



# Homeopathy for Allergic Rhinitis: A Systematic Review

Kushal Banerjee, MD, MSc, Robert T. Mathie, PhD, Ceire Costelloe, PhD, and Jeremy Howick, PhD

Presented By Dr. Kushal Banerjee

# Hold on to your horses!

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Homeopathy for Allergic Rhinitis: A Systematic Review

Kushal Banerjee, MD, MSc,<sup>1</sup> Robert T Mathie, PhD,<sup>2</sup> Céire Costelloe, PhD,<sup>3</sup> and Jeremy Howick, PhD<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

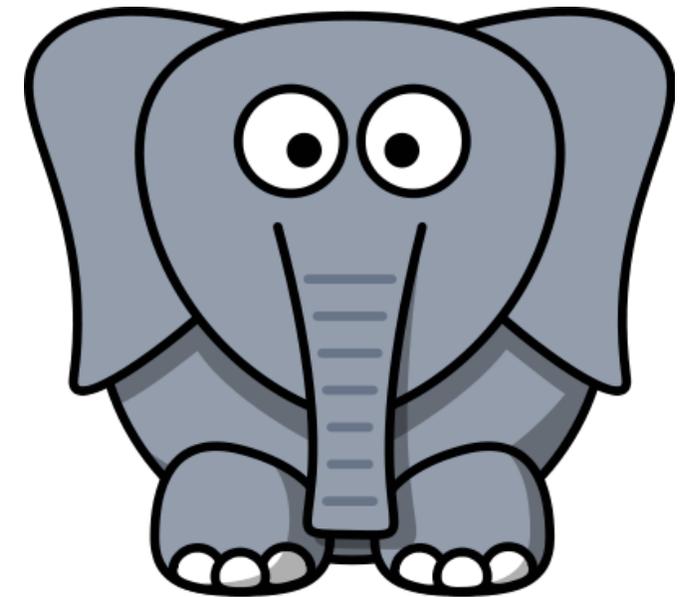
**Objective:** The aim of this study was to evaluate the efficacy and effectiveness of homeopathic intervention in the treatment of seasonal or perennial allergic rhinitis (AR).

**Method:** Randomized controlled trials evaluating all forms of homeopathic treatment for AR were included in a systematic review (SR) of studies published up to and including December 2015. Two authors independently screened potential studies, extracted data, and assessed risk of bias. Primary outcomes included symptom improvement and total quality-of-life score. Treatment effect size was quantified as mean difference (continuous data), or by risk ratio (RR) and odds ratio (dichotomous data), with 95% confidence intervals (CI). Meta-analysis was performed after assessing heterogeneity and risk of bias.

**Results:** Eleven studies were eligible for SR. All trials were placebo-controlled except one. Six trials used the treatment approach known as isopathy, but they were unsuitable for meta-analysis due to problems of heterogeneity and data extraction. The overall standard of methods and reporting was poor: 8/11 trials were assessed as “high risk of bias”; only one trial, on isopathy for seasonal AR, possessed reliable evidence. Three trials of variable quality (all using *Galphimia glauca* for seasonal AR) were included in the meta-analysis: nasal symptom relief at 2 and 4 weeks (RR=1.48 [95% CI 1.24–1.77] and 1.27 [95% CI 1.10–1.46], respectively) favored homeopathy compared with placebo; ocular symptom relief at 2 and 4 weeks also favored homeopathy (RR=1.55 [95% CI 1.33–1.80] and 1.37 [95% CI 1.21–1.56], respectively). The single trial with reliable evidence had a small positive treatment effect without statistical significance. A homeopathic and a conventional nasal spray produced equivalent improvements in nasal and ocular symptoms.

**Conclusions:** The low or uncertain overall quality of the evidence warrants caution in drawing firm conclusions about intervention effects. Use of either *Galphimia glauca* or a homeopathic nasal spray may have small beneficial effects on the nasal and ocular symptoms of AR. The efficacy of isopathic treatment of AR is unclear.

**Keywords:** homeopathy, homeopathic, allergic, allergy, rhinitis, hay fever, pollinosis, rhinorrhea, hypersensitivity



# Why perform this review?

W

Allergic Rhinitis (AR) is a global health problem: 500 million affected world wide<sup>1</sup>

H

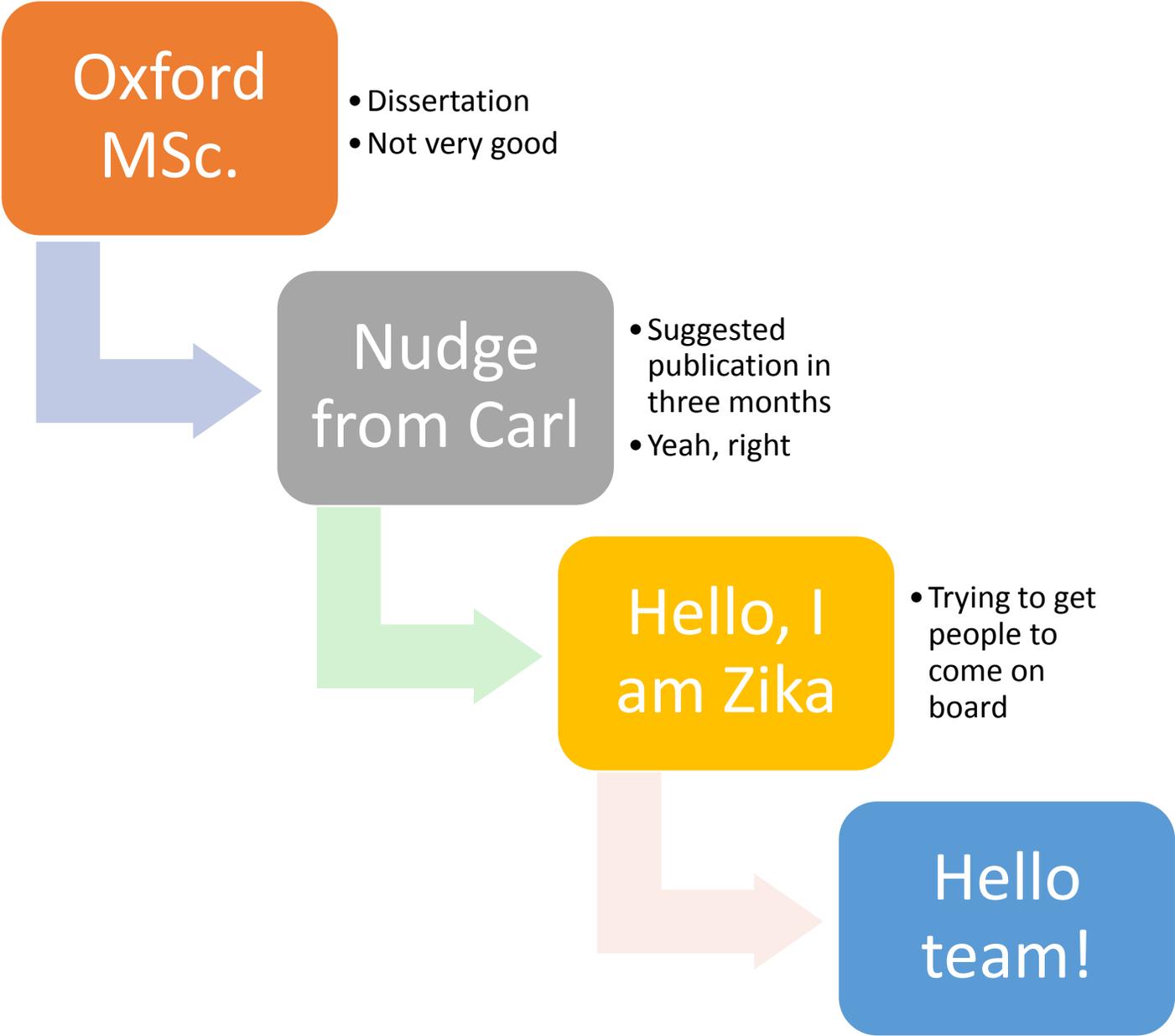
Significant impact on healthcare costs<sup>2</sup>

Y

CAM is being used extensively for AR<sup>3</sup>

Evidence is Lacking: No systematic review (SR) on AR treatment will all kinds of homeopathy

1. Brozek JL, Bousquet J, Baena-Cagnani CE, et al. Allergic rhinitis and its Impact on Asthma (ARIA) guidelines: 2010 revision. J Allergy Clin Immunol 2010;126:466–476
2. Gupta R, Sheikh A, Strachan DP, et al. Burden of allergic disease in the UK: Secondary analyses of national databases. Clin Exp Allergy 2004;34:520–526
3. Kern J, Bielory L. Complementary and alternative therapy (CAM) in the treatment of allergic rhinitis. Curr Allergy Asthma Rep 2014;14:1–6.



# Tick (almost)all the boxes



UNIVERSITY of York  
Centre for Reviews and Dissemination

PROSPERO International prospective register of systematic reviews

Homeopathy for allergic rhinitis

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NHS  
National Institute for  
Health Research

Banerjee et al. *Systematic Reviews* 2014, 3:59  
<http://www.systematicreviewjournal.com/content/3/1/59>

SYSTEMATIC  
REVIEWS

PROTOCOL

Open Access

Homeopathy for allergic rhinitis: protocol for a systematic review

Kushal Banerjee<sup>1\*</sup>, Ceire Costelloe<sup>2</sup>, Robert T Mathie<sup>3</sup> and Jeremy Howick<sup>4</sup>

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# Objectives: In brief

## Primary

- Efficacy
- Effectiveness

## Secondary

- Compare effectiveness of different forms



# Search Strategy- Medline

| S. No. | Search  | Results |
|--------|---|---------|
| 1      | Homeopathy/   | 4297    |
| 2      | (homoeopathy or homoeopathic or homeopathic).mp. [mp=title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, keyword heading word, protocol supplementary concept, rare disease supplementary concept, unique identifier]  | 2767    |
| 3      | 1 or 2  | 5188    |
| 4      | Rhinitis, Allergic, Perennial/ or Rhinitis, Vasomotor/ or Rhinitis/ or Rhinitis, Atrophic/ or Rhinitis, Allergic, Seasonal/   | 28236   |
| 5      | (nasal congestion or rhinorrhea or rhinorrhoea or sneezing or itchy nose).mp. [mp=title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, keyword heading word, protocol supplementary concept, rare disease supplementary concept, unique identifier]   | 8357    |
| 6      | ((allerg* or hypersensitiv*) adj5 (cat* or dander or dust* or mite* or dog* or ragweed* or pollen or grass* or cedar or alder or willow or birch or mugwort or tree* or weed* or perennial* or season* or spring or summer or nose or nasal)).mp. [mp=title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, keyword heading word, protocol supplementary concept, rare disease supplementary concept, unique identifier] | 28739   |
| 7      | (rhiniti* or rhinoconjunctivitis or SAR or PAR).mp. [mp=title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, keyword heading word, protocol supplementary concept, rare disease supplementary concept, unique identifier]   | 135756  |
| 8      | (hayfever or hay next fever or pollinosis or pollenosis).mp. [mp=title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, keyword heading word, protocol supplementary concept, rare disease supplementary concept, unique identifier]  | 2028    |
| 9      | 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8   | 143239  |
| 10     | 3 and 9   | 106     |



# Databases

## Medline

Medical Literature Analysis  
and Retrieval System Online

## CENTRAL

Cochrane Central Register of  
Controlled Trials

## CINAHL

Cumulative Index to Nursing  
and Allied Health Literature

## EMBASE

Excerpta Medica Database

## AMED

Allied and Complementary  
Medicine Database

Cochrane Ear, Nose  
& Throat Disorder  
Group Trials Register



# Search Results: PRISMA

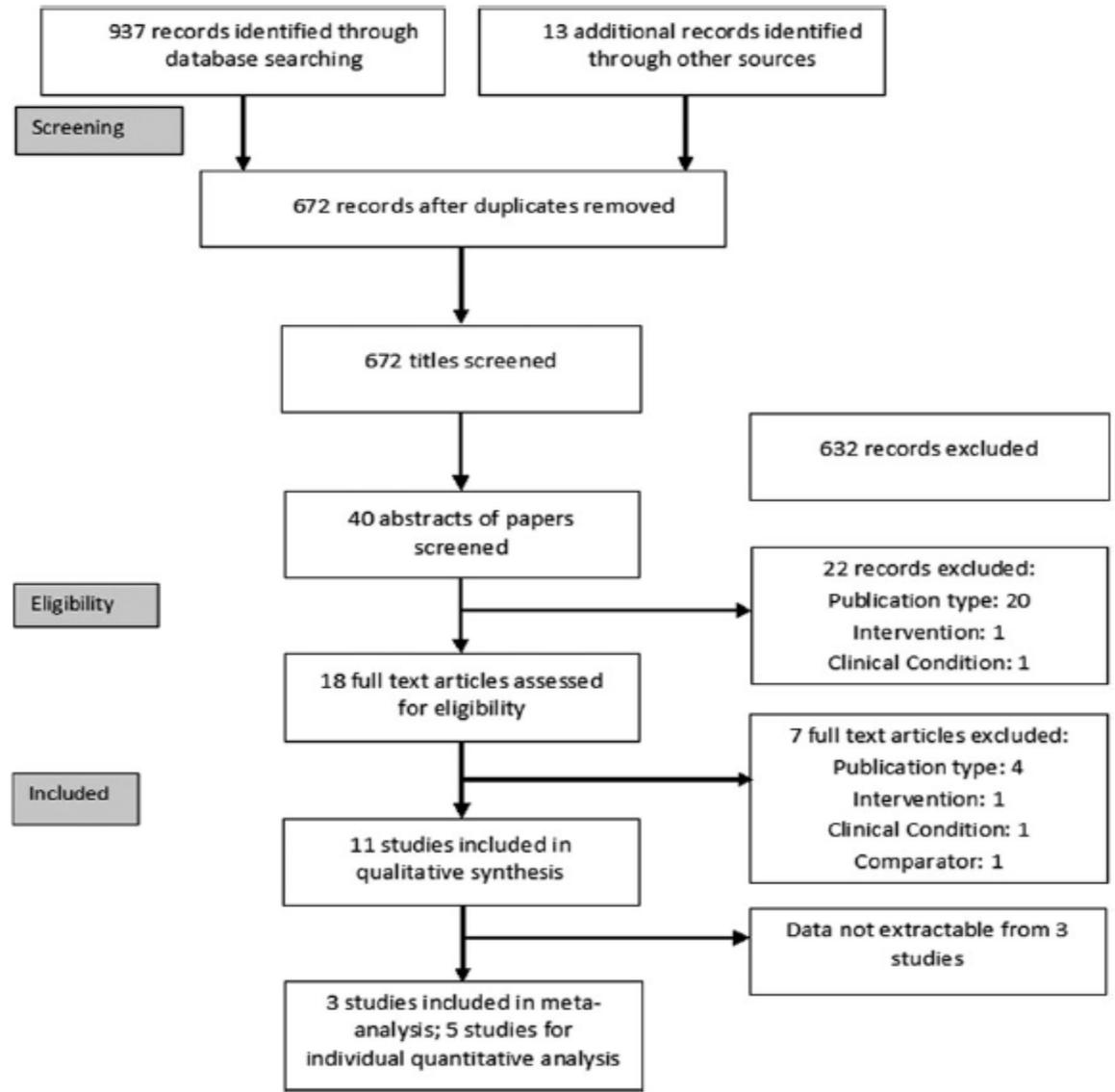


FIG. 1. PRISMA flowchart. Adapted from Moher et al.<sup>49</sup>



# Results

## Small benefit?

Galphimia  
Glauca

Commercial  
Homeopathic  
Nasal Spray

CAVEAT!  
(Later)

# Meta-Analysis

## Two Weeks

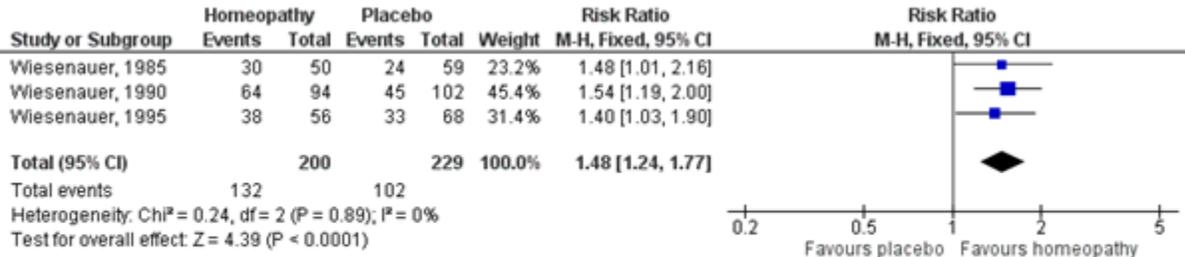


Figure 3 Nasal Symptom Relief at 2 weeks

## Four Weeks

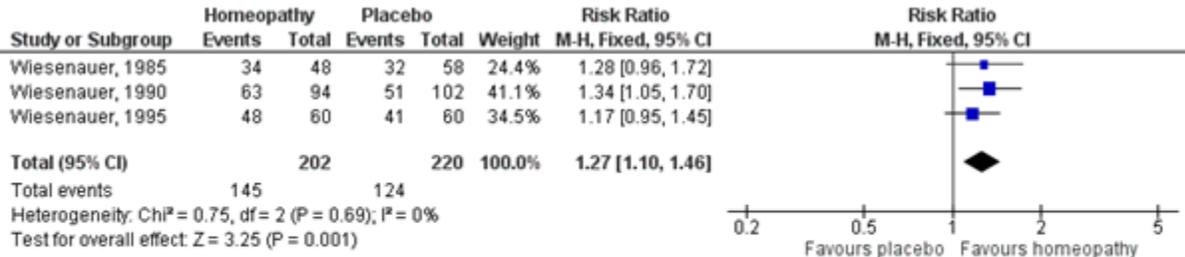


Figure 4 Nasal Symptom Relief at 4 weeks

Nasal Symptom Relief

## Two Weeks

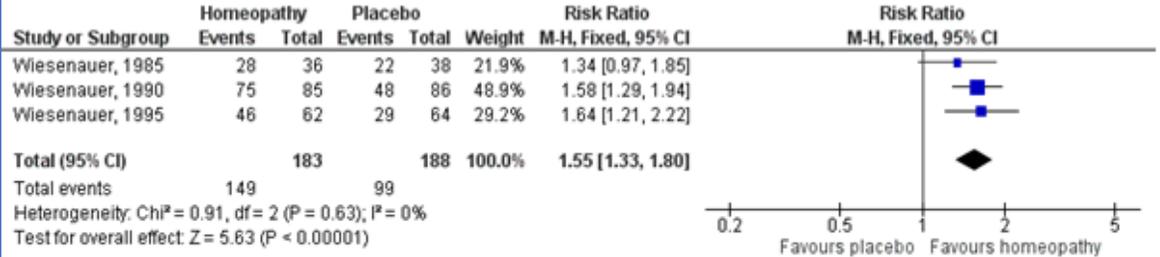


Figure 5 Ocular Symptom Relief at 2 weeks

## Four Weeks

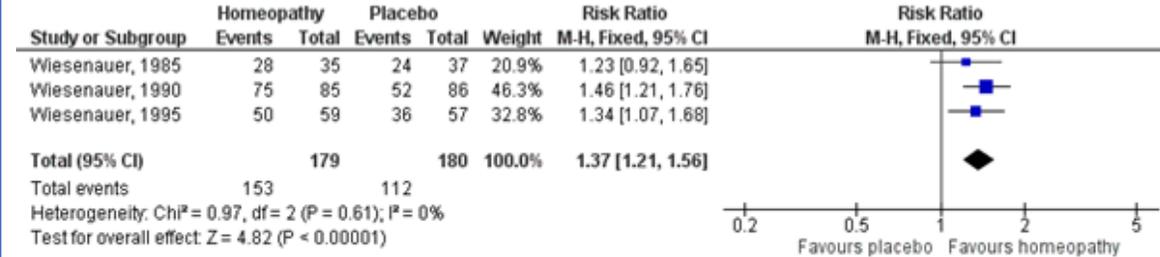


Figure 6 Ocular Symptom Relief at 4 weeks

Ocular Symptom Relief

# Results (non MA studies)

8 studies excluded from MA

5 studies reported a positive therapeutic effect in one or more outcomes

4 out of these 5 reported statistically significant positive effects

The fifth trial (only one with reliable evidence) did not have statistically significant results

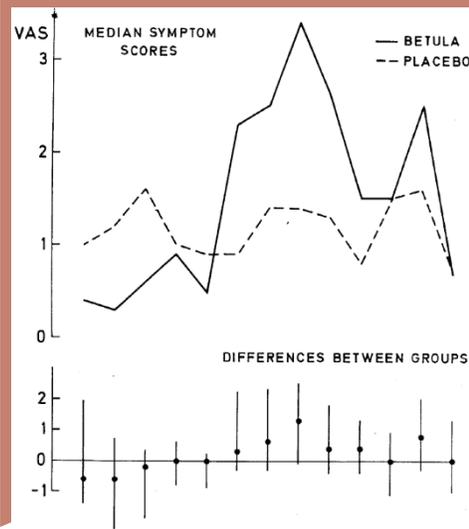
# Quality of Studies

## Overall: poor

- High attrition in 7 studies

## Missing Data

- Isopathy: 3 out of 6 trials without extractable data



## Reliability/Bias

- 3 studies with uncertain risk of bias (RoB)
- 1 of these: reliable source
- 8 remaining trials: high risk of bias overall



# Problems with SR: HUGE

## Meta Analysis

- Just three trials
- All from the same author group!

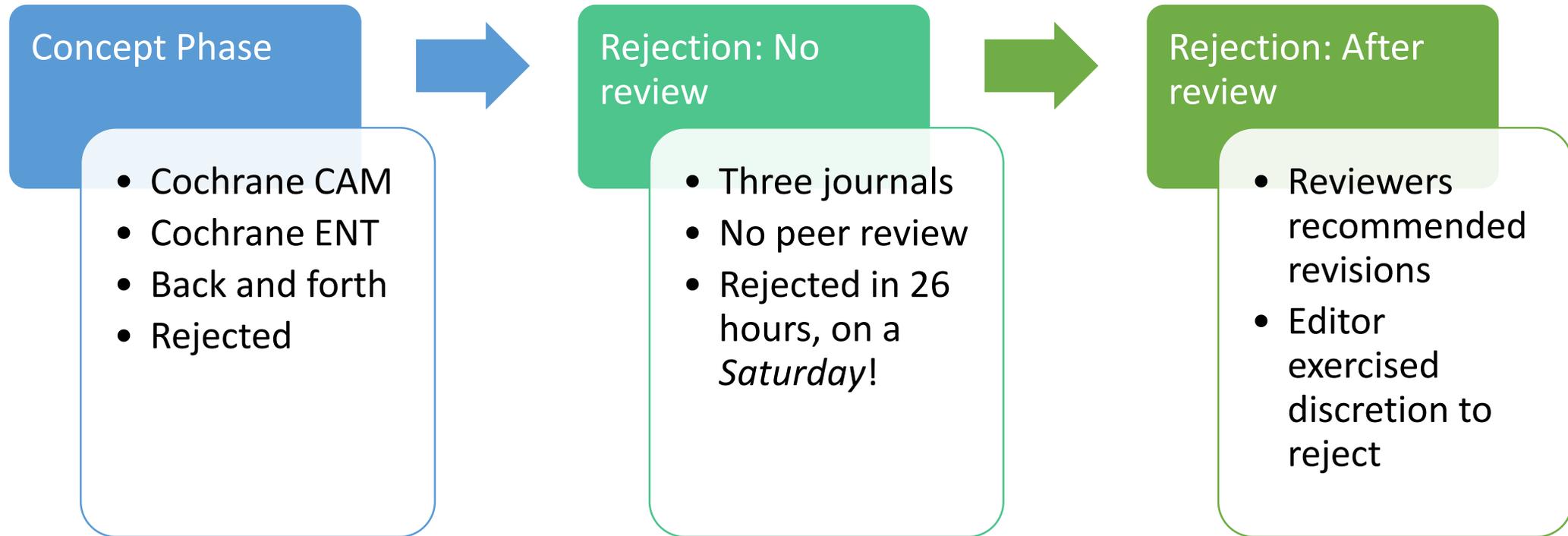
## Quality of Studies

- Missing data
- High attrition
- 1 study with reliable evidence did not have statistically significant results

## Heterogeneity: outcomes

- Different kinds of study diaries
- Different kinds of VAS
- Different kinds of Symptom scores
- Separate and composite symptom assessment
- Why, oh why?

# Publication Trouble/Bias?



‘This is the most difficult peer review process I have ever experienced.’



# Concepts about Homeopathy

## Ultra-dilutions Alone

- A significant number of prescriptions are not ultra diluted
- Where are the reviews of these interventions?
- Where are the *trials*?

## Therapeutic Consultation Process

- In busy practices there is limited time with the patient
- Consultation process is rather unpleasant

# Context – Homeopathic Practice



# DR. KALYAN BANERJEE'S CLINIC

NEW DELHI





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'If they answer not to thy call, walk alone.'

- Rabindranath Tagore

Thank you.