

Cost Effectiveness of Alternative Medical care: A case study with respect to Naturopathy

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In ancient times, India was far advanced in health knowledge than other countries of the world. The main method of treatment followed by the people is allopathic and other methods by the intake of drugs. Public health can look to naturopathy for answers to the emergence of chronic disease through natural therapies, many of which can take the role of primordial and primary prevention of several diseases. Some selected naturopathic therapies include nutrition, hydrotherapy, fasting therapy, yoga, behavioral therapy, and health promotion. In this study focused on the objectives are; To evaluate the trend and pattern of naturopathy treatment in Kerala, To analyze the effectiveness of Naturopathy and To compare the cost pattern of Naturopathy and Allopathy. The methodology was used in this study Cost effectiveness is measured through Cost Effectiveness Ratio and life years gained is measured by using Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALY). Use purposive Sampling Technique for collecting Data with Structured Questionnaire.

Key Words: Alternative medical care, Cost Effectiveness, Naturopathy, AYUSH

Health is one of the vital indicators reflecting the quality of life and therefore it has been rightly said, 'Health is wealth'. Though preservation and promotion of health is one of the most basic human rights, India is still lagging behind in realizing this distant dream. Public health is concerned with the health of the community as a whole. Its key goal is to reduce population's exposure to disease. It has been said that: "Health care is vital to all of us some of the time, but public health is vital to all of us all of the time". In the present world both the developed and developing countries focus mainly on public health care. A large amount of money is kept for research and development in the health care sector. Medicines and new way of treatment had been adopted by the countries. In India, the government spends relatively larger portion on health care.

In ancient times, India was far advanced in health knowledge than other countries of the world. The Rig Vedas consist of incarnations of Rishis, herbal and water therapies etc. used and applied by them. With the development of modern civilization, changes in the treatment became inevitable. India is the first country in the world to make drugs of herbal origin. The use of Ayurvedic medicines was first propagated in India in ancient times. Later on allopathic system came to dominate in the health care scenario and the indigenous systems of medicine were stifled. Then the traditional treatment methods had almost disappeared but the new trend shows that the people are more willing to follow the traditional way of treatments. In India, Government concentrates the way of treatment: The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) Begins 12th April 2005. Government introduce the alternative medical system AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Sidha and Homeopathy) in 2003.

The main method of treatment followed by the people is allopathic and other methods by the intake of drugs. Allopathic treatment are used to cure almost all diseases, but the fact is that the drugs should be taken for a long period of time and the side effect caused by this is severe. But now the people had changed their view on health care and are ready to practice new method of treatments. Here comes the importance of other complementary and alternative medicines. There are different methods of treatments used as an alternative to allopathic treatments which include Ayurveda, Naturopathy, Unani, homeopathy, etc. Among them the important is Naturopathy which makes the body as it is and treats the diseases without any intake of medicines. The emergence of Naturopathy was due to severe side effects and other allied problems of allopathic treatment. The result of Naturopathy was scientifically proved and hence it can be used for treating acute and chronic diseases. The expenditure for health care can be decreased if the people follow the way of life as said in the naturopathic theories. In naturopathy, it is believed that the body itself has the power to treat its diseases.

The main advantages of naturopathy is that it is drugless, noninvasive, rational, and evidence-based system of medicine that imparts natural therapies, based on the theory of vitality, toxemia, the self-healing capacity of the human body, and the principles of healthy living. This approach to health care emphasizes education, self-responsibility and therapies to support and stimulate an individual's self-healing capacity. The principles of naturopathy were first used by the Hippocratic School of Medicine in approximately 400 BC. The Greek philosopher

Hippocrates believed in viewing the whole person in regards to finding a cause of disease, and in using the laws of nature to induce a cure.

Change in life styles has made the people weaker and new forms of illness are affecting the new generation. Change in lifestyle includes the change in food intake. Chronic lifestyle diseases are now the leading cause of disease burden and morbidity globally which are attributable to modifiable health behaviors such as tobacco use, poor diet, and physical inactivity. Public Health can look to naturopathy for answers to some of these challenges through different natural therapies, many of which can take a role in primordial and primary prevention of several diseases. By contrast, Public Health can identify mechanisms to effectively deliver principles of naturopathy such as improved public access to naturopathic physicians in community clinics, increasing formal collaboration between naturopathic and other health professionals, or increasing the number of trained integrative medicine providers.

The Alma-Ata declaration recognized the value of traditional systems of medicine and advocated the integration of safe and effective traditional medicine practices into primary health care. The World Health Organization has urged its member states to integrate complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) into their national health care systems. The National Policy on Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy 2002 emphasized the need for a meaningful phased integration of the Indian Systems of Medicines with modern medicine. The government of India also has iterated that the Indian Systems of Medicine offers a wide range of preventive, promotive, and curative treatments that are cost-effective and efficacious. There is a need to end the long neglect of these systems in our health care delivery mechanism.

The Government of Kerala has set up the AYUSH department to monitor the traditional treatments. It was formed under the Indian Systems of Medicine. Kerala's development experience has been distinguished by the primacy of the social sectors. Traditionally, health accounted for the greatest shares of the state government's expenditure. Health sector spending continued to grow even after 1980 when generally the fiscal deficit in the state budget was growing and government was looking for ways to control expenditure. But growth in the number of beds and institutions in the public sector had slowed down by the mid-

1980s. From 1986–1996, growth in the private sector surpassed that in the public sector by a wide margin.

This study makes a comparative analysis of the cost effectiveness and other factors affecting the patients following allopathic treatment and naturopathic treatment.

Objectives

- To evaluate the trend and pattern of naturopathy treatment in Kerala.
- To analyze the effectiveness of Naturopathy and
- To compare the cost pattern of Naturopathy and Allopathy .

Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from the respondents (patients in both Naturopathy and Allopathy hospitals) by directly interviewing them with the help of a structured questionnaire which was prepared in tune with the objectives. The study was done by purposive sampling technique by which 4 hospitals were selected (1 govt. Allopathy hospital and 1 govt. naturopathy hospital along with 1 private naturopathy hospital and 1 private Allopathy hospital).. Varkala and Tirur represent the sampling area. Cost effectiveness is measured through Cost Effectiveness Ratio and life years gained is measured by using Quality- Adjusted Life Years (QALY). The most relevant secondary data were collected from official authorities and various publications.

There are substantial areas of overlap between naturopathy and public health, which include a focus on health rather than disease, a preventive approach, and an emphasis on health promotion and health education. Public health can look to naturopathy for answers to the emergence of chronic disease through natural therapies, many of which can take the role of primordial and primary prevention of several diseases. Some selected naturopathic therapies include nutrition, hydrotherapy, fasting therapy, yoga, behavioral therapy, and health promotion. We must reorient our focus on prevention and wellness to make a true impact on escalating health care costs. With the National Health Policy in India emphasizing the need for integrating the Indian Systems of Medicines with modern medicine, now is the right time for naturopathy

and public health to come together to provide a holistic health care system. Now the government realizes the fact that naturopathy care treatment is more effective and is planning to promote naturopathy.

The cost of treatment is less when compared to allopathic treatment. Every developing or developed country should use a major portion of their resources on health sector. The spending is too high as the cost of allopathic treatment is too high along with this the government should provide medicines at subsidized rate. Evidence suggests that a nation could save millions in health care costs and provide better quality of care without compromising patient outcomes if alternative medicine is widely practiced. Comprehensive systematic reviews have identified emerging evidence of the cost-effectiveness of various alternative therapies, compared to the usual care. In India Naturopathy can be used as an effective tool to combat rising health Care costs.

In this study cost effectiveness analysis is made by using the Cost Effective Ratio (CER)

$$\text{CER} = \frac{\text{Cost of Intervention}}{\text{Health effects produced}}$$

The term ‘Cost of intervention’ means the cost which the patients spend for treatment when they are admitted in the hospital. Health effects produced is the respondents’ health position. This is measured in terms of life years gained by using techniques like QALY and DALY.

Issues such as safety, efficacy, and quality need to be addressed to extend naturopathic care. These can be best tackled within the framework of a national policy. The policy should focus on the registration and licensing of providers, standards of training, safety monitoring of drugs and therapies, and the development of technical guidelines and standards of care. Clinical research into the use of naturopathic practices for treating common illnesses should be encouraged. Patients are increasingly seeking naturopathic therapies for many reasons, the most common of which is patients wanting to use all possible modalities of care. Other important reasons include a holistic approach that addresses the root of the problem, more time and attention from the doctor, concern about the adverse effects of drugs, more control over the treatment, and having not been helped by conventional care. Nearly 80% of the population in

developing countries depends on traditional systems of medicine as a source of primary healthcare.

It was evident from the study that by naturopathic treatment the diseases are not repeated whereas in the case of allopathic treatment the diseases are just suppressed for a short period of time and the study also reveals the repetitiveness characteristics of diseases which are treated under allopathic treatment method which are totally cleared under naturopathic treatment methods. The health stability of the patients was improved drastically after the naturopathic treatment as no medicines are used in the treatment, whereas in the case of allopathic treatments the health of the patients has been slowly degrading.

From the study it was found that the most of the patients following naturopathic treatment had undergone other treatment methods including Allopathy, Homeopathy, Ayurveda, etc., and selected naturopathy as their last resort to cure their ailments. People depends naturopathic treatment for curing all types of diseases but among them most of them prefer mainly to cure lifestyle diseases like irregularities in blood pressure, cholesterol, cancer, arthritis, cardiac vascular diseases and stroke. Another thing which was found in the study was that the patients who were following naturopathic treatment were highly educated. It was found that the patients who had allopathic treatment had severe side effects and this has led them to next treatment and thus incurred extra costs and sometimes it becomes a threaten to the patient's life. Thus it was evident from the respondents that allopathic treatment is a continuous treatment. Most of the patients selected naturopathy because of zero side effects as it can be assured because it does not use any type of drugs. Around 100% of the respondents of naturopathic treatment were fully satisfied by the treatment methods as well as the result they gained. It was found from the study that most of the patients had opted for naturopathy treatment because of painless and drugless treatment methods.

The study was framed on the basis of some objectives. The objectives of the study were to analysis the cost pattern and the upcoming trend of naturopathy in Kerala. The study also analyses the effectiveness of naturopathy. From the study, it was evident that naturopathic treatment was more effective than allopathic treatment. The disease was more fastly curable in allopathic but it was not consistent whereas in the case of naturopathy the treatment period was a little long, but the diseases were not repetitive. The study also analyzed the cost pattern of

naturopathy and allopathic treatment, in which it was found that naturopathic treatment, was more cost effective. The cost of drugs in allopathic treatment is high which increases the cost of treatment as a whole.

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