General awareness and relative popularity of allopathic, ayurvedic and homeopathic systems

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Abstract

World over, the general opinion is tilting towards use of herbal drugs. The gradual rise in trade of these drugs stands testimony to this. Common reasons for this tilt are-frustrating side effects and lack of the curative value in modern medicines. Traditional systems rely heavily on herbal materials compared to modern system of medicine (allopathic). Present study judges the awareness/knowledge of common man regarding traditional systems (Ayurvedic & Homeopathic) and the overall preference of system and the preference of system in case of common ailments and medical emergency. The study also evaluates their views regarding role of pharmacist and the government in promoting the use of these drugs. The responses (500) obtained on the questionnaire sheet have been presented as Bar charts, Pie charts and Tabular form depending upon type of response along with general conclusions and suggestions.
Key words: Herbal, Organic food, Ayurveda, Homeopathic and Allopathic.

Introduction

Herbs are staging a comeback and herbal 'renaissance' is happening all over the world. The herbal products today symbolize safety in contrast to the synthetics that are regarded as unsafe to human and environment. Although herbs had been priced for their medicinal, flavouring and aromatic qualities for centuries, the synthetic products of the modern age surpassed their importance, for a while. However, the blind dependence on synthetics is over and people are returning to the naturals with hope of safety and security.

Over three-quarters of the world population relies mainly on plants and plant extracts for health care. It is estimated that world market for plant derived drugs may account for about Rs. 2,00,000 crores. Presently, Indian contribution is less than Rs. 2000 crores. Indian export of raw drugs has steadily grown at 26% to Rs.165 crores in 1994-95 from Rs.130 crores in 1991-92. The annual production of medicinal and aromatic plant's raw material is worth about Rs.200 crores. This is likely to touch US $1150 by the year 2000 and US $5 trillion by 2050.

Of the 2, 50,000 higher plant species on earth, more than 80,000 are medicinal. India is one of the world's 12 biodiversity centers with the presence of over 45000 different plant species. India's diversity is unmatched due to the presence of 16 different agro-climatic zones, 10 vegetation zones, 25 biotic provinces and 426 biomes (habitats of specific species).Of these, about 15000-20000 plants have good medicinal value. However, only 7000-7500 species are used for their medicinal values by traditional communities.

In India, drugs of herbal origin have been used in traditional systems of medicines such as Unani and Ayurveda since ancient times. The Ayurveda system of medicine uses about 700 species, Unani 700, Siddha 600, Amchi 600 and modern medicine around 30 species. About 8,000 herbal remedies have been codified in Ayurveda. The Rigveda (5000 BC) has recorded 67 medicinal plants, Yajurveda 81 species, Atharvaveda (4500-2500 BC) 290 species, Charak Samhita (700 BC) and Sushrut Samhita (200 BC) had described properties and uses of 1100 and 1270 species respectively, in compounding of drugs and these are still used in the classical formulations, in the Ayurvedic system of medicine.[1-16]

The general opinion of the public is tilting towards use of herbal drugs. The gradual rise in trade of these drugs in all over the world stands testimony to this. Public seems to be fed up with Modern System (**Synthetic drugs**) mainly due to-

- Only symptomatic relief is experienced.
- 'Completion of treatment' is never a reality, more so in chronic ailments.
- Frustrating side effects.
- High cost involved.

Most common traditional systems in India are **Ayurvedic** and **Homeopathic** systems.
Popularity of **Ayurveda** is-

- Considered to be our own system.
- Time tested.
- Relies only on natural materials.

Reasons for **Homeopathy** finding favours are-

- Ease of administration of dose.
- High acceptability by children.
- No side effects.

Keeping above in mind we thought of conducting the present study. Present study judges the awareness/knowledge of common man regarding traditional systems (Ayurvedic & Homeopathic) and the overall preference of system and the preference of system in case of common ailments and medical emergency. The study also evaluates their views regarding role of pharmacist and the government in promoting the use of these drugs.

Experimental Section

A questionnaire was drafted keeping above said objectives, in mind. The language was kept very simple so as to present no problem in understanding the spirit of question. The objectives were duly explained to each and every respondent and doubts, if any, were clarified. Questions and their responses (total 500) are being presented as Bar charts, Pie charts and in Tabular form, depending upon the type of response.

Questionnaires & Observations

- The first eight questions in questionnaire were-
  1. Do you really know meaning of Herbal?
  2. Are you aware of traditional herbal drugs used in India?
  3. Have you ever found adverse effects of herbal drugs? If yes explain it.
  4. Do herbal drugs require standardization?
  5. Have you full faith in venders selling herbal drugs.
  6. In your view is common main is tilting towards herbal medicines.
  7. Are you aware of herbal farming?
  8. Do you understand the term organic food?

- Following bar diagram (Fig 1) shows responses of people as percentage Yes/ No to the above questions.

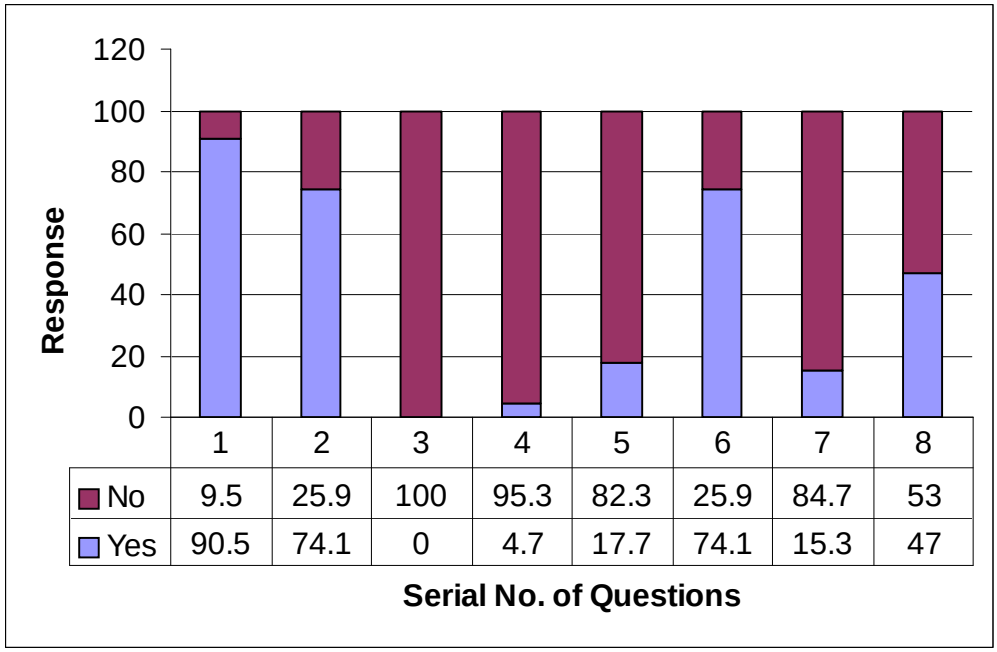

Fig 1

❖ Bar diagram (Fig 2) showing the extents up to which people are satisfied with efficacy of Herbal drugs?

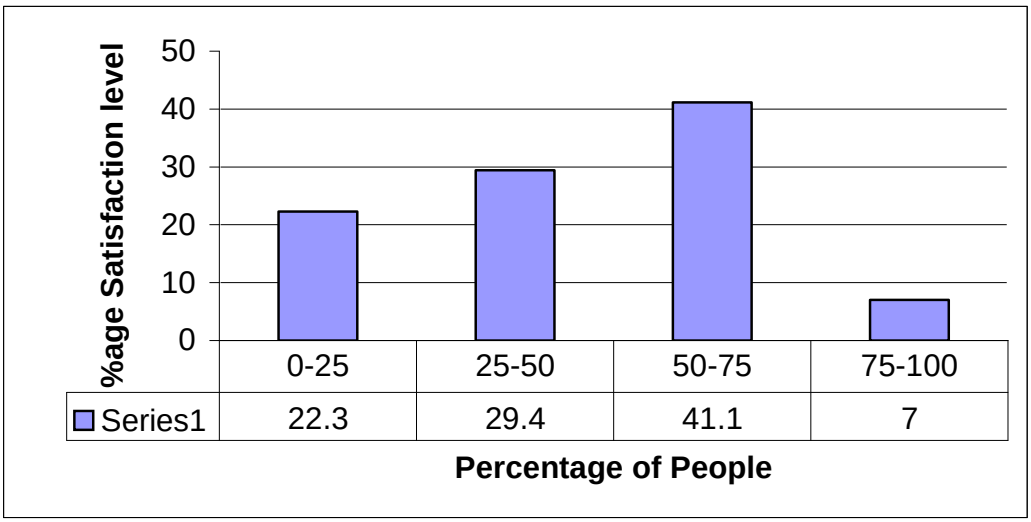

Fig 2.

❖ Which system of medicine is better? (Fig 3)

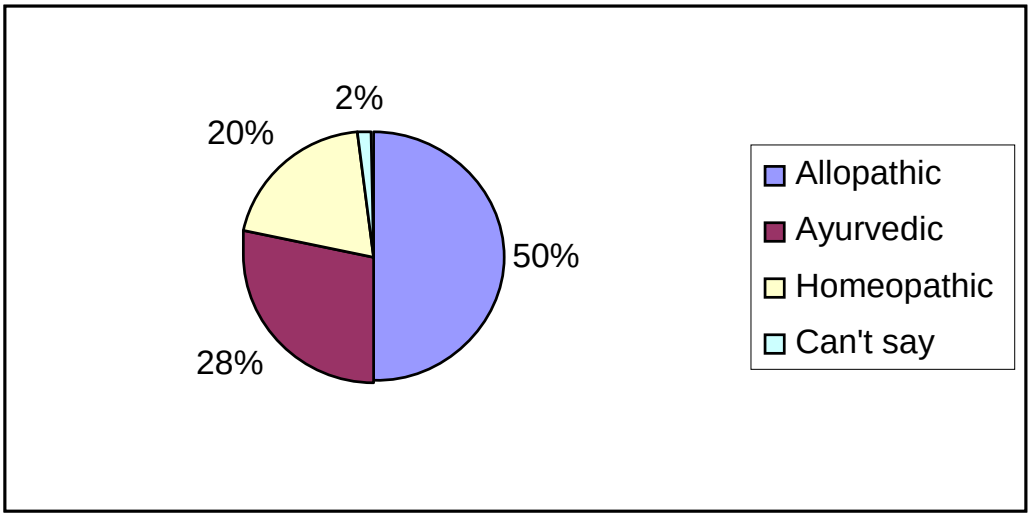

Fig 3.

❖ Which system will you prefer, in case of medical emergency? (Fig 4)

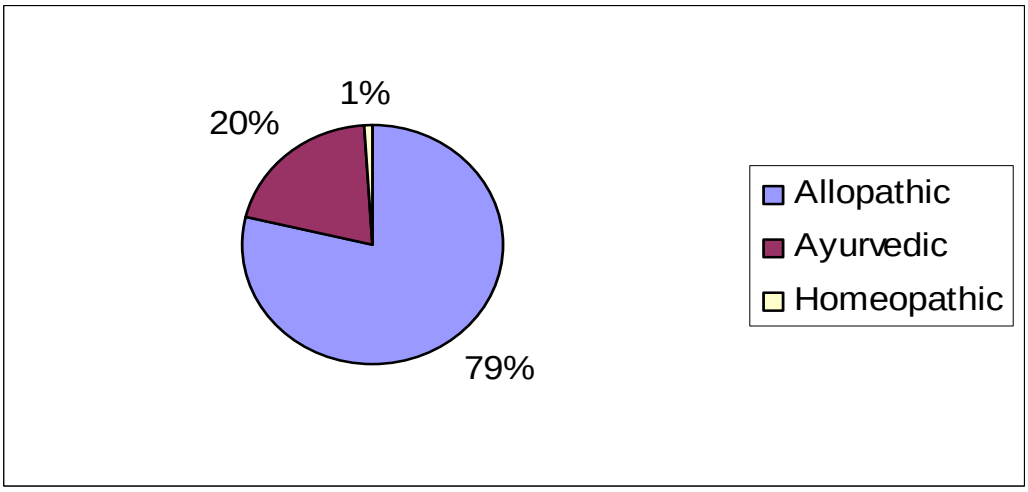

Fig 4.

❖ In case of common ailments which system will you prefer? (Fig 5)

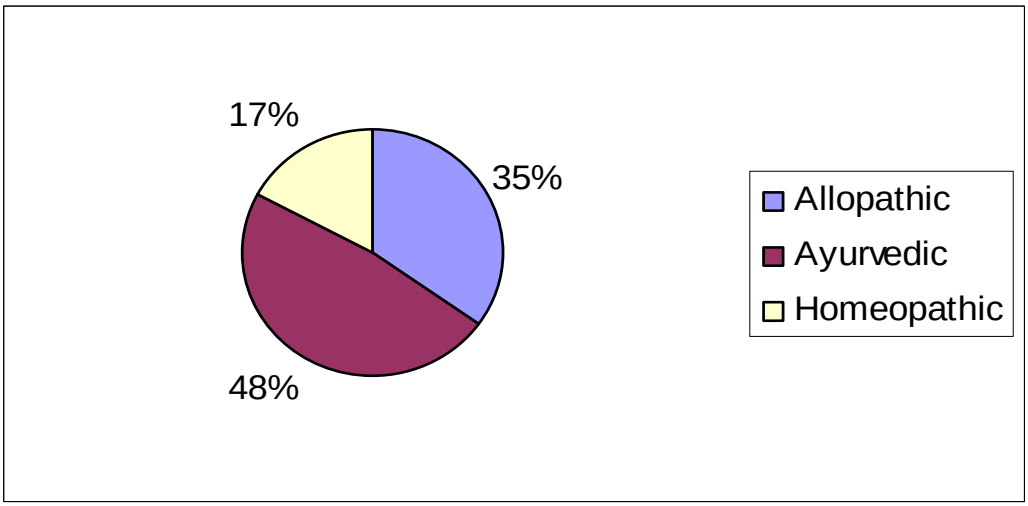

Fig 5.

❖ Which system will you prefer in case of following diseases? (Table 1)

Table 1: Showing system of preference in the specific diseases

S.No	Disease	Allopathic*	Homeopathic*	Ayurvedic*	Can't Say*
1.	Fever	88.5	4.5	7.0	0.0
2.	Sore Throat	51.5	3.5	34.5	10.5
3.	Flatulence	41.0	5.0	16.5	37.5
4.	Tooth Ache	51.5	5.0	28.0	15.5
5.	Common Cold	60.0	9.5	14.0	16.5
6.	Head Ache	75.5	4.5	5.0	15.0
7.	Muscular Pain	64.5	4.5	10.0	21.0
8.	Diarrhea	61.0	2.0	13.5	23.5
9.	Joint Pain	62.5	7.5	12.0	18.0
10.	Hair Fall	22.0	5.0	31.5	41.5
11.	General Weakness	40.0	9.5	16.5	34.0
12.	Respiratory Problem	44.5	2.5	13.0	40.0
13.	Diabetes	40.0	4.5	21.5	34.0
14.	Obesity	32.0	5.0	24.5	39.5
15.	Cancer	43.5	2.0	5.0	49.5
16.	Acidity	61.0	2.0	26.0	11.0
17.	Vomiting	68.0	3.5	16.5	12.0
18.	Constipation	32.5	7.5	42.5	17.5

* Responses in percentage

❖ Do you know the use(s) of following household medicines? (Table 2)

Table 2. Public awareness about use of common household remedies

S. No.	Drugs	Yes (%age)	No (%age)	Commonly cited uses
1.	Neem	91.5	8.5	Blood problems. Skin, Tooth problems.
2.	Tulsi	88.0	12.0	Sore throat, Cough, Cold, Stomach problems.
3.	Karela	83.5	16.5	Blood problems, Diabetes.
4.	Clove	85.5	14.5	Toothache, Cold.
5.	Hing	75.0	25.0	Gastric problems, Stomachache.
6.	Mulethi	74.5	25.5	Sore throat, Cough, Cold.
7.	Turmeric	77.5	22.5	Skin, Wound healing, Joints pain, Cosmetic.
8.	Dal chini	34.0	66.0	Diabetes, Cold, Stomach disorders.
9.	Amla	87.0	13.0	Immunity enhancer, Vit.C, Brain tonic, Good for Eyes and Hair.
10.	Honey	85.5	14.5	Sore throat, Cough, Cold, Tonic.
11.	Chotti Elaichi	49.5	50.5	Digestion, Diarrhea and Flavour (Tea)

Results and Discussion

According to the survey (500 responses) 41.1% people were satisfied upto 50-75% with efficacy of Herbal drugs. A large portion of population upto 50% prefers allopathy, 28% prefer ayurvedic and 20% prefer homeopathic system of medicines. In case of medical emergencies 79% people prefer allopathy, 20% prefer ayurvedic and only 1% people prefer homeopathy. In case of common ailments 35 % people prefer allopathic, 48% prefer ayurvedic and 17% prefer homeopathic medicines. About 70 % people know use of house hold remedies.

The most common sources of information, on herbal drugs, are TV, Newspaper, Books and Family friends. The single most common reason for preferring herbal drugs is- firm belief that these do not have any side effects. These drugs are usually procured from Pan sari shops, Kitchen, Kitchen garden and sometimes the municipal gardens/parks. Pharmacist can play a pivotal role in increasing their use by educating the people regarding benefits of these drugs. Government policies should not only promote their use but should also have strict control on standards and quality of these drugs. These can be made duty free to make easily affordable by masses.

Conclusion

From this study following general conclusions are drawn-

❖ People are of firm belief that herbal drugs are absolutely free from side effects.
❖ People generally believe in herbal drugs but not so in the integrity of vendors.

- Mass media is certainly an important source of information on herbal drugs.
- People by a large are aware of the use of, common herbal drugs and wish that the Govt. and Pharmacist should play their due role in promoting their usage.
- In spite of general tilt towards herbal drugs, the Allopathic system still remains the 1st choice in state of medical emergency.
- Awareness regarding organic food and herbal farming is still to spread.

The authors are of this view that if the scope of this study be widened, by collecting larger no of responses and the results statistically analyzed under expert supervision, then the exact mood/liking of masses can be gauged. The conclusions can provide the leads along which research can be pursued so as to provide, to masses, the drug of their liking from the system of their choice. Such a situation will pave the way to reap the benefits of all system minus the frustrating side effects of medicines.

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