



Editorial

Integration of Homeopathic System of Medicine into Main Health Stream of Pakistan

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Homeopathy is one of the medicinal field that is purely based upon principle of 'similia similibus curentur' which means 'let like be cured by like', in Latin. German physician Samuel Christian Friedrich Hahnemann (1755-1843) was the first to discover Homeopathy with his research on cinchona plant in 1796. He mentioned his work in 'Essay on a new curative principle for ascertaining the curative power of drugs with a few glances at those hitherto employed' (1).

In the first half of 19th century, Homeopathy became popular in the Europe because of two major factors; one success is in Epidemics and second in high profile cases (2). Homeopathy gained worth in epidemics, mainly in cholera that swept Europe and in that era homeopathy was very successful in such diseases as compared to conventional therapies. In hospitals, patient's death ratio was 74 % while at homeopathic outlets was 4–11% (3). In modern study of cholera, none of the deaths observed and hence no difference was found in mortality rate among homeopathy and placebo (4).

Homeopathy became very famous at global level in early 19th century. Dr Constantine Hering a German immigrant (1800-1880) introduced it in USA and in 1839, Dr John Martin Honigberger (1795-1869) first practiced in India. In 1843, Frenchman Benoit Mure (1809-1858) introduced in Brazil and later in Egypt. There was contrasting situation of homeopathy in USA and India. In USA, Abraham Flexner published a report related to medical education in 1910. During that time, "Modern" medicine was facing competition with other schools of medicine like naturopathy, osteopathy, eclectic medicine and homeopathy. The Flexner Report resulted in shutting down most of the Alternative settings including homeopathy that lead to quick decline in homeopathic practitioners (5)

In a study, it was found that 178 homeopathic colleges were imparting homeopathic education in India and of which 35 were government colleges. Moreover, < 200,000 were registered homeopaths and 12,000 graduating annually > 300 homeopathic hospitals and > 8000 homeopathic dispensaries have been established (6). Homeopathy is currently spreading in the world, late in 1997; European commission estimated 27 % citizens are utilizing it and widely practiced in Latin America and

North America. Homeopathy is officially recognized in Asian countries like Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, India, in Latin American countries like Mexico, Cuba, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Europe like UK, Hungary, Bulgaria, Portugal, Belgium, Romania. Homeopathy is integrated into national healthcare systems in some countries such as UK, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Mexico and Brazil (7).

A few countries such as Germany, France, India, USA and Brazil have developed their homeopathic pharmacopoeias. The European Commission has issued directions for registration and quality standards of homeopathic medicines and products. The WHO has published guidelines on safety issues in the preparation of homeopathic medicines (8).

Homeopathy is broadly adopted in all regions of WHO. Traditional Medicine Strategy 2002-2005 and 2004 to 2007 of WHO have addressed the worth, efficacy and safety of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and traditional medicine (TM). The key element is to develop technical guidance in quality control and safety of TM/ CAM and herbal medicines. In June 2002, WHO is requested by the 10th International Conference of Drug Regulatory Authorities (ICDRA) hosted by Hong Kong to: "Harmonize definitions of homeopathic medicines; [make] recommendations for safe degrees of dilutions of homeopathic preparations; promote the exchange of information; and provide guidance to governments and [nongovernmental organizations] NGOs training of

In Pakistan, homeopathy was first registered under the THE UNANI, AYURVEDIC AND HOMOEOPATHIC PRACTITIONERS (UAH) ACT 1965 and initially Diploma in Homeopathic Medical System (DHMS) was the Licensing qualification for homeopathic doctors while graduate level program Bachelor of Homeopathic Medical Sciences (BHMS) was started in 2000 in the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Till date, approximately 150 homeopathic medical colleges are imparting homeopathic education (DHMS & BHMS) and about 120,000 homeopaths are practicing homeopathy.

In Pakistan, TM is unified in national health policy in 2001. TM defining law is the UAH Act, 1965 that was

amended in 1982 and 2003. Ministry of Health is administrating the TM. The Drug Control Organization (DCO) in the TM Division of the National Institute of Health serves as the national research institute on TM. Good manufacturing practice (GMP) published by DCO is charted for traditional herbal medicines. There are special regulations for GMP in TM and not restrictions on selling herbal products. In 2007, 2008, 2009, the annual market sales of herbal medicines were assessed by Tibb and Homeopathic Manufacturers Association of Pakistan were US\$ 5.5 million, US\$ 6.5 million and US\$ 7 million, respectively (10).

In Pakistan, native traditional medicines are being consumed by 40–59% of the population. Population percentage practicing the TM as follows; homeopathy 20–39%, herbal medicines 40–59%, Unani medicine 40–59%, acupuncture 1–19%, naturopathy 1–19% and TCM 1–19%. National level regulations have been implemented by UAH Act. TM practitioners are officially allowed to practice in public as well as private sector hospitals and clinics. The National Council for Tibb issue the TM license to Homeopaths and Eastern Medicine graduates for safe practice. Bachelor, Masters, and PhDs degrees in TM are already being offered at university level (11).

In 2000, BHMS degree program was offered by different institutes in Pakistan and the Islamia University of Bahawalpur is one of the pioneer and leading institute providing quality education in Homeopathy. BHMS degree is recognized by; Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, and the National Council for Homeopathy Pakistan. Till date, more than 1000 graduates have completed BHMS degree and are providing their services in Pakistan to serve the ailing community. Moreover, a large number of Homeopathic pharmaceutical companies are manufacturing medicines for local use and to import in the world for strengthen the economy of Pakistan. Therefore, it is highly needed to launch Homeopathic degree program in all the universities of Pakistan. Moreover, it is strongly needed that Health Authorities and Government of Pakistan should support the graduates of homeopathy by taking initiatives in the research and development. BHMS graduates definitely can play role a big role to reduce health burden by providing cost effective treatment of diseases to the general population of Pakistan. The

government should also incorporate homeopathic system in the main health stream to minimize the national health burden. In this regard, government in collaboration with health authorities should allocate proper budget for the development of homeopathic system.

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