Type of patients seeking Homeopathic treatment under different physico-cultural background in and around Kolkata - India.

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Abstract

Background: The concept of health and Health Care began in India in the middle of 18th Century. National Health Policy 2002 initiated the program – “health for all”. Earlier it was a concept of individual care. New philosophy of Heath Care Service is inter-sector, i.e., indigenous system can be found in public as well as private sector and so on. The sectors of heath care services in India are categorized as: 1. Public sector 2. Private sector 3. Indigenous systems of medicine which include a. Ayurveda and Siddha b. Unani and Tibbiya c. Homeopathy d. unregistered practitioners 4. Voluntary Health Agencies 5. National Health Programmes. It needs to clarify who is a patient, according to World Health Organization (1948) defined health as a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” So a person is called healthy if he / she is physically fit, mentally sound and socially well adjusted. To explain further disease is the interruption or break in the state of equilibrium of all the components. Moreover, disease is lack of health, a disorder or illness caused by infection or deficiency with some characteristics or symptoms. The homeopathic doctors look into patient’s symptoms and take the medical history.

Objective: The objectives of the study are to find out (i) Disease specificity in homeopathic treatment (ii) Variation of diseases with seasons (iii) Variation of diseases with economic condition (iv) Variation in different socio-economic groups seeking homeopathic treatment (v) Reasons of failure of homeopathic treatment.

Methodology: Fifty (50) clinics of Kolkata and its suburbs and two (2) years data have been taken into consideration. Statistical methods like ANOVA are applied to find out the diseases related to homeopathy. Patients were classified according to their acute and chronic diseases. Acute diseases include seasonal ones like influenza, cough and cold, dengue, malaria, pox, common fever, diarrhea. Chronic diseases include arthritis, hepatic disorder, eczema, cardiac disorders, migraine, asthma, autism, epilepsy, tumors, skin diseases, pimples. Number of each chronic and acute cases in each clinic was recorded. All the numbers in 50 clinics were pooled together for each case. Socio-economic conditions of the patients were also recorded.

Result: Acute diseases like influenza, diarrhea, common cold, fever dominate over other diseases. Among the chronic diseases rheumatoid arthritis, migraine and asthma are more common than other diseases. Common cold and asthma predominate during autumn while diarrhea is common in monsoon.

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Discussion: Present paper tries to find out how unhealthy condition or disease is guided by two factors. 1. The climatic condition or the seasonal swing and 2. Economic condition of the patients surveyed. To specify, the paper seeks the variation of disease with seasonal swing and economic status of those who come to the homeopaths. The number of patients also varies with seasons. The number rises during monsoons (July to September) and falls in cold months (December and January). The upper socio-economic group seeks medical help for diseases like coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity etc., where as lower income goes for diseases like bronchitis, gastroenteritis, diarrhea, etc. The paper also tries to find out the causes failure of homeopathic treatment in the study area, they are (i) limited number of skilled doctors available in suburbs of Kolkata. In urban areas skilled doctors cannot cope with the growing number of patients. (ii) The improper selection of medicines among the trained doctors, moreover, application of proper potencies often fails. (iii) The poor quality of medicines is a major factor of failure. In homeopathy quality control is difficult. In-process quality control is only possible by engaging a large number of inspectors by the Drug Regulator. At present the number is insufficient. (iv) As the patients have little knowledge or ignorant about the homeopathic medicines, they compare homeopathic medicines with other systems of medicine. Only 3% natural substance present in the medicine which cannot be possible to detect by the patient. As the patients cannot smell the medicine and all medicines appear similar for which they often doubt about it’s effects.

Conclusion: The causes for seeking homeopathic treatment are different in different socio-economic groups. The lower socio economic groups are attracted due to the low cost of treatment. The higher socio economic groups are interested because of long lasting effects and permanent cure, no side effect, diagnostic problems due to complexity of diseases and to avoid surgery.

Keywords: Health, disease, patient, socio-economic group.

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