

Conference presentation

Growth and development of homeopathy in India: a perception study in and around Kolkata

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Abstract

India is a country of wide diversity in terms of physiography, climate, language, religion and available methods or systems of treatment. India also has a rich culture and heritage with ancient beliefs and knowledge; a large number of people use traditional methods of healing.

Homeopathy was first introduced in Kolkata, in 1810, by a German geologist who had come to perform geological investigations. By this time, Mr. Mullence, of the London Missionary Society, was known for treating the local people of southern Kolkata. The Calcutta Medical College was the first homeopathic medical college, established in 1881. This institution played a major role in the spread of homeopathy in India. However, at an earlier time, a homeopathic hospital was set up by the surgeon Samuel Brooking in south India. Many clinics and dispensaries opened at this time.

In 1973, the Government of India passed the Central Act, by which homeopathy is recognized as one of the national systems of medicine in India. This represents a true milestone in the growth and development of homeopathy in the country. The Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH) was established to regulate homeopathy education.

In the present time, there are about 200 homeopathic medical colleges and 38 post-graduate colleges that deliver degree courses; institutions such as like CCH (Central Council of Homeopathy), NIH (National Institute of Homeopathy), CCRH (Central Council For Research In Homeopathy), AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) promote high-level research. Several hundred thousands of practitioners deliver homeopathic medications all over the country. There are over 200,000 registered homeopathic doctors, and further 12,000 graduate every year. Government of India introduced the Homeopathic Enquiry Committee in 1948, which recognized homeopathy as a scientific system of medicine. Scientific homeopathic research is performed by investigators from different fields, such as: zoology, physiology, physics, etc. The mechanism of action of homeopathic potency is actively investigated by them. The experiments are performed on human, animal and plant's body. The faith in homeopathy increases day by day, as it represents a safe, effective and natural mode of healing.

The aims of the present study were: 1) to analyze the growth and development of homeopathy in India; 2) To establish the degree of acceptance of homeopathy by different socioeconomic groups; and 3) To establish the degree of satisfaction with homeopathic treatment of different socioeconomic groups.

The study was based on primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected in a survey using a questionnaire applied to 100 individuals, randomly selected and with different socioeconomic background in and around Kolkata; the participants were categorized in 3 groups.

The secondary data were gathered from the electronic media. The data were subjected to statistical analysis. Variables assessed were: 1) frequency of visits to homeopathic services; 2) type of diseases for which homeopathy is preferred; 3) age range for which homeopathy is preferred; 4) Whether the respondent is the first generation using homeopathic medicine or his/her ancestors used to take it; and 5) level of satisfaction. These variables were compared among the 3 groups.

The result showed that low-income group - family income < 3,360 Euro per month – (daily laborers, rickshaw drivers, domestic workers) does not use homeopathy for any disease. The medium income group - family income 3,360 to 8,400 Euro per month (small shopkeepers, service providers) prefers homeopathy for minor ailments and local doctors. The high-income group - Family income > 8,400 Euro per month (businessmen, college professors etc) prefer homeopathy for their children, visit reputed urban doctors and obtain medicines from reputed manufacturers, but the level of satisfaction is almost equal in 2nd and 3rd groups.

Keywords: Homeopathic treatment, user, education, income group

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