Podcast 39 – Blue Is The New Black!



In this podcast, we cover:

01:08 Introducing Michèle and Christophe

08:34 Homeopathy in France and the US

14:54 Boiron's role in the growth of homeopathy

20:50 Boiron in India

You are listening to a podcast from joettecalabrese.com where nationally certified American homeopath, public speaker, and author, Joette Calabrese, shares her passion for helping families stay healthy through homeopathy and

nutrient-dense nutrition.

Joette: Hi Folks! Today's podcast is going to be a complete turnaround for me. Normally, I'm interviewed, but this time, I'll be the one interviewing my two special guests. The reason I've decided to do this is multifold. Once you understand who these folks are, it will become clear to you why I wanted to do this so much. So, whether you're new to homeopathy or an old pro, you'll appreciate what you'll learn today because we're going to be interviewing two key people in the world of global homeopathy.

So, let me start with this: You know those little blue bottles of homeopathic medicines that you see at your local supermarket, or health food store, or at your local conventional pharmacy and online? Well, they're made by Boiron. There is a fascinating and, perhaps to you, an untold story that needs to be revealed here in the US. *That* is my goal today. I want to start with two super important people, as I said, at Boiron.

Introducing Michèle and Christophe

First, we have Michèle Boiron. In case you haven't made the connection yet, she carries the family name of Boiron which makes her super important in the story that she and we are about to tell. So, Michèle Boiron is a pharmacist since 1969. She practiced her profession with passion behind the counter until 2005 – in both homeopathic and allopathic pharmacies. That makes her a little special, folks, especially in the US. Since then, Michèle has traveled the world sharing her experiences with fellow pharmacists in countries such as Brazil, Russia, Tunisia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Polynesia. Now, of course, she's in North America. She's probably done this many times. But, this is a really fascinating thing is that she was made knight of the

Legion of Honour by the French Minister of Health in 2008.

Now, before we start talking to her, let me also introduce to you, Christophe Merville. Christophe, who is a Doctor of Pharmacology, is the Director of Education and Pharmacy Development at Boiron. In his position, he creates training programs both online and in print for pharmacists and retailers on homeopathic medicines used to treat common health conditions. Before his 20-year career with Boiron, Christophe was a university hospital pharmacist in France, Loire Valley where he obtained three years of clinical experience. He was, of course, born in France. He completed his pharmacy doctorate in Nantes in 1985. He also co-authored several published works and has presented homeopathic topics at scientific meetings.

So, I welcome you both. This is really exciting for me and I hope for our listeners as well.

If you don't mind, let's start with you Michèle. I just have to ask you this question if you don't mind. I've heard you have a reputation for being a troublemaker. I love troublemakers.

Michèle: That's right.

Joette: I tell people, they need to have guts, spunk, and moxie. I want to know what the reason is for this reputation. I heard you speak on it recently. So, I'd love to have you share that with us. Why are you such a troublemaker?

Michèle: Yes, I am really. I was a troublemaker because I was never satisfied with what I had. I began my story in the family pharmacy in Lyon. In that pharmacy, there were only homeopathic medicines. So, I was not so well with that because as a young pharmacist, I felt there were many other medicines very effective and important. So, I stayed there 10 years and I said, "No, I have to go on my own." I went

and I bought a small pharmacy in this suburb of Lyon, only allopathic drugs and not a single pellet tube. I was happy to say, “I’m going to do what I want.”

Joette: I love it. That’s the goal for all of us. Can you tell me a little bit of the legacy of your parents as pharmacists and how that all fit into your life and what Boiron is today?

Michèle: You know? I wanted to be an English teacher. You can’t imagine that today, huh? But we had family values. My father was pharmacist. My mother was pharmacist. So, I became a pharmacist. Then I began with my mother in her pharmacy. Afterwards, I had my own pharmacy. I introduced homeopathy in the allopathic pharmacy. Then I came back to the family pharmacy, and there I put conventional medicine in the homeopathic pharmacy. That’s why I am a troublemaker, you know, because I need to get all the medicines and not only a part of that. They always teach me to do what I really wanted to do. So, that’s very important. My father was so much passionate by homeopathy. So, I lived with that. He transmitted that to us, I think. Us three, my two brothers and I are still working in the field of homeopathy.

Joette: Yes. So, you’re the bridge to the two paradigms of medicine: allopathy and homeopathy.

Michèle: Yes, that’s true because we have wonderful medicines. The only thing is to use them in the right way. And, first of all, not to take your hammer to kill a mosquito. So, at the first beginning of a story of a disease, you have to try first – for me – homeopathic medicine because they are effective and without side effects. If ever it’s not working for one reason or another, okay, we have time to take another medicine. So first of all, it can be used alone. And also, now, more and more, it’s used as a complementary medicine. Of course, also in case that people cannot take conventional medicine. So, you

have so many ways to use homeopathy. For me, it's important to know it. That's why I'm going around the world to share my experience with homeopathy with pharmacists.

Joette: Yes, yes. But there's a uniqueness in that message. Is that … maybe it's because of the French pharmacies and the patient pharmacist exchange? Perhaps that has something to do with it. I believe that's very unusual. We don't see a tight exchange here in North America between the pharmacist and the patient. The pharmacist in the US is kind of the go-between. I love that it's done this way in France. I would love you to expound on that if you don't mind.

Michèle: Yes. It is true that it is very different exercise in France than in the US. But I can tell you, it is changing all around the world. The role of the pharmacist is increasing and becoming a more advisory role everywhere, in Russia, in Tunisia, in Italy, and everywhere in the world. I think it's coming here, too, because people need to have somebody to ask questions as soon as it comes. Of course, otherwise, they have to be aware of many things themselves. It's very difficult.

Joette: It's a lot of work. You're absolutely right. I've actually advised people that if their pharmacist is too busy during the day, that they should call in the middle of the night those pharmacies that are open 24 hours – and get the lonely pharmacist when he or she is all alone and in need of company and wouldn't mind some questions coming in at the dark hours of 3 AM. But maybe that will change in the US. That would be great. I'd love to see that happen.

Michèle: I think it's going to change.

Joette: So there's a wide appeal of homeopathic medicines in France, much different than what we see in North America. Yes?

Homeopathy in France and the US

Michèle: Yes, of course. In France, more than 50% of the people over 18 years old have used already homeopathic medicines. That means without counting children. So, that's very important. Here, it's not exactly the same, a little bit less. But we are on a wave at that moment where people are willing more natural and less aggressive therapeutics. It is the same for the food. It is the same for everything. They want more natural things. Homeopathy fits quite well with this new way of life. So, I think it will be more and more.

Joette: It is a tidy fit. I agree with you. I think it has a lot to do with perhaps the politics of the world today, perhaps the internet having the ability to look things up on their own. There's a movement, I think, throughout the world as you said for cleaner environments and better food and accountability and what these medications can or cannot do. I agree with you.

So, Christophe, if you don't mind, I'd love to bring you into this. Tell us about how your medicines are made. I don't want to get too deep into this. I don't want to get into potencies, et cetera, et cetera. But a little bit about the rules and regulations with those folks who tend to believe that homeopathy is running by the seat of its pants – when in fact, it is nothing like that? Could you dispel that for us?

Christophe: The first thing to know important is that in the US, homeopathic medicines have been defined as drugs since 1938. For everybody, that means that the level of control in the manufacturing and distribution of these medicines is very high, much higher than with herbs and supplements. So, for example, during the manufacturing process, you have dozens of controls that are happening to control exactly that each medicine is the same. One thing

that role has been very, very instrumental in the world of homeopathic manufacturing is establishing guidelines that have been accepted, integrated to the French Pharmacopoeia and some of them to the US Pharmacopoeia (homeopathy pharmacopoeia, of course, in the US) to provide medicine that's very reliable. You can count on it. With Boiron, we start always with fresh plants, for example. Every time we can, it's a fresh plant. The level of control here also is very high. For example, on each homeopathic, from each Boiron homeopathic medicine, you have a little lot number. If you give me that lot number, I can call France, and they can tell me what was the weather like.

Joette: Oh, come on!

Christophe: Yes, because we need to.

Joette: Oh, how impressive!

Christophe: When the plant was harvested because we need to gather the plants when it's not rainy, otherwise, there is too much water in the plant, and so on and so forth. So, those are just a few examples of the level of control we care. Not talking about dilutions in detail, but when we manufacture homeopathic dilution, it is done in an environment where the air is extremely pure. It's even purer than the air on top of Mt. Everest. And, all that is validated and controlled and so on. So, homeopathic medicines are not made in the corner of a kitchen table. It's a highly controlled process. Therefore, each physician, each pharmacy, each patient to receive, or to distribute, or to dispense the medicine of the highest quality and reliability.

Joette: So Christophe, are you saying that this is unique to Boiron?

Christophe: I would say yes. No question. I worked with other pharmacist. We – the company, Boiron company – has a

fast pharmacist control, and especially in domain of homeopathy where tradition and modernism work together. This is really unique. To not to criticize, but for example, the dynamization process – you can do it by hand, of course. That's how Hahnemann described it. But we keep the same spirit, but we use a dynamizer which is the same in every Boiron plant and is calibrated to vibrate at the same speed and doing the same length. So, each dynamization is *always* made the same way.

Joette: Consistency.

Christophe: Consistency in order to eliminate from the patient and the physician or the pharmacist the doubt that, "Oh, I don't see the same effect with the medicine because of the medicine." No, if you don't see the same effect, it comes from the patient. So, that's very important.

Joette: Yes, that eliminates one factor that could be very important.

Christophe: We don't know to what extent the dynamization must be: 10 seconds, 12 seconds, 5 seconds. All that needs to be ascertained. I'm sure it will be in the near future. However, consistency at this point is important. You know it works well when you do it that way. You keep doing it that way. It's as simple as that.

Joette: Beautiful. It's beautiful. So obviously, what happens when you run a company for many decades and it grows exponentially – not just in the home country from which it began but then to the next country and the next and the next and then goes across the pond to the other side of the world – there's a reason for that. That has a lot to do with the consistency and the quality and etcetera. So, I believe – even before I knew anyone at Boiron – that Boiron has something unique. And, not only because of the blue tubes. (I must say parenthetically, Michèle has a blue jacket on

and blue eyeglasses on. They're very beautiful. I wish you could see her. I'm totally enjoying the view I have right now.) But also, because there's a new role occurring for Boiron. I mean it's not that new … you've been in the US for what, 40 years?

Christophe: Since 1983.

Joette: '83, okay. What is the role of Boiron in the role of growth of homeopathy throughout the world?

Boiron's role in the growth of homeopathy

Michèle: It is our aim to make homeopathy well-known everywhere in the world. Our aim is not to make a special medicine so that we can gain much money. Of course, it's good, but that's not the point. The point is we really want homeopathy to be known everywhere, so that people are able to choose the way of curing them. To choose, you have to know it before. It's the same for people than for all the healthcare professional. So, it's important that we go everywhere in the world to promote homeopathy.

Christophe: May I just add something?

Joette: Please.

Christophe: It's very simple. If you go on the Boiron website, you will see that goal clearly written. It's about, for us I think, establishing a trustful relationship with the pharmacists, physicians, or customers. I think that is strong. People recognize it. They talk about it. That's how it grows very organically. It's not so much an exponential growth. It's an organic growth. Mothers talk to their daughters, to their neighbors.

Joette: Yes!

Christophe: When they want information, we give them coherent and consistent information. We try to give as clear

and transparent as possible. That is really helping people to choose something they're trusting, as opposed that something they're fearing. That I think plays a role.

Joette: Yes, I couldn't agree with you more. A big aspect of my message is that this needs to be in the hands of families. That usually means mothers and grandmothers. Although, I see fathers more and more interested in this. But the mothers are the ones who are generally up with the children in the middle of the night. The grandmothers are the ones who are advising their daughters and daughter-in-laws, et cetera. So, I believe what this is, is a movement towards family. Family doesn't have to be with children. Family can be with cats. A family can be with livestock. A family can be with having two poodles and a German shepherd. That's still family, because we can't help but want to take care of those we love and that is a big part of this. So, I say "family" and "mother" and "grandmother" with a little bit broader understanding of it. But, I also understand that there are pharmacy schools in the US. Tell me about these schools, and are you teaching there, Christophe? Tell me about that a little bit.

Christophe: Yes, I was very pleased and honored to be invited to speak at several schools of pharmacy and two of them on a very regular basis for seven years now. Our goal is to go there with a visual of information. We are not there to promote Boiron or even promote homeopathy. It's as much as saying those are drugs. You cannot ignore it. We think we are the best people to explain in detail and answer all your questions. We expose the facts. We expose the research.

At the beginning, I was very surprised to see how – from a level of knowledge that was almost zero – at the end of the two hours, they say, "Well, we are very comfortable now answering questions." For pharmacists or future pharmacists, this is so important. Because if they appear not to know

something, the customer will go elsewhere – and God knows where sometimes – and not receive the same good advice. So, at least in the US, that's my experience. I'm sure in France, situation is not the same, but homeopathy is more integrated. We have other types of questions. But in general, pharmacists, when they start to know homeopathy, have a keen interest into it.

Joette: Well, interestingly, I find that when I teach homeopathy and I get pharmacists in my classes … they get it. Once they flip that switch, and they move just a tiny degree over, it all fits. Because that's what homeopathy is – is pharmacology.

Christophe: May I share with you just a quick number? We were involved in a process of sponsoring continued education program. One of the questions that was asked, before the program was launched, is to pharmacist, "Are you interested in being educated in homeopathy?" Guess what the percentage was? 400 pharmacists answered.

Joette: I have no idea. I like to think it's high.

Christophe: 96%.

Joette: Oh, come on! That's excellent!

Christophe: Can we say they are open-minded?

Joette: They're looking for the alternatives. I think that's how we have all come to homeopathy – perhaps not Michèle so much, because she grew up in a family with it. But for those of us who were on the allopathic trail for so many years and then we're cured (or diseases were resolved for myself, et cetera, my family), it becomes a passion like no other passion. Now, I love food and I love preparing food. I love travel. There are many things that I love. I love Italian opera. But *nothing has turned me on* like this. Talking about a switch being flipped … once mine was

flipped, there was no turning back. I see that, and I keep waiting for it to happen in others. I am observing this in so many people because of our goal in teaching families time and time again. So, it is a very exciting movement. I do believe that it is a movement. Would you say, Michèle, that this is a movement?

Michèle: Yes, of course, this is a movement. I'm very happy of that. I'm proud to help it. So, as long as I can do that and it will be really a big chance for me.

Joette: Yes. So now, I also understand that you're looking to India, and you've broken into the Indian market … is that right?

Boiron in India

Michèle: It is our last subsidiary. We went to India before, and then we moved. But today, we have the will to be back to India. We are in India, since one year. In this country, homeopathy is an official medicine. You have plenty of people using already homeopathic medicines.

Joette: Yes.

Michèle: So, we hope to do a good job there.

Joette: Yes, yes. I think it's an excellent idea. I don't know that they have the steps that other countries in Europe and the US have in terms of regulations. I don't know how deep their regulations go. So, it would be good to have something that was universally regulated. I love that idea. Generally, I'm not for universality but when it comes to this – I'm all in.

Christophe: Joette, I know that in India, they are looking to the homeopathic pharmacopeia of the US as a provider of clean and reliable guidelines. That's a very good sign.

Joette: Guidelines, yes, guidelines.

Christophe: Normalization.

Joette: Yes, it's needed because I work with people from all over the world. It's hard to get them some medicine sometimes because I don't know the pharmacies in those parts of the world. To be able to send them to Boiron in remote places would certainly make it a lot easier for many of my students, et cetera. Yes, it would be great.

So Michèle, you said – and please correct me if I'm wrong – something to the effect that it's not one product that you have in mind; it's something other than that. Could you just expound on that just for one more minute? I just want to make sure I understand.

Michèle: The aim is to give some people a chance to be cured when they can't be cured by conventional medicine. That is to say a woman who has hot flushes who has a risk of breast cancer – she will not be able to take hormonals. So, what can she do?

Joette: Excellent example.

Michèle: Except homeopathy, you don't have any solution. And then you have also all the palliative care we can accompany – not, of course, replace – chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Joette: Surgery and diagnostics, et cetera, yes.

Michèle: Only to mitigate the side effects of the chemotherapy. So, it helps a lot and it helps so many people. So, that's our way of thinking.

Joette: Yes, yes. Well, on the other hand, there is one product that Boiron is so well-known for. And it's Oscillococcinum. What's really fascinating about this story is that I have a picture of your dog in front of me.

Michèle: Yes.

Joette: Tell these listeners about how those two bridged together?

Michèle: Her name was Oscillo, that's why.

Joette: Oscillo, very sweet. So, it only goes to show how important one medicine can be in one family.

Michèle: She lived five years more than all her siblings because she was cured with homeopathy, so good for pets.

Joette: Is there anything else that I should be asking you folks that I have not asked, or anything you would like to comment on for our listeners that you believe would be valuable?

Michèle: Not to discuss perhaps, but to say that homeopathic medicines are good from the first day of the life until the last day of the life. They are for everybody. Everybody can take those medicines without any risk. That would be my message – dare to try –because you don't have any risk. It is so important to dare to try.

Joette: I love it, guts, spunk, and moxie – So, thank you very much both Christophe and Michèle. It's been wonderful. I totally enjoyed it.

Michèle: Thank you.

Christophe: Thank you.

Joette: Bye now.

Michèle: Bye.

Christophe: Bye-bye.

Joette: There you have it, folks, straight from the experts. Many thanks to Michèle Boiron and Christophe Merville and Boiron for this inspirational interview.

Thank you for listening to this podcast with Joette Calabrese. If you liked it, please share it with your friends. To learn more and find out if homeopathy is a good fit in your health strategy, visit joettecalabrese.com.