



Anthroposophic medicine

Its nature, its aims, its possibilities



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What is anthroposophic medicine?

For many people, anthroposophic medicine is a difficult concept. But in fact, it is quite easy to explain. It is an integrative form of medicine, derived from two sources: "material scientific medicine" with its methods and results, on the one hand, and "spiritual scientific" findings on the other. Neither one may be taken in isolation.

For an individual is not simply a body, there's also the psyche and personality to take into account as well. Anthroposophic doctors regard physical and mental existence together with personality as a unit, each element having the capacity to influence the others. One of the fundamental aspects of anthroposophic medicine is to take this into account during diagnosis and therapy.

Nevertheless, it is not an "alternative medicine" – it doesn't aim to replace conventional medicine. On the contrary – it is based on accepted medical science; it just takes things a step further. Or in other words, anthroposophic medicine makes use of everything that scientific research has revealed to be of benefit to the human being. Moreover it supplements "material science" with aspects of spiritual science in order to assess the individual as a whole entity. For instance, this may include body language, personal history, breathing, and many other aspects besides – all of which determine an individual's personality. Anthroposophic medicine therefore attempts to

include the individuality of the patient, as well as the accepted features of an illness, in the treatment process. For just as each person is unique, so is each treatment – even though some may appear to apply to many people.

Anthroposophic medicine is not pre-determined. It avoids pure routine. Even if, owing to their characteristic features, the same disease pictures constantly recur, each illness manifests itself differently in each patient – a manifestation inseparable from the uniqueness of the individual. Anthroposophic medicine therefore aims to form a picture of the physical, psychological, and personal circumstances that have paved the way for an illness to take hold. Taking such factors into consideration during diagnosis and therapy and re-applying the process to every new patient, guided by scientific findings, medical experience, personal discernment, and intuition, is fundamental to anthroposophic medicine. Any medicine that ignores the person as an individual cannot claim to be true human medicine.

Anthroposophic medicine does not seek to replace conventional medicine, but rather to complement it

Iris germanica, Bearded Iris. The root extract helps regulate the fluid balance in cases of lymphostasis and oedemas.



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Bergamot. An extract of the herb is used for digestive complaints.



Patients don't just passively accept treatment, they are also actively involved in the therapy

How is anthroposophic medicine different from other systems?

The main difference between anthroposophic medicine and conventional medicine is that it doesn't only look for the illness in the person, but rather for the person in the illness. The diagnostic procedures and the symptoms observed therein may be identical, but a holistic interpretation can lead to different treatments being recommended, or conventional therapies being supplemented by additional measures.

Medicine based purely on material science is limited to explaining an illness solely on the basis of the laws of physics and chemistry. Anthroposophic medicine is more ambitious. It takes into account additional factors, both general and individual, that may affect the patient's life, mind, and soul, and their physical manifestation: in growth, regeneration, microcirculation, fluid retention in the skin, muscle tone, biorhythms, heat distribution, posture, uprightness, gait, mental focus, speech. When illness occurs, examination of the above may reveal deviations, imbalances, and extremes – additional diagnostic parameters that need to be considered when selecting a therapy. Anthroposophic medicine also has a different understanding of the role played by the patient in

overcoming illness. The patient is not simply a passive recipient of medical skill, but an equal partner with the doctor.

After all, nobody can know the patient better than the patient. During an illness, the patient has the opportunity to recognise the state of imbalance body and soul have reached, to understand this and rectify it. The illness can provide an opportunity to learn new modes of behaviour, to develop further insights, and acquire greater maturity.

Anthroposophic doctors offer the patient support during this process. They strengthen patient autonomy, recognise patient responsibility, and promote the patient's right to involvement in the selection of an appropriate therapy.

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Illness and health

The pendulum of life swings us back and forth between illness and health, which is why anthroposophic doctors always examine both aspects together.

Health is produced when the polar extremes of life are held in dynamic balance: waking and sleeping, stillness and movement, joy and sorrow. It results from actively searching out and choosing the path we as individuals take into the world and back into ourselves. There are therefore as many healthy

states as there are people in the world. Health is not an end in itself; it simply helps us make the most of our personal and social lives. Anthroposophic doctors do not just treat illness; they also strive to promote the health of the individual, strengthening the patient's own resolve to remain healthy.

Will anthroposophic doctors recommend all available methods of diagnosis and treatment?

Anthroposophic doctors are acquainted with the entire range of diagnostic and therapeutic possibilities.

Nevertheless, they do not necessarily use all of them. They are particularly critical of the tendency to use certain conventional procedures or drugs as a matter of course. They question whether these familiar methods are really suited to solving the specific problem of the patient. Treatment should

only proceed when the diagnostic or therapeutic course of action would benefit the patient's individual profile – nothing should be done simply because “that’s the way it’s always been”. The benefits must always considerably outweigh any risks associated with the diagnostic or therapeutic procedure.



Viscum album, *Mistletoe*. Extracts made from leaves, twigs, and berries are among the most frequently prescribed substances for treating cancer.



Medical technology is also used

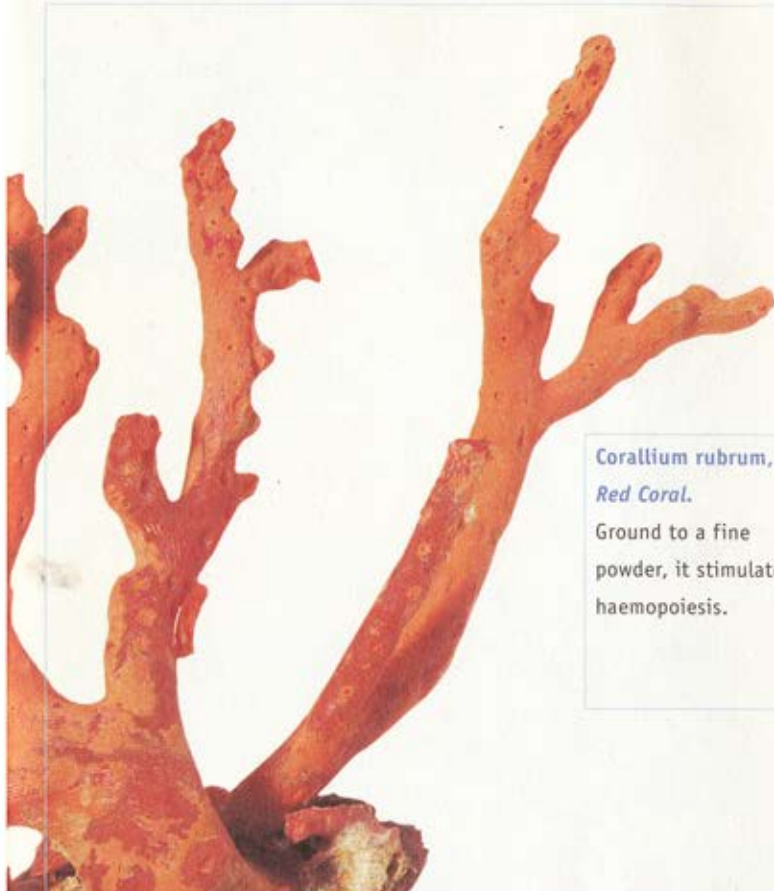
In the diagnosis of an illness, anthroposophic doctors will use all the procedures offered by conventional medicine. Nevertheless, when it comes to medical aids, they prefer initially to rely on their own senses.

They examine the individual from top to toe, observing body language, expressions, and gestures, the patient's handshake, gait, posture – in fact, their entire appearance. They feel whether skin and extremities are warm or cold, clammy or dry to the touch, and they also feel and listen to the body. They listen to the patient's own estimation of his or her well-being and mental health, and assess how strong the patient's will to live is – now and in reference to past personal history.

Only then does the question arise whether or not a technical procedure might aid diagnosis. The central issue is always: what new information

might such an investigation reveal and what would be the therapeutic consequence? Is such a step even relevant for this particular patient? Medical technology is not used as a matter of course, but only when it could bring recognisable benefits for the patient.

Unnecessary investigations are therefore avoided, meaning anthroposophic doctors work in a particularly cost-conscious manner. Nevertheless, whenever a technical method is considered appropriate, anthroposophic doctors are only too willing to apply modern technology for the good of the patient.



*Corallium rubrum,
Red Coral.*
Ground to a fine
powder, it stimulates
haemopoiesis.

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What therapeutic procedures are used?

On the one hand, anthroposophic medicine uses procedures that require passive acceptance on the part of the patient; these are supplemented, however, by procedures demanding the patient's active involvement.

Medical procedures such as operations, the whole spectrum of physiotherapy, and the allopathic drugs of conventional medicine don't require any active patient involvement. Artistic therapies such as elocution, music, painting, sculpture, and therapeutic eurythmy, discussion therapy (psychotherapy, biographical counselling), nutrition, movement, and relaxation techniques, on the other hand depend entirely on the patient get-

ting involved. Treatment with drugs is partly based on dosing with naturally based anthroposophic drugs, the composition of which is determined by the typical features of an illness. In addition, other substances tailored to the patient's unique characteristics are administered. These are frequently homeopathic substances designed to stimulate the organism and its powers of self-healing.

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Equisetum arvense,
Field Horsetail.

Extracts of this herb stimulate toxin excretion in cases of kidney complaints and rheumatism.



Plant extracts are used in both concentrated and homeopathically diluted form orally, externally and injected



What defines an anthroposophic drug?

Drug therapy within anthroposophic medicine is based on the ancient principle: as little as possible, as much as necessary.

In cases of severe and chronic illness, or if a patient's own strength reserves are exhausted, the use of allopathic drugs may be preferred. However, whenever possible, symptoms are not suppressed; instead the intention is to activate powers of self-healing with the aid of homeopathically produced anthroposophic drugs, and to stimulate the body into finding its own natural rhythm once more.

During treatment, anthroposophic doctors try to observe what special stimuli the organism could require to make a full recovery. For instance, bitter substances from the root of the yellow gentian or chicory stimulate the production of digestive juices and promote intestinal movement. Essential oils with warming properties extracted from the labiatae genus or from native Mediterranean plants can help ease muscular tension and promote blood circulation. Additional substances tailored to the

illness in question are also used: their composition is based on the general features of the disease picture. These include both whole plant extract preparations and those of mineral or animal origin.

Which substance a doctor selects, whether as whole extract or homeopathic concentration, depends on the type and course of the illness, the symptoms, pains, length of illness, patient strength, age, but above all the patient's internal and external activity levels.

Anthroposophic drugs are produced to pharmacopoeial standards of quality and wherever available to specific national, European and international pharmacopoeias.

Anthroposophic medicine's aim of understanding both patient and illness therefore also demands a pluralistic, holistic approach to drug therapy.

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Modern medicine needs a pluralistic approach!

If the perception of what constitutes health and illness differs from person to person, the range of diagnosis and therapy needs to accommodate these variations.

The more specific the methods, the better equipped they are to deal with the peculiarities and needs of individual cases. Today's pluralistic society demands methodological variety. Individuals should be able to opt for the medicine that suits them best. Despite this, modern medicine is generally dominated by a one-sided materialistic school of thought, which assumes that the human organism can be explained away entirely in terms of the laws of physics and chemistry. This means "conventional medicine" only addresses the material aspect of human existence –

everything else is systematically excluded. This reductionist medical doctrine therefore is not qualified to make general pronouncements which relate to the more holistic aspects of medicines. In consequence no research has been done for possible alternative approaches. Therefore: "The European Parliament calls on the Commission to launch a process of recognizing non-conventional medicine and, to this end, to take the necessary steps to establish appropriate committees" (Resolution n° A4-0075/97 dd. 29.05.1997).

Rewarding and challenging

Patients used to high tech medicine often find the intensive personal attention they receive from an anthroposophic doctor stimulating.

During consultation, they experience the very respect and interest they are seeking as patients. Moreover, not only may they take part in the various therapeutic procedures, they are actively encouraged to do so – a rare occurrence in conventional medicine. Neither is the doctor's interested questioning of the patient during an appointment superficial; it is indeed one of the essential tools of his trade. In

order to treat a patient satisfactorily, the doctor must gain a thorough understanding of the individual in all his or her complexity. For anthroposophic doctors, being able to exploit the whole range of medical procedures – conventional and complementary – in the treatment of a patient is a rewarding challenge. They regard the unrestricted choice of therapy as a valuable and indispensable possession.



Hypericum, *St. John's*

Wort. Oil extracted from the flowers relieves muscular tension.

Alcohol-based herb tinctures alleviate depression.



Anthroposophic medicine is modern

What makes anthroposophic medicine so contemporary is that it takes the whole person into account. These days, patients don't want to be seen merely as an illness, but as a person with an illness.

Anthroposophic medicine continues to develop in pace with medical progress. It regularly embraces new issues and trends, searching out the means to reflect these latest interpretations of illness and health. Over the last few decades, for instance, anthroposophic doctors have developed an internationally recognised therapy programme for addicts. As soon as the benefit of a new diagnostic or therapeutic procedure has been proven, it is accepted and integrated into the range of medical options. Anthroposophic medicine also pursues its own scientific research. Within conventional science-based medicine, the experience of doctors in the field is more often than not overridden by methodology. This is the precondition for randomised (two groups divided at random), placebo-controlled (compared with a pseudo drug), double blind trials (neither doctor nor patient knows who is taking the actual drug and who the placebo).

Such trials replace the consultation-based doctor-patient relationship with generalised, experimental and anonymous situations, entirely at odds with routine therapeutic reality. The clinical pharmacologist Georges Fülgraff described the process thus, "it entails replacing reality with models; the more complex reality is, the simpler the models are, until, in a final irony, the only part of reality that is perceived is that which occurs in the model. In this way, we no longer acquire medical experience: treatment is based on models and not on reality." In proving the efficacy of their therapies, anthroposophic scientists strive to employ new scientific methods and develop them still further, enabling anthroposophic treatment, with its many approaches, to be demonstrated in day to day practice. Anthroposophic medicine is constantly on the move – yet another reason why it's so contemporary.



Thymus serpyllum,
Thyme.

The extract of stems,
flowers, and leaves
reduces acute coughing.

*Anthroposophic
medicine is
constantly changing –
yet another reason
why it's so
contemporary*

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Echinacea angustifolia, *Purple Coneflower*.
Whole plant extracts
strengthen the immune
system to fight
inflammatory diseases.



Anthroposophic doctors are certified according to international criteria

How are anthroposophic doctors trained?

Every anthroposophic doctor completes a standard conventional medical training. Following a degree in medicine, the doctor is licensed by their Governing Body and then undergoes specialist training.

That's why you'll find anthroposophic doctors in general practice as well as in all the major medical disciplines: from surgery, paediatrics (children), internal medicine, cardiology (heart), endocrinology (hormones), gastroenterology (digestive tract), ophthalmology (eyes), otolaryngology (ear, nose, and throat), oncology (cancer), gynaecology (female complaints), orthopaedics (musculoskeletal system) to neurology (nervous system) and psychiatry (mind).

In addition to their chosen specialism, doctors then complete a minimum of three years study focusing on the main emphases of anthroposophic medicine. Training centres are located at anthroposophic clinics in Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland. Practical experience in this alternative diagnostic and therapeutic approach to patient care is gained through work experience in the anthroposophic practices of

other doctors, or in the doctor's own practice under the supervision of mentors.

Various specialist schools in Germany and Switzerland offer training courses. In addition, postgraduate courses are regularly held for those doctors who have already qualified in anthroposophic medicine. The latest scientific findings and therapeutic developments are presented and discussed within working groups and at national or international conferences, where anthroposophic attitudes to current medical issues are also worked out.

Lectureships or professorships in anthroposophic medicine currently exist at the universities of San Francisco (USA), Hamburg (Germany) and Berne (Switzerland). Furthermore introductory lectures on anthroposophic medicine are included in the syllabi of many universities in Europe and elsewhere.

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Do anthroposophic doctors treat state-funded/insured patients?

Wherever possible, anthroposophic doctors are fully integrated in the health service of an individual country.

Anthroposophic medicine is recognised by the public health services of Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.

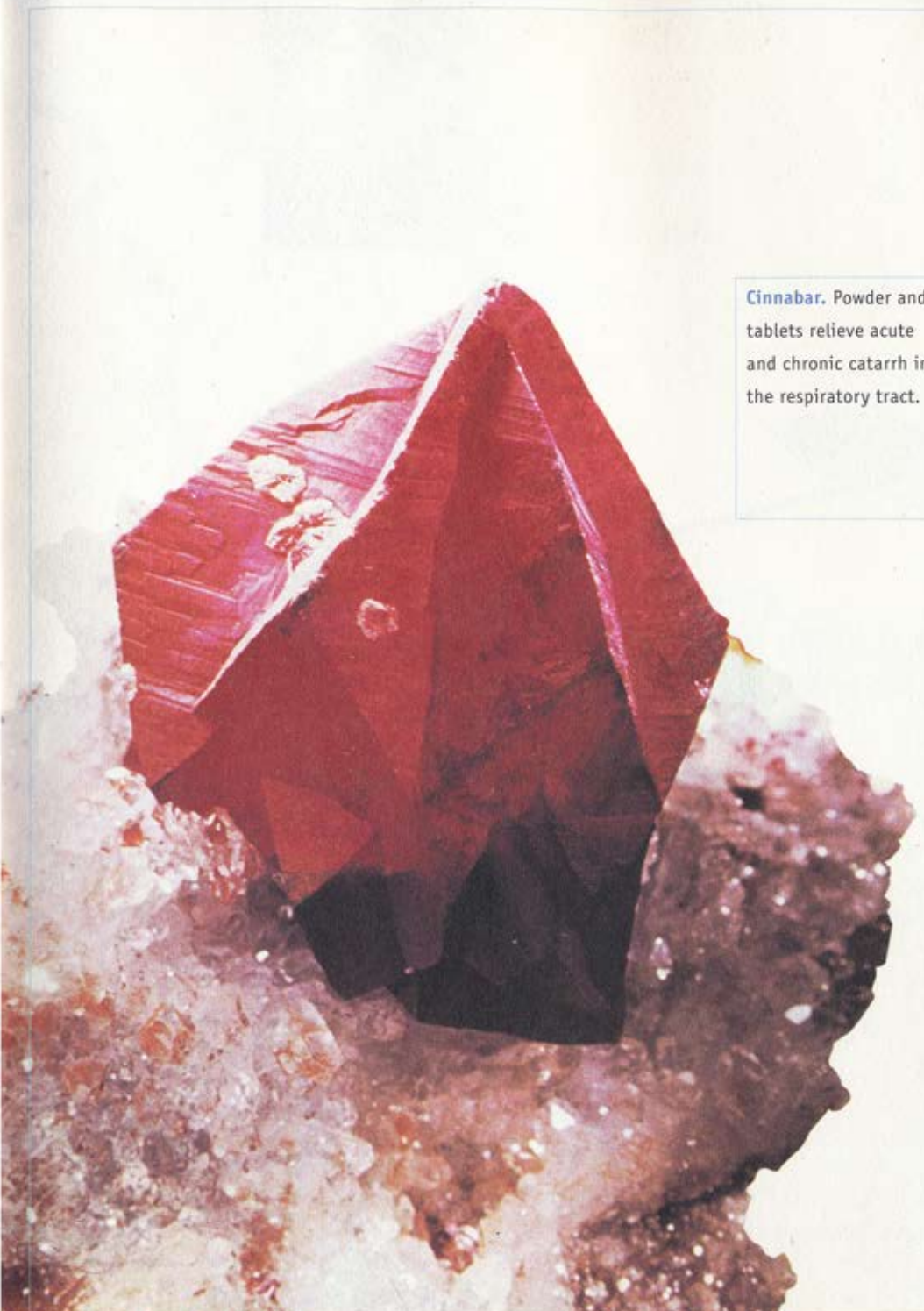
There are also many anthroposophic doctors and therapists in these countries, as well as in Denmark and Spain, who offer their services privately.

May anthroposophic doctors be called upon to act in an emergency?

Of course! That's something every doctor is taught.

Anthroposophic doctors feel just as duty-bound to provide first aid as any other doctor. Every anthroposophic clinic boasts an intensive care ward with all the latest essential equipment. Not without

reason has the anthroposophic *Filderklinik* near Stuttgart been the A&E hospital for Stuttgart Airport – processing national and international flights – since 1975.



Cinnabar. Powder and tablets relieve acute and chronic catarrh in the respiratory tract.



Why and how did anthroposophic medicine come about?

Anthroposophic medicine has been around for almost a hundred years.

Dr. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), founder of the anthroposophic school of thought, developed the medicine's integrative concept with Dr. Ita Wegman (1876-1943). Both believed it vital that anthroposophic doctors remain abreast of the latest scientific findings. With this in mind, they aimed to extend conventional medical practice with aspects of spiritual science. That is systematic anthroposophic scientific study of the none material aspects of the human being. The term "anthroposophy" is made up of two Greek words

"anthropos" – man, and "sophia" – wisdom. This puts the emphasis on the individual and a knowledge of self – an approach that extends to medicine as well.

As early as 1921, the first modest clinics dedicated to the application of this innovative medical approach opened in Arlesheim, near Basle (Switzerland), and in Stuttgart (Germany). From these small beginnings, anthroposophic medicine has continued to grow, develop and change over the decades.



Bryonia, Bryony.

The root extract reduces inflammatory oedemas.

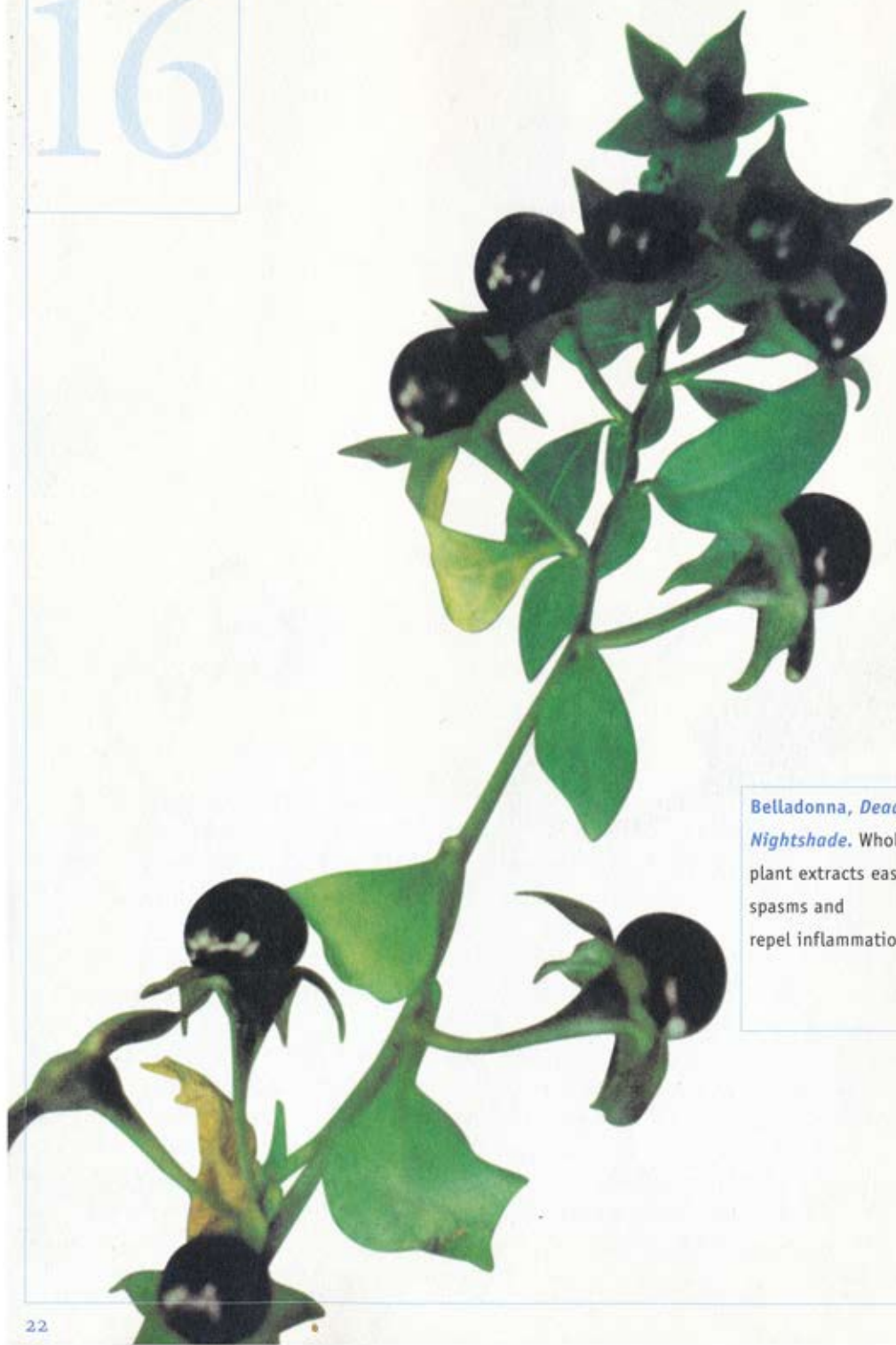
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Where is anthroposophic medicine practised?

Anthroposophic medicine is practised in over 80 countries around the world: in Cape Town and Helsinki, Moscow and San Francisco, Hamburg and Manila.

Hospitals, sanatoria, and other clinical institutions dedicated to anthroposophic medicine are located in Brazil, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland. Furthermore, there are numerous practices and independent therapeutic institutes worldwide, where doctors and therapists specialising in various disciplines work together. Branch and sales offices of manufacturers of

anthroposophic drugs exist in most European countries, as well as in North and South America, Russia, South Africa, Egypt, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Worldwide there are also more than 350 institutes in 26 European and 12 other countries, which work according to their own concepts of healing and social therapy – including anthroposophic medicine.



Belladonna, Deadly Nightshade. Whole plant extracts ease spasms and repel inflammation.



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What legal status does anthroposophic medicine have in the EU?

A European Union guideline concerning anthroposophic medicine has yet to be developed. Efforts are underway, however, to draft a guideline or integrate anthroposophic medicine into existing guidelines.

In six European member states – Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy – and in Switzerland, anthroposophic drugs have at least been awarded formal recognition and a legal foundation within one medical law. Further legal initiatives are in progress, for instance, in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Sweden.

The European Parliament's Collins Resolution, dating from 29th of May 1997, 'on the status of non-conventional medicines', specifically

mentions anthroposophic medicine, along with seven other unconventional schools of therapy. Resolution 1206 (1999) of the Council of Europe – 'A European approach to non-conventional medicines' – also mentions anthroposophic medicine in document 8435 as one of the most important forms of complementary therapy. Therefore, the term of anthroposophic medicine is well known enough to be integrated in one of the existing guidelines.

Never was anthroposophic medicine more necessary!

In an age when increasing emphasis is being placed on individual responsibility for health, any medicine that approaches this task methodically and seriously is a social necessity. In an age which, despite the pluralistic nature of society, is showing an increasing tendency towards whole-

sale generalisation and standardisation, the need for a medicine that offers a range of specific holistic options and places the uniqueness of the individual at its centre is all the more urgent.

Never was anthroposophic medicine more contemporary and more necessary!



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