

Homeopaths can prescribe allopathic medicines

The Homeopathic Integrated Medical Practitioners Association, Maharashtra (HIMPAM) has praised the government's decision to allow homeopaths to prescribe allopathic medicines.

HIMPAM representatives pointed out that in many rural areas, homeopaths and doctors of other disciplines were often the only medical practitioners available. "The ground realities being what they are, such a move is necessary to make up for the shortage of doctors and medical facilities in the rural areas," said Dr Paresh Navalkar. Of the 26,000 registered in Maharashtra, 23,000 are in the rural districts.

Dr Navalkar pointed out that certain injuries and illnesses necessarily require emergency allopathic treatment. "Even things like sutures and IV fluids are considered as part of allopathy and illegal for us to use," said Dr Sharad Rao, Mumbai chairman of HIMPAM.

The state government is planning a six-month training programme with an examination in allopathic pharmacology for homeopaths to equip themselves to prescribe medicines. The programme, which is supposed to be a compression of

the usual one-and-a-half year course, is to be held in medical colleges in batches of a hundred. Training of all the doctors in the exercise is estimated to take three-and-a-half to four years.

"Anyway we go through the same rigorous four to five-year course as the allopathic doctors, including one year of internship at a hospital. Many of the courses like physiology, surgery and medicine are the same, the only thing different being the pharmacology course," Dr Navalkar said.

Doctors said such a move had been recommended by the first conference of health ministers and secretaries. "Maharashtra is the pioneer state in implementing the resolution," Dr Rao said. Dr Navalkar noted that the committee had also recommended incorporating pharmacological training into the syllabus of current students.

Asked how the patient would be able to tell that the doctor was qualified, Dr Navalkar said a certificate would be given to those who had undergone training.

It's good we can now prescribe allopathic drugs: homeopaths. *The Times of India*, July 8, 1999.

Homeopathy, allopathy and quackery . . .

It may be understood that suturing wounds and giving intravenous fluids in emergencies could be allowed to be done by homeopaths in rural areas, with no allopath around. However, that does not mean that every homeopath who attends a six-month crash course in pharmacology should prescribe allopathic medicines, especially in a city surrounded by allopathic doctors.

Second, many patients who are fed up with allopathic drugs go to homeopaths for a homeopathic cure. They don't want to be prescribed the same, allopathic drugs by a homeopath.

Third, no crash course is going to give homeopaths the same knowledge as allopaths are given. If homeopathic doctors want to practice allopathy, if they do not respect homeopathy, they should scrap it altogether, without aspirations of prescribing allopathy instead.

Recently, I was talking to a second-year student of BHMS. She was thrilled because they had been told of new government rules permitting them to prescribe allopathic drugs. Do we want to inculcate this attitude to homeopathy in the new generation?

Once an exception is made, everybody will want to be included in it. Homeopathy is a wonderful thing. Do not ruin it.

There is another problem when "doctors" get degrees not from years of hard work in medical college, but through the post.

For those who cannot get admission to a medical college, there are plenty of institutes offering diplomas and degrees of all sorts in some form of medicine. These institutes flourish all over the country. They freely advertise in newspapers and magazines.

You too can buy a degree. And once you set yourself up, patients will start coming in. You just have to look up a copy of CIMS/MIMS, and begin prescribing allopathic medicines. You will get bolder with every prescription you write, and soon enough, you prescribe steroids and hormones, inject painkillers and vitamins with more confidence than a real doctor. You practice in villages and slums. Your patients are mostly illiterate, and very happy with your small fees and the injections of steroids which give them immediate relief. You soon become

popular and get all sorts of cases. A "gharwali" brings a young girl for an abortion. With a little reference work you prescribe Cyclenorm EP, and the "ayurvedic" MTP Forte or KP Forte, and you have "done the job". Soon, you become well-known for this "service" and you dare to perform MTPs with instruments. In no time you have done such "favours" for the local policemen, and the local politicians' "chamchaas".

This story is typical of the lakhs of quacks practicing in our country. No one has come forward to tackle this serious problem. Government officials can be expected not to do anything about it, because they have too much political pressure, and a lack of will.

It is time we acted out of concern for the health of our people. A professional body or voluntary organisation must take the lead in formulating an action plan after networking with other medical, para-medical, professional and consumer organisations. The aim is not to make these quacks jobless, but to prevent gullible people from falling prey to unqualified treatment.

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