (IHPC), which facilitates policies for universal access to the full range of therapies that create health and wellness. IHPC is the unified national policy and advocacy voice for integrative health and wellness. And thanks to Nancy's efforts, the National Center for Homeopathy became one of IHPC's earliest Partners for Health. Since then, IHPC has grown to include 24 health professional partner-organizations representing over 600,000 providers. This sort of work calls for a strategic vision of joining with colleagues across disciplines in order to advance homeopathy as an integrative care profession, as well as an appetite for the granular policy work it entails.

Nancy likens this skill set to homeopathic case-taking.

"You have to be able to see from afar, and on the ground, using the macroscopic and the microscopic lenses. When you take a case, you hear the whole picture, and then you bring it back in to the detail, and then you bring it out to the macro level, and bring it back in again [to home in on a remedy]. We do this anyway in our profession as homeopaths!

"I worked with then-Executive Director of IHPC, Janet Kahn, on the Affordable Care Act (ACA). I was instrumental in getting language into the ACA to include non-discrimination against 'licensed and integrative health care practitioners.' (Section 2706) Then I worked with her to identify what that means—who are these 'integrative health practitioners' mentioned in the definition of the 'healthcare workforce' in Section 5101 of the ACA? Luckily, it put us homeopaths in a position of recognition as integrative practitioners. And then we presented a Congressional Briefing where we identified integrative health practitioners as licensed and nationally certified practitioners whose credentials are accredited by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence. That means that integrative practitioners

Thanks to Nancy's efforts, the NCH became one of IHPC's earliest Partners for Health.

have to meet a high standard. The federal government will recognize non-licensed practitioners as on par with licensed practitioners if their credentials are accredited by this gold standard organization [the Institute for Credentialing Excellence].

"Many organizations have a certifying exam; however, in order to assure public safety, a legitimate requirement of government regulatory bodies, a standard of education must be met. Following completion of your education, the certifying exam that you take must be accredited by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence. The Council for Homeopathic Certification (CHC) has worked diligently over years to achieve the Institute for Credentialing Excellence accreditation of the CHC's national exam. The Certified Classical Homeopath (CCH) credential is now the standard bearer that consumers and the healthcare industry look to for choice and access to well-qualified homeopaths."

Thanks to the groundwork Nancy has laid, the profession of homeopathy now has a broader base of acceptance.

"Now, I can say I can die peacefully!" says Nancy.

Not quite yet! Nancy lays out the next stage of the game plan for homeopaths to be integrated into the system as healthcare providers.

"We have to get into the game. Now we have to get the workforce into the healthcare system. We can't only work outside of that, in private practice alone. The prevailing healthcare system in the U.S. is allopathic, and we need it—we need drugs, surgery, lifesaving technology. However, the trend has been afoot for years with consumers demanding safe, effective alternatives to medicines that are ineffective and dangerous. The increasing addiction and deaths due to opioid overdose, for example, have created a crisis wherein the Attorneys General called for alternatives to opioids and acknowledged the need for individualization of care. Person-centered care is the crux of homeopathy. Along with its record of safety, low

cost, and now, a workforce of accredited integrative practitioners, homeopathic medicine is poised to regain its former status as a reliable system of medicine.

"There are ways of practicing homeopathy besides being a solo practitioner. You could work in a hospital or a community healthcare center or be a partner in a medical center. You can specialize in areas such as pain management and be an effective member of the team. There is also a great need for education within medical schools and nursing schools. As a consultant to the CHC, I assist them to mobilize, inform, and represent the homeopathic workforce in the health care system. I've been lobbying for 18 years now. As the representative of CHC to the Board of IHPC, I've been behind the development of the Congressional Caucus for Integrative Health and Wellness [to educate members of the U.S. Congress] that launched in March this year."

Nancy acknowledges the challenges of the individual homeopath working on the ground and addresses what each of us can do for ourselves and to advance our profession.

"We now have 800+ Certified Classical Homeopaths. CHC is broadening its reach to the international arena. In the U.S., we have to work with health freedom initiatives or legislation within each state so homeopaths are able to



As a leader, Nancy blends humor with hard work: facilitating a 2008 NCH board meeting with counsel from a "wise owl."



Nancy Gahles received the 2018 Julian Winston NCH Service Award in April; NCH board member Tina Quirk (right) presented it.

practice professionally without fear of recrimination, regardless of licensure. I am currently working to get that status within hospitals and community health centers. I am in the process of developing an educational tool kit to define our profession more rigorously to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, hospital accreditation committees, local health departments, appropriate governmental bodies, and insurers for ease of implementation of our national healthcare workforce.

“What you can contribute, if you are a homeopath, is to become a Certified Classical Homeopath—a CCH—and tithe a part of your income to the profession to ensure our growth and development. The other thing that you can do is to practice well. Be a good, fabulous, incredible homeopath in your community so that the word homeopathy has value. It doesn’t mean you have to cure everybody. It doesn’t mean you have to get the right remedy on the first try every time. It means you have to practice as a professional. Reputably and ethically, keeping lines of communication open, doing a good job. Develop good relationships with doctors in your community. Let them know what you do. Shared cases with good results reflect well on all members of an integrative team.”

After practicing as a chiropractor for 40 years, Nancy has retired from chiropractic work and focuses on serving her community in the Rockaways as a homeopath.

“Rockaway is a tiny peninsula in New

York City, a small area three to four blocks wide and 110 blocks long, very vulnerable to the elements. It has a large population of firefighters and police officers. On 9/11, we had the most number of people killed per capita. I know everybody, and I watched what happened to the families. Then we had the American Airlines plane crash in the Rockaways just two months after that. And then we had Hurricane Sandy. We were, as a community, completely devastated. Many people developed organic illnesses also—thyroid disease, cancers, irritable bowel disease. A vast number of our residents, including children, suffer from anxiety. Mental health is a huge issue, and homeopathy is hugely fabulous for mental health issues. People don’t realize it’s not only physical health we can help—we treat people with anxiety and depression symptoms.”

Nancy is so integrated into the life of her community that when one of her patients wanted to get married, she charged Nancy with the responsibility of marrying her! She told Nancy:

“You have changed my life. *You* have to be the person to say the words that you say, to do what you do at my wedding. You have *got* to do it.”

And so Nancy set about becoming an interfaith minister!

“It’s always been a passion of mine. I’d studied religions in college. I looked around, I saw you can get ordained on the internet, but my husband was *horrified*. He said, ‘You will never do that. You can’t do that. It’s so beneath you.’ So I found a wonderful seminary, the World Life Fellowship, and studied with them and got ordained through them. Interfaith, inter-spiritual, not isolated religious dogma. Interfaith ministry is resonant with the principles of homeopathy—individualized care, harmonizing sensation and function in order to access your highest purpose in life. That’s how I became ordained in 2004.”

Since then, she has married a lot of her patients, baptized their children, confirmed

them, buried them. In response to the personal losses and spiritual crises in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, Nancy founded a spiritual community—Spirit of Love, The Rockaway Sangha—in her home/office space, where she offers weekly Dharma classes, mindfulness-based stress reduction consultations, and labyrinth events. Spirit of Love, The Rockaway Sangha has been invited and accepted as a member of the prestigious Charter for Compassion. Nancy has received a \$2 million budget to install a permanent labyrinth, a walking meditation tool, for healing and resiliency in Rockaway scheduled for 2020.

“It’s part of a community practice for me, very fulfilling, like a family practice. Because of the community I’m in, it’s just been very wonderful. They call me Dr. E.—Dr. Everything. It’s wonderful. I’m very, very blessed.”

Nancy blogs regularly at the Integrative-Practitioner.com, an interdisciplinary forum for integrative healing. Her strategy is to build bridges to other disciplines. At the global level, she appeals to the common ground that we all aspire to while reaching out to like-minded practitioners to find common vocabulary, and she is strategically local when bringing homeopathy into the conversation. In a recent blog, she writes about “the energy body” as it manifests on different planes—spiritual consciousness, emotional awareness, physical well-being—as a continuum.

She cites Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, the 1937 Nobel Laureate in Medicine: “In every culture and in every medical tradition before ours, healing was accomplished by moving energy.” She draws on the work of the chiropractor June Leslie Weiner to talk about resonance as the sympathetic vibration of similar patterns in nature, and how, as a chiropractor, she would use the energy she felt in her hands to interact with the felt energy body of her patient, and how opening her heart to receive these states vastly increases the potential for healing. She reminds us of how Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) views the body as an energetic system of

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dynamic energy flow, invisible to the naked eye, yet palpable. And finally, she relates it back to homeopathy, which liberates the healing potential of natural substances through dilution and succussion to restore an individual’s dynamic balance, similar to, yet different from, TCM. By the time she introduces homeopathy, the reader is already primed to place this modality within the natural principles of healing that they probably already recognize and embrace in other areas of their life!

Nancy’s welcoming approach embraces life.

“I love life. I just love life. I love all the opportunities and possibilities that keep coming up before me. If they didn’t come up, and there was nothing else to do, I would just read. I love reading

and researching and simply learning. So I would always still do it. Always keep being more of you. I don’t feel I am done. I always come up with a purpose or something I can accomplish with my skill set. I always tell my children, ‘When you find something that’s for your good and you raise everyone else up, we all benefit.’ I feel it’s my purpose and my calling to advance the homeopathic profession in whatever way that I can. I feel that I am called to do this type of ministry.”

In a life jam-packed with milestones and accomplishments, what is she proudest of?

“Oh gosh,” Nancy pauses and draws in a sharp breath. “Proud to be a good mother! I turned out two excellent people into the world. Beautiful, quality, fabulous humans! That is my greatest



Dr. Nancy Gahles delivers a TEDxTalk on “The Power of Self Care” at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

accomplishment. Although I won’t discount the privilege of being able to assist so many people to find their wellness and actualize their own potential.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Juan Heng, PhD, CCH, decided to enroll in homeopathy school when she saw her son, who was diagnosed with autism at the age of three, improve dramatically with homeopathic treatment. She brings a tenacious optimism, a skeptic’s mind, and an open heart to her practice in New York City and

Long Island. Her dream is to collaborate with holistic healers of different modalities to help clients. Her website is: www.homeopathystudio.com

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