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Dr. Md. Salimur Rahman
BHMS (DU), MPH (ASAUB),
Lecturer, Department of
Chronic Disease Case Taking
and Homoeopathic
Repertorisation Government
Homoeopathic Medical College
and Hospital, Mirpur-14,
Dhaka-1206, Bangladesh

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Md. Salimur Rahman
BHMS (DU), MPH (ASAUB),
Lecturer, Department of
Chronic Disease Case Taking
and Homoeopathic
Repertorisation Government
Homoeopathic Medical College
and Hospital, Mirpur-14,
Dhaka-1206, Bangladesh

Role of homoeopathy in the primary health care system

Md. Salimur Rahman

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Abstract

Primary Health Care (PHC) forms the foundation of an equitable and effective health care system. Homoeopathy, as a holistic, safe, and affordable medical science, has demonstrated considerable potential in strengthening PHC globally. Its contributions range from preventive care and chronic disease management to maternal and child health, thus reducing the burden on tertiary health institutions. Homoeopathy's integration into PHC systems in many countries highlights its value in improving accessibility, community trust, and health promotion.

Keywords: Homoeopathy, primary health care (PHC), holistic medicine, integrative medicine, preventive health, public health, community health, affordable care, maternal and child health, chronic disease management, global health

Introduction

Primary Health Care is recognized as a cornerstone of universal health coverage and health equity. The Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978 emphasized PHC as a means to achieve "Health for All" [1]. Homoeopathy, being the second most widely used medical system globally [2], is an important contributor to PHC. Its affordability, safety, and individualized approach make it suitable for both developed and developing countries.

The Homoeopathic System of Treatment-A Brief Discussion

Homoeopathy is a system of medicine founded by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann in the late 18th century. Its core principle is the "Law of Similars" (Similia Similibus Curentur), which means "like cures like." According to this principle, a substance capable of producing certain symptoms in a healthy individual can cure similar symptoms in a diseased person when administered in minute doses [3].

Another essential principle is the minimum dose, where medicines are prepared by a unique process of potentization that enhances their healing properties while minimizing toxicity [4]. Homoeopathy treats the patient as a whole, focusing not only on physical symptoms but also on mental and emotional states.

Homoeopathic prescriptions are individualized, meaning that two patients with the same medical diagnosis may receive different remedies based on their totality of symptoms [5]. This holistic, safe, and patient-centered approach makes homoeopathy particularly suitable for primary health care settings, where both acute and chronic conditions are commonly encountered.

Furthermore, homoeopathy emphasizes preventive care and health promotion, in line with PHC principles. Its wide acceptance, affordability, and non-invasive nature have helped it gain recognition in various countries, making it one of the world's most popular complementary medical systems [6].

Key Roles of Homoeopathy in Primary Health Care

1. Accessibility and Affordability

Homoeopathic medicines are inexpensive, require minimal equipment, and can be easily distributed even in rural areas. This accessibility makes homoeopathy a valuable tool in countries where medical resources are limited [7].

2. Holistic and Individualized Care

Homoeopathy emphasizes treatment of the whole person rather than isolated symptoms. This aligns with the PHC model of comprehensive, patient-centered care ^[8].

3. Preventive and Promotive Role

Homoeopathy has been used successfully in disease prevention, particularly in epidemics. Studies show its effectiveness in influenza prophylaxis, Japanese encephalitis prevention in India, and dengue prevention strategies [9,10]. This highlights its role in community-based preventive care.

4. Management of Common Acute Illnesses

Conditions such as diarrhea, cough, fever, minor skin diseases, and injuries are effectively managed through homoeopathy. Such interventions reduce unnecessary referrals to higher centers and decongest tertiary facilities ^[11].

5. Chronic Disease Management

Homoeopathy plays a significant role in managing chronic illnesses like asthma, migraine, allergies, arthritis, and irritable bowel syndrome. Studies indicate its effectiveness in improving quality of life without significant adverse effects ^[12].

6. Maternal and Child Health Care

Safe use in pregnancy, lactation, and pediatrics makes homoeopathy a vital component of PHC. It supports management of common pediatric conditions and contributes to reducing maternal and child morbidity ^[13].

7. Integration into National Health Systems

WHO acknowledges homoeopathy as a traditional medicine system used by millions worldwide ^[14]. In India, Bangladesh, Brazil, Germany, and the UK, homoeopathy has been integrated into PHC with favorable outcomes ^[15].

8. Community Acceptance and Cultural Compatibility

Homoeopathy's non-invasive, natural, and safe nature ensures wide acceptance in communities. Its compatibility with cultural health beliefs strengthens community participation in PHC ^[16].

Challenges

Despite its contributions, homoeopathy faces challenges such as limited awareness, underrepresentation in policy frameworks, and need for more rigorous scientific research. Integration with PHC requires collaborative approaches between modern and traditional systems ^[17].

Conclusion

Homoeopathy contributes significantly to the Primary Health Care system by offering safe, affordable, and holistic care. Its integration within PHC enhances accessibility, reduces health system burdens, and empowers communities. Strengthening research and policy support will further establish homoeopathy as a pillar of PHC in the 21st century.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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