

Homoeopathy in India: a rejoinder to the report published in the Lancet

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The Lancet has recently published a report under the caption “**Homoeopathy booming in India**¹”. The correspondent has given certain data about the status of homoeopathic infrastructure in India. But, by highlighting a solitary case of failure of HIV positive patient by one homoeopathic doctor in Maharashtra, the reporter has not done justice to Homoeopathy. In the same state, the Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (an autonomous body of the Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, whose mandate is to conduct and promote research in Homoeopathy) has one Regional Research Institute in Mumbai, which conducted one pilot study (1989-91) to evaluate the role of homoeopathic medicines in the management of HIV infection. Initial results suggested a positive role of homoeopathic medicines and prompted a randomized placebo control study (1995-97). In the subjects with stage III AIDS a statistically significant difference was observed in CD4+ T-lymphocyte counts between the pre and post trial levels in the patients treated with drugs (varum group), whereas in the placebo group, a similar comparison yielded non-significant results².

Another group of studies conducted in the clinic settings in California, Oregon, Hawaii, New York and Washington found specific physical, immunological, neurological, metabolic and quality-of-life benefits, including improvements in lymphocyte counts and functions and reductions in viral loads³.

According to Dr. N.K. Ganguli, Director General of Indian Council for Medical Research, a homoeopathic medicine was found to be very effective against HIV/AIDS during screening at National AIDS Research Institute, Pune (India). The homoeopathic compound screened in vitro at this Institute against HIV has been found to have a lot of potential in effectively

killing the virus. The compound could be released for commercial exploitation only after testing on human beings. Dr. Ganguli asserted that thousands of compounds are tested at this Institute and sometimes none of them were found effective⁴.

The correspondent could have reported the outcomes of these studies, besides the trials published in other journals which establish the positive role of homoeopathic medicines in HIV/AIDS cases.

In the absence of any definite therapeutic intervention and prophylaxis, the role played by homoeopathic medicines for prolonging the life of asymptomatic HIV carriers, treating the minor opportunistic infections and improving quality of life should not be ignored.

- ii. The statement of Dr. Amar Jesani, an editorial board member of the Indian Journal of Medical Ethics, quoted in the report, 'Homoeopathy and Ayurvedic doctors provide a back-door entry into medicine and those who don't get into Medical Colleges try to get into general practice in rural areas through other systems', is unethical and false. The qualified homoeopathic doctors are proud of their profession. A good number of doctors qualified in Allopathy in India and abroad, have adopted Homoeopathy as their profession after studying homoeopathy courses. Cross-practicing is found in all the systems; then why to single out Homoeopathy & Ayurveda?
- iii. The elite group of upper middle and rich classes in India come to homoeopaths for redressal of their health problems, but not from fashion point of view, as commented by Dr. Ravi Duggal, an independent health counselor of Mumbai. His comment, "Ethics are not on the agenda in (India) medicine. Making money is" is quite unfortunate and based on conjecture.

References:

1. Prasad Raekha. Homoeopathy booming in India, The Lancet, Vol-370 November 17, 2007.
2. Rastogi D.P, et al. Homeopathy in HIV infection: a trial report of double-blind placebo controlled study; British Homeopathic Journal; vol-88, issue-2,1999
3. Ullman Dana. Controlled Clinical Trials Evaluating the Homeopathic Treatment of People with Human Immunodeficiency Virus or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome; The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine. 2003, 9(1): 133-141.
4. A homeopathic cure for HIV/AIDS? Visit to <http://www.rediff.com/news/2007/nov/07homeo.htm>.