Mr A Etukudo  
Division of AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (ATM)  
WHO Africa

1st June 2009

Dear Mr Etukudo

Homeopathy and serious diseases in the developing world: an open letter from early career medics and researchers

We are calling on the WHO to condemn the promotion of homeopathy for treating TB, infant diarrhoea, influenza, malaria and HIV. Homeopathy does not protect people from, or treat, these diseases. Those of us working with the most rural and impoverished people of the world already struggle to deliver the medical help that is needed. When homeopathy stands in place of effective treatment, lives are lost.

Examples of homeopathy being promoted for these diseases include:

- In Kenya, the largest homeopathic supplier, the Abha Light Foundation sells homeopathic medicines for malaria, diarrhoea and influenza. It now runs 20 health centres, 25 mobile clinics and five HIV/AIDS clinics.

- In Tanzania, Jeremy Sherr and Sigsbert Rwegasira run three homeopathic clinics and claim to have government support to establish a school of homeopathy. Rwegasira claims to treat “no less than 100 malaria patients per day.” According to Sherr’s promotional material, “conventional medicine only supplies temporary relief, often at a great cost financially, and with many severe side effects”.

- In Ethiopia, the Amma Resonance Healing Foundation, run by Peter Chappell, offers to treat AIDS patients with “resonance healing in the form of homeopathy”, as “an ideal alternative and complement for the treatment of HIV/AIDS in developing countries” because of “the very low costs of producing the remedy” and because it has “no side effects”.

- In Ghana, the Senya/Tamale Homeopathy Project treats malaria patients with homeopathy.

- In Botswana, the Maun Homeopathy Project offers homeopathic treatment in several locations and mobile clinics for HIV related complaints such as herpes and diarrhoea “for those people who are HIV+ but who are not taking anti-retroviral drugs”.

Many people in developing countries urgently need access to evidence-based medical information and to the most effective means of treating these dangerous diseases. The promotion of homeopathy as effective or cheaper makes this difficult task even harder. It puts lives at risk, undermines conventional medicine and spreads misinformation.
We are sure that you will recognise these dangers and ask that you issue a clear international communication condemning the promotion of homeopathy for treating TB, infant diarrhoea, influenza, malaria and HIV. We are sure, too, that you will recognise the urgency of our request, and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wilson
On behalf of the Voice of Young Science network
Sense About Science, London

Ms Marianne Baker
PhD Student
Molecular Pathology of Cancer Training Programme, Cancer Research UK

Harriet Ball
PhD Student
Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London

Dr Vitor Bernardes Pinheiro
Career development fellow
Medical Research Council UK

Julie Bristow
PhD Student
Working on control of the vector of trachoma, Durham University

Duncan Casey
PhD student
Department of Chemistry, Imperial College London

Dr Meera Cush
Toxicologist
The Health Protection Agency

Dr Oliver Fenwick
Research Associate
Department of Physics, University College London

Dr Melissa Friswell
Postdoctoral Research Associate
Department of Clinical Gastroenterology, University of Liverpool.

Dr Melita Gordon
Senior Lecturer and Consultant in Gastroenterology
University of Liverpool Gastroenterology Unit
Previously Research Fellow, College of Medicine, Blantyre, Malawi

Dr Robert Hagan
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Biomolecular Scientist, University of St Andrews

Evelyn Harvey
Biochemist and Medical Writer

Andrew Johnston
Neuroscientist and Neurogeneticist

Dr Tina Kresfelder
Post-doctoral Fellow
Department Medical Virology
University of Pretoria, South Africa

Jennifer Lardge
PhD Student
Department of Physics, University College London
Dr Simnikiwe Mayaphi  
MMed (Virology) student  
Department of Medical Virology  
University of Pretoria, South Africa

Dr Daniella Muallem  
Postdoctoral researcher  
Department of Neuroscience, Physiology and Pharmacology, University College London

Dr Michael Ofori  
Research Associate  
Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, University of Ghana

Bobby Ramakant  
Health and Development Networks Key Correspondent, India

Dr Blanka Sengerová  
Postdoctoral researcher  
Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine, University of Oxford

Juliet Stevens  
Medical Student, University of Oxford  
*Currently on placement* at Somerset State Hospital, Cape Town, South Africa

Harriet Teare  
DPhil Student  
Organic Chemistry, University of Oxford

Dr Marietjie Venter  
Senior Lecturer  
Department Medical Virology  
University of Pretoria, South Africa

Tom Wells  
PhD Student  
Department of Chemistry, Imperial College London

Patrick Woodburn  
PhD Student  
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine  
*Formerly* a medical statistician with the Medical Research Council in Uganda for three years.

Our call for a communication is also supported by the following experts and organisations:

The AIDS Care Watch campaign (ACW)  
[www.aidscarewatch.org](http://www.aidscarewatch.org) - a civil society partnership of over 400 organizations

Dr NJ Beeching  
Senior Lecturer and Clinical Lead in Infectious Diseases  
Tropical and Infectious Disease Unit  
Royal Liverpool University Hospital

Dr Peter Flegg MD, FRCP, DTM&H  
Consultant Physician  
Department of Infectious Diseases  
Victoria Hospital

Stephen Graham  
Associate Professor  
Centre for International Child Health  
University of Melbourne

Marianne Johnson  
Director  
AidCamps International

Celina Menezes  
President - World Care Council Asia  
President - Delhi Mahila Samiti (a women forum of Delhi Network of Positive People)
Dr Alastair Miller MA FRCP DTM&H
Consultant Physician
Tropical & Infectious Disease Unit
Royal Liverpool University Hospital
Beri Gisela Ntam
Strategic Humanitarian Services in Cameroon
Billian Nyuykighan
Program Co-ordinator
Strategic Humanitarian Services in Cameroon
Ndzerem Stephen
Director and Development Analyst
Strategic Humanitarian Services in Cameroon

Signatories are on an individual basis unless otherwise stated