

Role of Homeopathy in Preventive Healthcare in Rural India

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Abstract

Homeopathy, a system of alternative medicine, is increasingly being acknowledged for its promise in preventative healthcare, particularly in rural India. This article examines the historical context, current integration, problems, and future prospects for homeopathy in rural healthcare settings. The study emphasizes the importance of homeopathy in improving healthcare accessibility and cost in marginalized areas by examining government actions, community acceptability, and educational frameworks.

Key Words : Homeopathy, Preventive Healthcare, Rural Health India, Alternative Medicine, AYUSH Integration, Primary Health Services, Community Health Programs, Traditional Medicine in India, Holistic Healthcare

Introduction :

Infrastructural limits, economic restraints, and a shortage of medical experts frequently make it difficult for India's rural population to get effective healthcare. Homeopathy, with its emphasis on holistic treatment and minimum side effects, provides a supplementary approach to conventional medicine. Its integration into rural healthcare has the potential to address service delivery gaps and encourage preventative health practices. Homeopathy is effective for treating a variety of illnesses. But it has limitations. Certain conditions necessitate traditional treatment. In such instances, homeopathic medications might be used as a supplemental treatment to help a patient recover faster.

Despite the fact that homeopathy is the world's second most popular medicine, people often seek it after attempting and failing to respond to conventional treatment. During that time, the condition may have developed pathologically, making treatment more time-consuming. However, in many cases when homeopathic treatment is initiated immediately following diagnosis, as well as in infants whose immune systems are untouched by toxins, the homeopathic system of medicine works extremely well, resulting in a cure.

The most common diseases for which patients seek homeopathy include ear infections, depression, insomnia, sinusitis, stress and anxiety, skin disorders, menstruation issues, common colds, and allergic asthma.

The general population has a high level of understanding and faith in homeopathy for treating a variety of acute and chronic health conditions. Homeopathy addresses the entire person, including the body, mind, and emotions, rather than just the sickness. The basic strategy is to make a diagnosis based on the patient's entire medical history as well as an awareness of his or her temperament, personality, lifestyle, and eating habits.

According to this holistic philosophy, each patient is treated as a distinct individual. As a result, the remedies are chosen to complement a patient's physical and mental characteristics in order to stimulate the body's natural healing capacity.

Homeopathic medications can also help prevent sickness and promote good health. Recent clinical research indicate that homeopathic treatments improve allergic rhinitis, fibrositis, and influenza. Homeopathy cures a wide range of ailments, including headaches, fevers, stress, arthritis, maternity and pediatric issues, and eczema. Homeopathic medicines are used as a stand-alone treatment or in combination with other systems' medicines to address a variety of clinical diseases.

Homeopathic Practice in Indian Healthcare

Homeopathy was first introduced in India by certain German missionaries and physicians who distributed German homeopathic medications to local residents during their mission. However, it gained popularity in 1839 after Dr. John Martin Honigberger successfully treated Maharaja Ranjit Singh's vocal cord paralysis. As a result, Dr. Honigberger settled in Calcutta and became known as the Cholera Doctor. Following him, Dr. M.L. Sirkar, a renowned physician, began practicing homeopathy. In 1868, he founded 'The Calcutta Journal of Medicine,' the first homeopathic journal. In 1881, numerous eminent allopathic physicians, such as Dr. P.C. Mujumdar and Dr. D. N. Roy, founded the first homeopathic medical institution, the 'Calcutta Homoeopathic Medical institution.' Dr. Lahiri, Dr. B. K. Sarkar, and many more were also impressed by homeopathy and began practicing it as a profession. It all transpired in West Bengal, yet it aided the expansion and development of homeopathy across India.

It resulted in an increase in the number of amateur homeopaths. As a result, the government had to streamline the system because such practitioners required recognition. As a result, in 1937, the Central Legislative Assembly resolved to incorporate homeopathy into government hospitals and to grant homeopathic colleges the same status and credit as allopathic colleges in India.

In 1948, the same Assembly passed another resolution on homeopathy, which led to the founding of the Homoeopathic Enquiry Committee. In 1949, this group produced a report suggesting the formation of a Central Homoeopathic Council. Later, in 1952, a Homoeopathic Adhoc Committee was founded, which was renamed Homoeopathic Advisory Committee in 1954. Its role was to advise the government on all aspects of homeopathy, including homeopathic education, research, practice regulation, the Indian homeopathic pharmacopeia, drug manufacturing, financial aid to homeopathic institutions, government dispensaries, and hospitals, and collaboration with the International Homoeopathic Medical League. Finally, in 1973, Parliament established the Homoeopathy Central Council Act, which governs homeopathy education and practice in the country.



In the current situation, homeopathy is critical to India's various healthcare systems. The Indian government has made ongoing attempts to promote its growth and development, as well as those of other Indian medical systems such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Sowa Rigpa, collectively known as Ayush. Homeopathy is being practiced both at the national level and in all state health systems. A regulatory structure for quality university education exists at around 195 undergraduate and 43 postgraduate homeopathic medical colleges, as well as an autonomous research council with 22 institutes and units. In addition, with around 2,83,840 registered homeopathy practitioners, drug safety standards, and 403 drug manufacturing units, India has a large list of homeopathic medicines.

Homeopathy in the Indian healthcare system

Ayush services are integrated into the country's healthcare delivery system at all levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary care. The Indian government has launched a number of programs and initiatives to enhance coverage and promote Ayush systems across the country. These restrictions ensure that healthcare quality is preserved while also allowing people to pick their own therapy.

State governments, municipal entities, the Central Government Health Scheme, the Labor Ministry, and the Railway Ministry operate 235 hospitals and 8117 dispensaries that provide homeopathic healthcare services. One of the National Rural Health Mission's primary initiatives is to integrate the Indian medical system and homeopathy to improve healthcare in these locations. In 2015, Ayush facilities were constructed in 512 district hospitals, 2739 community health clinics, and 9112 primary health centers through the National Rural Health Mission. Dr. Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India, launched the "Ayush Wellness Centre" on July 25, 2015, at the President's Estate in New Delhi.

Growth of Homeopathy in India

Since the previous two decades, the Government of India has maintained a consistent focus and initiatives to improve the quality of homeopathic health services, with goals of upgrading education, further studies, research, drug development, and effective healthcare delivery and system regulation. As a result, instruction and training in homeopathy in India are comparable to other medical systems. Registration with the State or Central Register of Homeopathy is legally required to practice homeopathy in India.

With a highly qualified people resource and homeopathic infrastructure, India is regarded as the world leader in homeopathy. Several countries have a high demand for qualified practitioners and teachers. Online homeopathic treatment, the availability of online homeopathic medicines, and webinars have offered promising options and career paths for young doctors. Some of the benefits of homeopathy include pharmaceutical safety, an easy-to-administer form of drugs, especially for infants, and low cost, as well as Ayush's strong support and restrictions.

The Department of Ayush has grown into the Ministry of Ayush. Ayush services were introduced to existing PHCs and government outlets to guarantee that healthcare services are accessible and available to everyone. The health ministry began implementing the Ayush system with stringent supervision.

Many strategies and plans were included in the recent National Ayush Mission, such as multidimensional mainstreaming, developing infrastructural facilities for Ayush medical institutions, increasing Ayush medicine production, improving drug standardization and quality control, professional capability building, increasing research and public health skills, and initiating community-based awareness on preventive and promotive health care.

Several studies have found that homeopathy is effective for common health conditions reported at primary health centers, such as headaches, acute otitis media, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children, respiratory tract and ear infections, allergies, and so on.

Public health and preventive medicine

Homeopathy has enormous potential in the fields of public health and preventive medicine, especially in situations where healthcare accessibility, affordability, and overall well-being are significant concerns. Homeopathy, as an alternative medical system, is rapidly being investigated for its role in illness prevention, immune system regulation, and community health. In countries like India, where a big proportion of the population relies on traditional and complementary remedies, incorporating homeopathy into public health programs has the potential to provide significant advantages. For example, homeopathic prophylactics have been utilized during epidemic outbreaks of chikungunya, dengue, and influenza, raising concerns about their efficacy and widespread adoption. Research into the effectiveness of homeopathic therapies in preventing seasonal diseases, viral outbreaks, and stress-related problems can provide important insights for health planning. Furthermore, community-based studies might look into how homeopathic treatment awareness campaigns affect the health behaviors and preferences of rural communities. Homeopathy's mild and non-toxic approach also makes it an appealing alternative for maternity and child healthcare, particularly in underserved areas where conventional treatment may be unavailable or culturally unacceptable.

Another essential component is homeopathy's contribution in developing the concept of preventive care, as opposed to symptom-focused therapeutic programs. Studies can look into how frequent constitutional treatment in homeopathy helps with immunity, stress resilience, and disease recurrence. The incorporation of homeopathy into national and state-level public health frameworks, such as the National Health Mission (NHM), Ayushman Bharat, or school health programs, is an important topic of research. Research can also look into the barriers of policy acceptance, inter-practitioner collaboration, and infrastructural requirements for mainstreaming homeopathy in the preventive healthcare ecosystem. Furthermore, perception studies of homeopathy among public health professionals, patients, and traditional healers might provide valuable information for developing outreach and training initiatives. The cost-effectiveness of homeopathic therapies in large-scale health initiatives is another intriguing subject for empirical inquiry, particularly in light of escalating pharmaceutical costs and overburdened hospital systems. Overall, this line of investigation helps to build the foundations of inclusive, integrative, and sustainable healthcare in developing and low-resource settings, as well as to widen the application of homeopathy.

Conclusion

To summarize, homeopathy is a promising complementary approach to public health and preventive medicine that focuses on individual well-being, immune strengthening, and illness prevention at the communal level. Its low cost, little side effects, and cultural acceptability make it ideal for inclusion



into rural and underprivileged healthcare delivery systems. While more empirical evidence and regulatory support are needed to confirm and standardize its use, homeopathy has the potential to complement holistic and inclusive health strategies. Strengthening research, public awareness, and collaborative health models can help ensure that homeopathy plays an important part in accomplishing larger public health objectives.

The preceding facts clearly demonstrate that optimal integration of Homoeopathy in basic healthcare alongside traditional medicine leads to patients' safe and cost-effective recovery, increases patient satisfaction, and lessens the strain on the conventional health system. Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO, has also emphasized that the two systems do not have to fight; rather, within the context of PHC, they can merge in a beneficial harmony, utilizing the best characteristics of each system and compensating for specific inadequacies in each. There is a long way to go, yet it is not impossible. It is possible to successfully execute it with the correct instructions and efforts.

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