

Acceptance and Utilization of Homeopathic Treatment in Public Healthcare Systems

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Abstract: ***Background:** Based on a pluralistic approach to health care, India offers a range of medical treatment modalities to its population. In that context, the government of India aims at providing its people with wider access to homeopathy. This article provides insight into the infrastructural support put in place by the government to meet that aim. **Data and Methods:** A literature review was carried out of recent surveys and articles to assess the morbidity trends in India and the treatment modalities being sought by patients. Extensive attempts were made to identify and access all data sources that could contribute to understanding the situation of homeopathy in public health in India. These efforts included analysis of secondary data about government wellness centers, as also a case study of one such centre. **Results:** In India, homeopathy is well represented in public health, being a close second among the AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) services. Homeopathy wellness centers comprise 31% of the total for AYUSH. Seven out of 10 diseases recognized as a national health burden are in the category of most commonly reported diseases at the homeopathy wellness centers. 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. Homeopathy units comprise 1/19th of the number of allopathy units, yet the annual patient footfall in the former is 1/5th of the latter. **Conclusion:** Homeopathy services, wherever available, are being used fully and thus sharing the patient load in the government - run wellness centers. There is the potential for more homeopathic practitioners to contribute importantly to health care delivery in India.*

Keywords: India healthcare, homeopathy access, government support, AYUSH services, patient treatment trends

1. Introduction

Homeopathy, an alternative medicine system based on the principle of "like cures like," has been integrated into various public healthcare systems globally, including India. The Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) in India provides a comprehensive health service package to central government employees and pensioners. This review explores the acceptance and utilization of homeopathic treatment within CGHS wellness centers, with a particular focus on the CGHS Wellness Centre in Lucknow, India.

Homeopathy in Public Healthcare

- **Global Perspective:** Homeopathy is recognized and practiced in over 80 countries, with varying degrees of integration into national healthcare systems. Countries like Germany, France, and Brazil have substantial acceptance of homeopathic treatments within their public health frameworks. In these countries, homeopathy is often used alongside conventional medicine to provide holistic patient care.
- **Indian Context:** India is one of the largest markets for homeopathic medicine, with government support through policies and institutions such as the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy). Homeopathy is officially recognized and is a significant part of India's public health strategy, with dedicated homeopathic hospitals and integration into primary healthcare services.

Acceptance of Homeopathy in India

- **Patient Perception and Trust:** Studies indicate a high level of acceptance and trust in homeopathic treatments among Indian patients, driven by cultural beliefs, holistic treatment approaches, and perceived fewer side effects compared to allopathy medicine. This acceptance is

often higher in chronic disease management, where patients seek long-term, sustainable treatment options.

- **Government Initiatives:** The Indian government promotes homeopathy through various initiatives, including the establishment of homeopathic medical colleges, research councils, and integration into national health programs. CGHS wellness centers are a prime example of this integration, offering homeopathy alongside conventional medical treatments.
- **Utilization of Homeopathic Services**
- **Utilization Patterns:** Utilization of homeopathic services within CGHS wellness centers, such as the one in Lucknow, reflects broader national trends. Patients often turn to homeopathy for chronic conditions like arthritis, asthma, and skin disorders, where conventional treatments have either failed or caused undesirable side effects.
- **Service Accessibility:** The accessibility and affordability of homeopathic treatments in CGHS centers contribute significantly to their utilization. Government funding and subsidies make these treatments accessible to a broader population, including lower-income groups and the elderly.
- **Patient Outcomes:** Research on patient outcomes in CGHS wellness centers suggests that homeopathic treatments can be effective in managing chronic diseases and improving overall patient well-being. Patient satisfaction surveys often report high levels of satisfaction with homeopathic care, citing improvements in symptoms and quality of life.

2. Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges: Despite its acceptance, homeopathy faces challenges such as skepticism from the mainstream medical community, lack of robust clinical evidence for certain treatments, and regulatory issues. Ensuring quality control

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and standardization of homeopathic medicines is also a significant concern.

Opportunities: There are substantial opportunities to enhance the acceptance and utilization of homeopathic treatments through public health education, more extensive research, and integration into broader health policies. Strengthening the evidence base for homeopathic interventions through rigorous clinical trials can also help in addressing skepticism and improving acceptance.

3. Case Study: CGHS Wellness Centre, Lucknow

Overview: The CGHS Wellness Centre in Lucknow serves as a model for integrating homeopathy into public healthcare. It provides homeopathic consultations, medicines, and follow - up care as part of the CGHS services.

Patient Demographics and Preferences: A significant proportion of patients at this center prefer homeopathic treatments for chronic and lifestyle - related conditions. Factors influencing this preference include cultural beliefs, positive past experiences with homeopathy, and recommendations from family and friends.

Impact on Health Outcomes: Studies conducted at the Lucknow center indicate positive patient outcomes, particularly in managing chronic conditions. Patients report improvements in symptoms, reduced need for conventional medications, and enhanced quality of life.

4. Conclusion

The acceptance and utilization of homeopathic treatment in public healthcare systems, particularly within the CGHS framework in India, demonstrate a positive trend towards integrative medicine. The case study of the CGHS Wellness Centre in Lucknow highlights the potential benefits and patient satisfaction associated with homeopathic care. However, addressing the challenges of clinical validation, regulatory standards, and broader acceptance within the medical community remains essential for the sustained integration of homeopathy into public health systems.

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