

A Study of Utilization of AYUSH Services at A Primary Health Centre In Goa

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Abstract: Background: Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) together known as the Indian system of medicine is an antique system of health care which still persists in spite of advent of Modern Allopathic practice. This may be due to varied factors that influence the health seeking attitude of an individual. Though the integration of AYUSH in primary health centre has been initiated, its performance still needs to be evaluated. Therefore, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives: 1) To determine the extent and pattern of utilization of the integrated AYUSH services at a primary health center 2) To study the profile of patients utilizing these services Methods: It is a retrospective record based study conducted in a primary health center with integrated AYUSH services namely (Ayurveda and Homeopathy clinics). Results: Of the total 3330 patients, 512 (15.4%) patients attended Ayurveda clinic whereas 2818 (84.6%) patients attended Homeopathy clinic. Majority of the patients were females (54.5% in Ayurveda clinic and 75.3% in Homeopathy Clinic). The proportion of new patients was higher among the Ayurveda and Homeopathy Clinic (65.23% and 89.10% respectively) as compared to follow up patients. These services were well utilized by patients in the age group of 31-60 years. Conclusion: AYUSH services are well utilized at a primary health center. More awareness among the people regarding AYUSH and its services is definitely needed in order to provide health care to the rural people. [Elvira NNJIRM 2017; 8(5):57-60]

Key Words: AYUSH, Mainstreaming, Traditional Medicine

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Introduction: Traditional and complementary medicine is an important part of health services. Its use in health maintenance and in disease prevention and treatment particularly for chronic diseases is well known. It is a method that can enrich, strengthen the public health system and improve the quality of life.

Traditional medicine is defined as “the sum total of the knowledge, skill and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness”¹. Complementary medicine or alternative medicine refer to “a broad set of health care practices that are not part of that country’s own tradition or conventional medicine and are not fully integrated into the dominant health care system”¹. In some countries they are used interchangeably.

In India, the traditional system of medicine is officially recognised as AYUSH which stands for Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy. This Indian System of Medicine is an antique system of health care which is the culmination of the Indian Thought of medicine for healthy living.

In 1995, a separate Department of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H) was set up which

was later renamed as the Department of AYUSH in November 2003 and recently the Department of AYUSH is formed as a separate Ministry known as Ministry of AYUSH on 9th November 2014.

In spite of flourishing Allopathic practice in the country, the practice of Traditional medicine still persists. This may be due to varied factors that influence the health and the health seeking attitude of an individual including its easy availability, affordability and safety. Although there are many known advantages of AYUSH over Modern health system, this sector has not been involved so far in public health interventions². With the Integration and revitalization of local Health Traditions, as an important strategy under National Rural Health Mission, aims to reinforce the existing public health delivery system and to improve outreach and quality of health delivery in rural areas³.

Though the integration has been initiated, there is lack of information on evaluation of its performance which is essential to plan an effective strategy towards promotion of AYUSH services. Hence the study was undertaken in a Primary health centre with integrated AYUSH services with following Aims and Objective:

1. To determine the extent and pattern of utilization of the integrated AYUSH services (namely

Ayurveda and Homeopathy) at a Primary Health Centre.

- To study the profile of patients utilizing the integrated AYUSH services at a Primary Health Centre

Methods: The present study is conducted in a rural area in a primary health center setting with integrated AYUSH services. Only Ayurveda and Homeopathy Clinics are present at the concerned Primary Health Centre

The Primary Health Centre is provided with separate Out Patient Departments (OPD) each for Ayurveda and Homeopathy which consists of one male Ayurveda registered practitioner and one female Homeopathy registered practitioner along with one male attendant each for both OPD's. The Ayurveda clinic is conducted twice a week i.e. on Mondays and Thursdays whereas the Homeopathy clinic is conducted every day in a week.

A retrospective record based study of patients utilising these AYUSH services was undertaken wherein six-month data (January 2015 to June 2015) was collected from the daily OPD registers of both the AYUSH clinics.

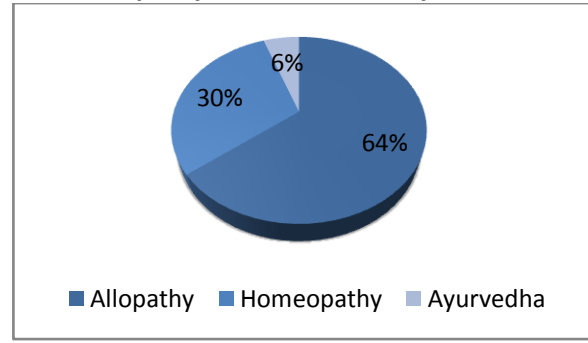
The profile of the patients attending these clinics during the said period was studied with respect to age, sex, type of ailments, follow up visits, the number of patients attending these clinics. The opinions of the consulting Ayurvedic and Homeopathic physicians pertaining to utilization of AYUSH services by the people were also considered.

Ethics Approval & Data Analysis: Approval of the Institutional Ethics Committee was obtained for conducting the above study along with permission from concerned authorities

Data from OPD record registers maintained at the Primary Health Centre was compiled and analysed using SPSS version 14.

Results:The total number of patients registered for the Out Patient Department (OPD) from 1st January 2015 to 30th June 2015 was 9358. The utilisation of the service depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Patients Attending Allopathic, Ayurvedic and Homeopathy Clinic at a Primary Health Centre



A total of 3330 patients AYUSH OPD attendees 15.4% (n=512) patients attended Ayurveda clinic whereas 84.6% (n=2818) patients attended Homeopathy clinic. Since the frequency of Homeopathy clinic was on daily basis, the patient attendance for the Homeopathy clinic for two days of the week similar to the Ayurveda clinic frequency was assessed and it was found that of the 1247 patients attending AYUSH clinic to 323 (25.09%) and 924 (74.09%) attended the Ayurveda and Homeopathic Clinic respectively. The attendance was higher from Jan to March as compared to April to June.

Majority of patients attending AYUSH clinic belonged to the age group of 31-60 years (n=1910, 57.35%), of which 41.6% (n=1383) of the patients were from the age group of 31-50 years.

Table 1: Age wise distribution of study participants

Age (years)	Patients Attending AYUSH Clinic				Total	
	Ayurveda		Homeopathy		N	%
	n	%	n	%		
<30	103	20.11	969	34.38	1072	32.19
31-60	311	60.74	1599	56.74	1910	57.35
>60	98	19.14	250	8.87	348	10.45
Total	512	15.4	2818	74.6	3330	100.0

Of the total 3330 AYUSH OPD attendees, female patients contributed up to 72.10% as compared to only 27.89% which was contributed by males. This difference was found to be statistically significant. Also this difference was more prominent in Homeopathy Clinic attendees where Female patients constituted 75% of the 2818 patient load as compared to Males (24%)

Table 2: Sex wise distribution of study participants

Sex	Patients attending AYUSH clinic				Total	
	Ayurveda		Homeopathy			
	n	%	N	%	n	%
Male	233	45.5	696	24.7	929	27.89
Female	279	54.5	2122	75.3	2401	72.10
Total	512	15.4	2818	84.6	3330	100
Chi square value: 93.26, degree of freedom=1, p<0.05						

65.23% and 34.76% were New cases and Follow up patients respectively among those attending Ayurvedic Clinic while the New Cases and Follow up patients were 89.10% and 10.9% among those attending Homeopathy Clinic.

Table 3: System wise distribution of study participants

Systems	Patients attending AYUSH Clinic				Total
	Ayurveda		Homeopathy		
	n	%	n	%	
Respiratory	75	14.6	875	31.1	950
Musculoskeletal	240	46.9	1040	36.9	1280
Genitourinary	24	4.7	108	3.8	132
Skin	54	10.5	240	8.5	294
Trauma	1	2	12	4	13
Central nervous system	6	1.2	86	3.1	92
Gastrointestinal	39	7.6	429	15.2	468
Nutrition	3	6	11	4	14
Non-communicable	70	13.7	17	6	87
Total	512	15.4	2818	74.6	3330

Patients consulted the AYUSH practitioners for various complaints. The system wise distribution of their complaints is provided in Table above.

It was observed that majority of the patients consulted AYUSH practitioners for Musculoskeletal (38.43%) and respiratory (28.52%) conditions.

Discussion: In this study, it was observed that there was a higher patient load on the Allopathic OPD followed by Homeopathy. Though Allopathic is widely used, Homeopathy services usage was also a choice among a large proportion which depicted an encouraging utilisation. The drop in attendance during

April to June could be due to school vacations where many people go away for vacation.

Utilisation of the AYUSH services by the middle age populations rather than the generally presumed geriatric and the paediatric population showed that even the young adult were ready to use these services if available.

The female predominance seen in the AYUSH OPDs similar to the findings seen by Gursimer J et al⁴, Klea D. Bertakis et al⁵ which could be due to the fact females tend to be more analytical and could be wary of side effects of Allopathy.

It is presumed that AYUSH services were mostly utilised for Chronic debilitating conditions, but in this study, along with chronic (musculoskeletal) conditions a large number of patients also consulted for both acute (respiratory illnesses) conditions which breaks the myth.

The higher proportion of New cases reflected preferred utilization of AYUSH services for acute conditions instead of chronic non-communicable diseases that require regular follow ups as are being seen in the Allopathic OPD.

Conclusion: Mainstreaming of AYUSH is one of the important initiatives under NRHM as a substantial portion of rural India is still dependent upon the AYUSH systems of medicine as a way of availing health care services.

AYUSH services are well utilised more so if facilitated due to integration of AYUSH in Primary Health Centre providing a one point contact.

More awareness among the people regarding AYUSH and its services is definitely needed in order to provide health care to the rural people and also to decrease the burden of patient load on the Allopathic OPD.

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