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Why do people choose homoeopathy? A cross sectional study

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Abstract

As Medical Pluralism is booming in the health care sector, lot of treatment options have been made accessible. Government of India is promoting AYUSH system so that people can avail a variety of treatment modalities. The objective of the study is to know the reason why patients are preferring homoeopathy.

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among patients attending the out-patient department of the Government homeopathic hospital in Hyderabad, India. A self-administered questionnaire consisting of 8 questions in local vernacular Telugu, English and Hindi was administered to the patients.

Results: A total of 1000 patients' responses were included in the current analysis. 21.4 % patient chose homoeopathy because they were advised by friends and relatives. 20.5% chose homoeopathy fearing the side effects from allopathic system of medicines. 16.5% chose because they thought that homoeopathic physician is giving good quality time to them. 15% always choose homoeopathy over allopathy in all kinds of treatment. The least number of patients (1.5%) came to homoeopathic opd by seeing internet/television.

Keywords: Homoeopathy, patients' preference, survey

Introduction

Homeopathy is an accepted form of health care and is practised in more than 70 countries worldwide. Homeopathy is mainly known for not causing side effects or addiction problems. Nowadays Homeopathic remedies are also readily available, over the counter, in urban areas. There are no reports that Homeopathy can interact with other conventional treatments, causing harm to the patient and hence are preferred^[1].

Homeopathy has always considered the patient as a whole and has never been disease centric. The Homoeopathic principles distinguishes us from various other treatment modalities.

In India, homeopathy is second most opted treatment among the AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa rigpa and Homeopathy) services. Among AYUSH, homeopathy is popular and successful. Though Homoeopathy is not indigenous and was introduced in the early nineteenth century, its popularity is increasing day by day.

Homeopathy wellness centres comprise 31% of the total for AYUSH. Seven out of 10 diseases recognised as a national health burden are in the category of most commonly reported diseases at the homeopathy wellness centres. Academic homeopathy institutes comprise 35.8% of AYUSH colleges, the total student intakes of which are 13,658 and 32,256 respectively. Homeopathy practitioners are 37% of the AYUSH total.

Hence a study why people are choosing homoeopathy.

Materials and methods

A cross sectional survey was carried out on the patients visiting out patient department at the government homeopathic medical college, Hyderabad. The study was of 3 months duration- July to September 2021. No universally accepted standardized questionnaire was available for this purpose hence a self-administrated questionnaire was provided in local vernacular Telugu, Hindi and English language. The questionnaire is as follows and patients were asked to convey their preference orally.

English version of used questionnaire Why are you taking Homoeopathy?

1. There is no treatment in Allopathy
2. After taking allopathy, not satisfied with the treatment

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3. Fear of side effects from allopathic medications
4. My friend/relative suggested me to take Homoeopathic treatment
5. I have come here by seeing television or internet
6. I have always chosen Homoeopathy over allopathy from the start
7. Homoeopathic treatment is less costly
8. Homoeopathic doctor gives more quality time to the patients

Statistical Insights

Gender Wise: It is observed that out of the 1000 patients surveyed, 52% were female and 48% were male. Out of the total 1000 patients surveyed, 520 are Female and 480 are Male. Therefore it could be concluded that overall Gender-wise representation is proportional.

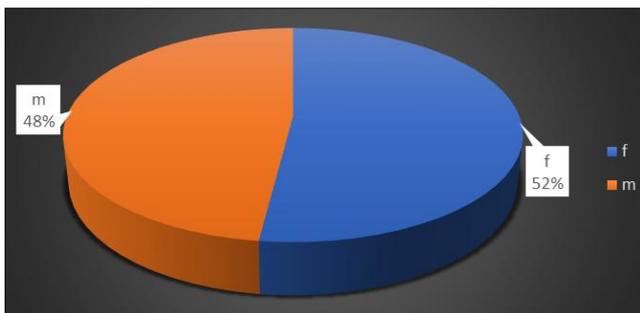


Fig 1: Male Vs Female in Homeopathy

Age Distribution: It is also observed that the range of participants is from 2 years to 86 years, thus suggesting a holistic participation of patients from an age based perspective. Age wise statistics are Mean of 38.3 years with a Standard Deviation of 15.9.

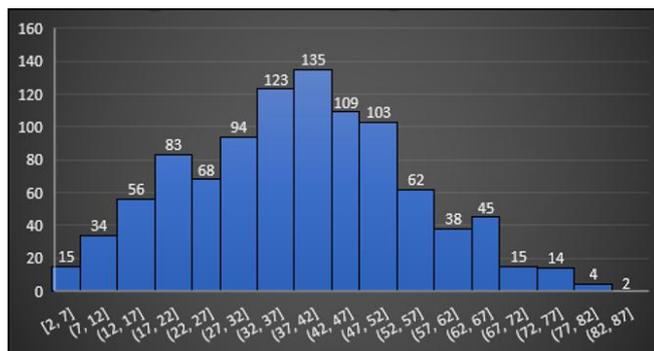


Fig 2: Histogram of patient age distribution

Options chosen: Top Option chosen was no.4 i.e 21.4% of patients were referred from friends and relatives. This shows that majority of patients are coming from references from friends and relatives, that shows that Homoeopathy had created a positive impact on them.

Second best Option chosen was no. 3 i.e 20.5% took treatment for the fear of side effects. This shows that people prefer our treatment over allopathy due to ever increasing side effects.

Third best Option chosen was no.8 i.e 16.5% felt that the Homeopathic doctor gives quality time for the patient, which has to be appreciated in a government run hospital.

Fourth Option chosen was no. 6 i.e 15% of the patients always prefer homoeopathy over allopathy, which shows the growing popularity of Homoeopathy.

Fifth Option chosen was no. 2 i.e 13.9 % are not happy with allopathic treatment.

Sixth Option chosen was no. 7 i.e 5.9% prefer homoeopathic treatment as it is cost effective.

Seventh Option chosen was 1 i.e 5.6 % of the patients feel that there is no treatment in allopathy system of medicine.

Last Option chosen was no.5 i.e only 1.5% of the patients came to opd after watching tv or internet. This shows a lot can be done to increase the propagation of Homoeopathy.

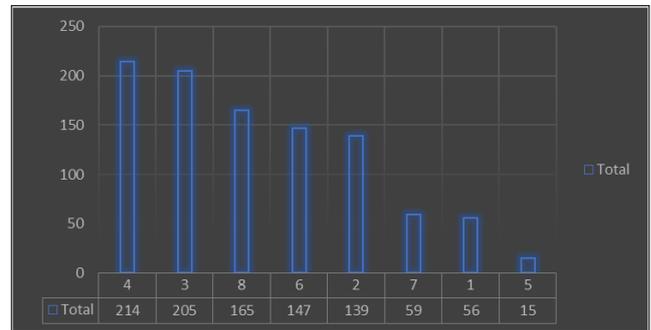


Fig 3: Option wise bar chart

Among the females surveyed the following are inferences

- a) Age distribution is from 2 years to 82 years
- b) Top 4 options chosen by patients are Option 3(21%), Option 4(20%), Option 6 and 8(both 18%) as a preference criterion for Homeopathic treatment.
- c) Age wise statistics are Mean of 39.7 years with a Standard Deviation of 21.5.

A. Among the males surveyed the following are inferences

- a) Age distribution is from 2 years to 85 years
- b) Top 4 options chosen by patients are Option 4(23%), Option 3(20%), Option 2 and 8(both 15%) as a preference criterion for Homeopathic treatment.
- c) Age wise statistics are Mean of 41 years with a Standard Deviation of 16.4.

Discussion

Charles Miller Leslie, was the first person who came up with the concept of medical pluralism. He stated that the reason why medical pluralism exists is that many therapeutics don't have treatment for all the diseases, which makes the patients discontented and a search for alternative therapies. He also states that patients satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the treatment is the main reason for medical pluralism [2].

Homeopathy's popularity is growing day by day, which is also evident in it the sales of Homoeopathic Medicines. The homoeopathic market in India, is estimated to be around Rs 2,758 crore, which will be more than double by the year 2017 [4]. In France, homeopathy is the most frequently used complementary therapy in supportive care in oncology (SCO). Ten percent of oncologists stated they prescribe homeopathy, 36% recommend it, 54% think that homeopathy is potentially helpful in SCO [3]. In United kingdom it is gaining popularity as it is being promoted by influential people [5].

This year the theme for World Homoeopathic Day 2022 in India was "People's choice for Wellness." Objectives being to build a future roadmap for advancement of Homoeopathy and make this system as the first choice for peoples

wellness. To further promote Homoeopathy, Ministry of AYUSH has started covid 19 counselling helpline number (14443) providing assistance 18 hours/day (6 am to 12 am) by a team of Ayush doctors.

Conclusion

Government of India under Ministry of Ayush is promoting Homoeopathy and its services but more media promotion and scientific research is required so that we can reach the masses not only at the urban sector but also at the rural sector and thus help in sharing the patient load.

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