

Awareness and Utilization of Homeopathic Medicine among Urban Population: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Background: Homeopathy is widely practiced as a complementary and alternative system of medicine in India. Increasing public interest in AYUSH systems, particularly among urban populations, has contributed to greater awareness and utilization of homeopathic medicine.

Objectives: To assess the awareness and utilization of homeopathic medicine among the urban population and to identify factors influencing its utilization.

Materials and Methods: A community-based cross-sectional study was conducted among 270 urban residents in which participants aged 18 years and above were selected using convenient sampling technique. Data were collected using a predesigned, pretested semi-structured questionnaire assessing socio-demographic characteristics, awareness, utilization practices, perceptions, and sources of information regarding homeopathic medicine.

Results: Among 270 participants, 81.9% were aware of homeopathic medicine, while 61.9% had utilized it at least once. Family members and friends were the most common source of awareness (53.4%). Respiratory illnesses (43.1%), skin diseases (34.7%), and joint pain (27.5%) were the major conditions for which homeopathy was preferred. A significant association was observed between educational status and awareness regarding homeopathic medicine ($p=0.001$).

Conclusion: Educational status, social influence, and positive perceptions regarding safety and affordability significantly influenced utilization patterns.

Keywords: Homeopathy; Awareness; Utilization; Urban population; AYUSH; Complementary and alternative medicine.

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Introduction

Homeopathy is one of the major components of the AYUSH system of medicine widely practiced in India. Over the last decade, the popularity of homeopathic medicine has increased among both rural and urban populations due to its perceived safety, affordability, holistic approach, and minimal side effects. In India, the Government has actively promoted AYUSH systems through public health initiatives, awareness campaigns, and integration into primary healthcare services. As a result, awareness regarding homeopathic medicine has improved considerably among the general population. [1]

Urban populations are increasingly exposed to multiple healthcare systems including allopathy, Ayurveda, Unani, and homeopathy. Factors such as higher literacy rates, internet accessibility, social

media influence, and dissatisfaction with conventional treatment for chronic illnesses have contributed to greater acceptance of complementary and alternative medicine. [2] Homeopathy is commonly sought for chronic diseases, allergic conditions, skin disorders, respiratory illnesses, stress-related disorders, and pediatric ailments. Many individuals perceive homeopathic medicines as natural and free from adverse drug reactions, which further encourages their utilization. [3]

Awareness plays a crucial role in determining healthcare-seeking behavior and utilization patterns. Adequate awareness regarding the principles, indications, benefits, and limitations of homeopathy influences patient preferences and treatment adherence. [4] However, despite growing popularity, misconceptions and inadequate

scientific understanding regarding homeopathic medicine still persist among the public. Some individuals use homeopathy based on family traditions, peer recommendations, or media advertisements rather than evidence-based knowledge. [5]

Understanding the level of awareness and utilization of homeopathic medicine among urban populations is important for policymakers, healthcare providers, and public health planners. Such information can help identify knowledge gaps, misconceptions, and factors influencing healthcare choices. [6]

It may also contribute to designing effective educational programs and policies aimed at promoting rational and informed utilization of homeopathic medicine. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to assess the awareness and utilization of homeopathic medicine among the urban population through a cross-sectional study design.

Material and Methods

Study Design & Setting: A community-based cross-sectional observational study was conducted to assess the awareness and utilization of homeopathic medicine among the urban population. The study was conducted in selected urban localities of field practice area of a tertiary care Homeopathic hospital in western Uttar Pradesh. Participants from different residential colonies, marketplaces, and community areas representing varied socioeconomic and educational backgrounds were included in the study.

The study was carried out over a period of three months from January to March 2026, including questionnaire preparation, data collection, data entry, and analysis.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria: Individuals aged 18 years and above who were permanent residents of the urban area for at least six months and willing to participate were included in the study.

However individuals who were severely ill or unable to respond during the interview or Healthcare professionals directly practicing homeopathy or AYUSH medicine were excluded from the study.

Sample Size Calculation: The sample size was calculated using the formula for prevalence studies:

$$n = 4pq/l^2$$

Where:

- n = required sample size
- p = prevalence from previous study
- $q = 100 - p$
- l = allowable error

The prevalence (p) was taken as 62% based on study conducted by Sumedha et al* regarding awareness and utilization of complementary and alternative medicine among urban residents.4

Thus,

$$p = 62, q = 38, l = 10\% \text{ of } p = 6.2$$

$$n = 4 \times 62 \times 38 / (6.2)^2, n = 245$$

After adding 10% for possible non-response and incomplete questionnaires, the final sample size was rounded to 270 participants. A convenient sampling technique was employed for selection of study participants. Urban localities were visited, and eligible participants were approached consecutively until the desired sample size was achieved.

Study Tool: Data was collected using a predesigned, pretested, semi-structured questionnaire prepared after extensive review of literature and expert consultation.

The questionnaire comprised the following sections:

- Sociodemographic profile
- Awareness regarding homeopathic medicine
- Sources of information regarding homeopathy
- Utilization practices and frequency of use
- Diseases/conditions for which homeopathy was preferred
- Factors influencing utilization and barriers to use

Data Collection Procedure: Participants were contacted personally in community settings such as residential colonies, public places, and marketplaces. The objectives and purpose of the study were explained to them in simple language. Written informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using the semi-structured questionnaire for obtaining the desired information. Confidentiality and privacy of the participants were ensured throughout the data collection process.

Study Variables

The major variables included:

- Awareness regarding homeopathic medicine
- Utilization of homeopathic medicine
- Frequency and purpose of utilization
- Source of awareness
- Perceived effectiveness and safety
- Socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education, occupation, and socioeconomic status

Operational Definitions

- **Awareness:** Participants who had heard about homeopathic medicine and possessed basic

knowledge regarding its uses and principles were considered aware.

- **Utilization:** Participants who had used homeopathic medicine at least once during the previous one year were considered users.

Statistical Analysis: The collected data were entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

version 21.0. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize the findings.

Results

A total of 270 participants were included in the present study to assess the awareness and utilization of homeopathic medicine among the urban population.

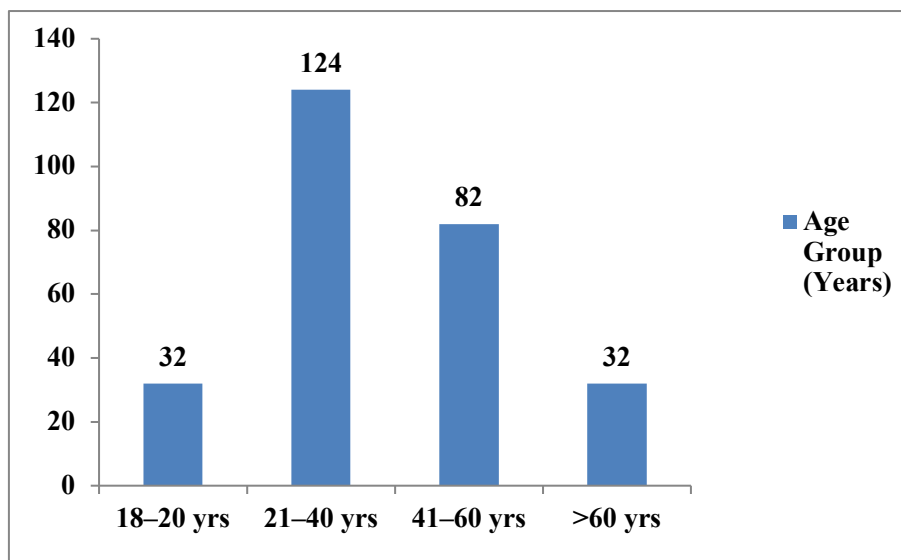


Figure 1: Distribution of study subjects based on age group (years)

Majority of the study subjects were in the age group of 21-40 years

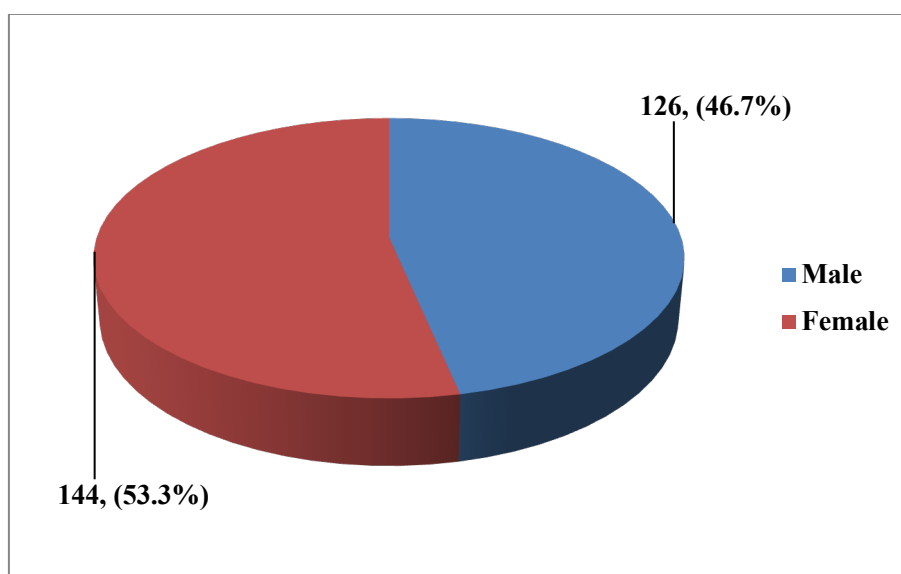


Figure 2: Distribution of study subjects based on gender

Majority of the study subjects were females.

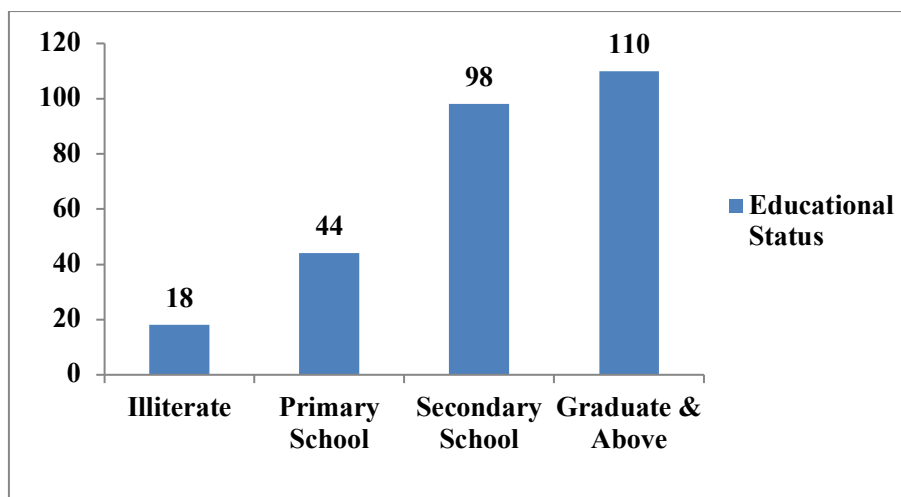


Figure 3: Distribution of study subjects based on Educational Status

Majority of the study subjects were Graduate and above based on educational status.

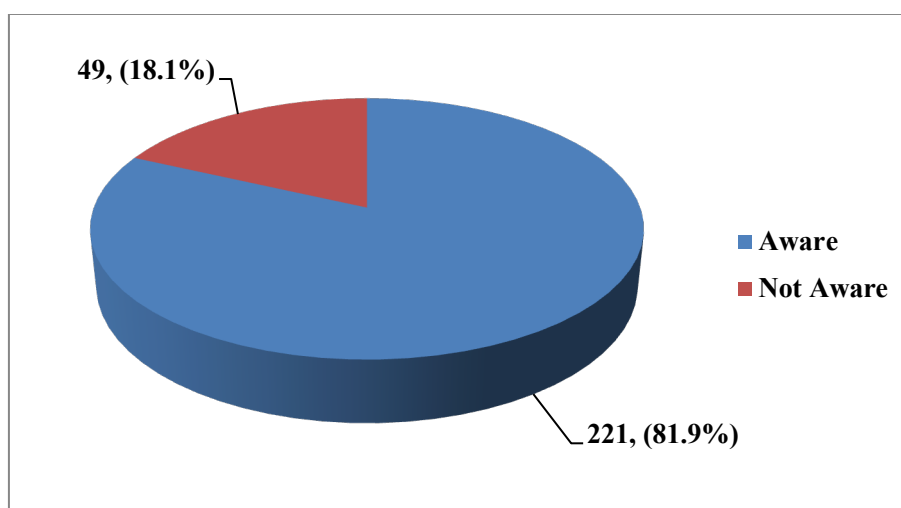


Figure 4: Awareness Regarding Homeopathic Medicine

The study revealed that 221 (81.9%) participants had heard about homeopathic medicine, while 49 (18.1%) were unaware of it.

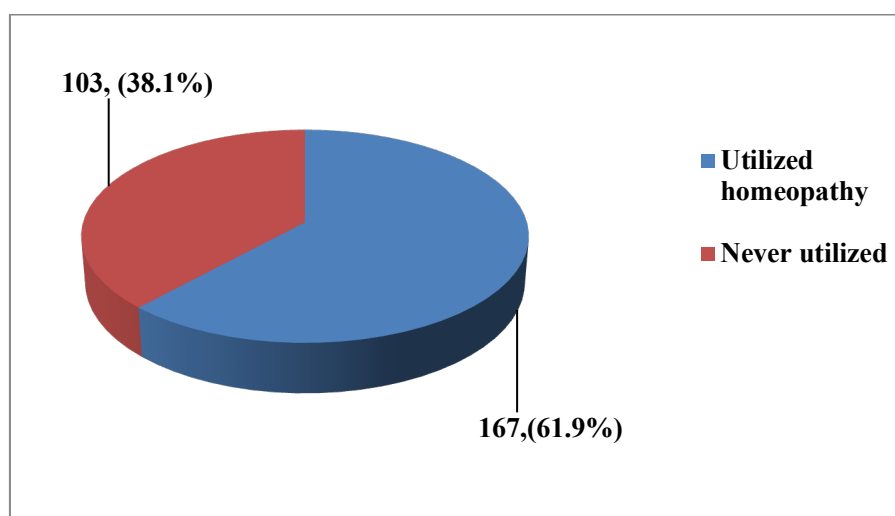


Figure 5: Utilization of Homeopathic Medicine among Participants

Out of the total participants, 167 (61.9%) reported having used homeopathic medicine at least once in their lifetime.

Table 1: Sources of Awareness Regarding Homeopathic Medicine (n = 221)

Source of Information*	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Family/Friends	118	53.4
Social Media/Internet	82	37.1
Television/Newspaper	64	29.0
Doctors/Healthcare Workers	58	26.2
AYUSH Campaigns	36	16.3

*Multiple responses allowed

Among those aware, family members and friends were the most common source of information regarding homeopathy, followed by social media/internet and healthcare providers.

Table 2: Common Conditions for Utilization of Homeopathic Medicine (n = 167)

Condition	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Respiratory illnesses	72	43.1
Skin diseases	58	34.7
Joint pain/Arthritis	46	27.5
Allergic disorders	42	25.1
Gastrointestinal problems	36	21.6
Stress/Sleep disorders	24	14.4

The most common conditions for which homeopathic medicine was utilized were respiratory illnesses, skin disorders, joint pain, allergies, and gastrointestinal complaints.

Table 3: Perceptions Regarding Homeopathic Medicine (n = 270)

Perception	Agree n (%)	Disagree n (%)
Homeopathy is safe	198 (73.3)	72 (26.7)
Homeopathy has fewer side effects	212 (78.5)	58 (21.5)
Homeopathy is effective for chronic diseases	176 (65.2)	94 (34.8)
Homeopathy acts slowly	194 (71.9)	76 (28.1)
Homeopathy is affordable	186 (68.9)	84 (31.1)

Regarding perceptions about homeopathy, the majority of participants believed that Homeopathy is effective for chronic diseases and affordable.

Table 4: Association between Education Status and Awareness Regarding Homeopathic Medicine

Education Status	Aware n (%)	Not Aware n (%)	Total	p-value
Illiterate	8 (44.4)	10 (55.6)	18	
Primary School	28 (63.6)	16 (36.4)	44	
Secondary School	82 (83.7)	16 (16.3)	98	
Graduate & Above	103 (93.6)	7 (6.4)	110	0.001*

*Significant p value

A statistically significant association was observed between educational status and awareness regarding homeopathic medicine ($p < 0.05$). Higher awareness and utilization were found among graduates and participants belonging to middle and upper socioeconomic groups.

Discussion

In the present study, 81.9% of participants were aware of homeopathic medicine. Similar findings were reported by Sumedha et al., who observed high awareness regarding complementary and alternative medicine among urban residents in Tamil Nadu. [4] Likewise, Pengpid and Peltzer reported substantial awareness and utilization of AYUSH systems among Indian adults, particularly

in urban and educated populations. [3] Increased government promotion of AYUSH services and growing public interest in holistic healthcare may explain the higher awareness levels observed in recent years. The present study also demonstrated that 61.9% of participants had utilized homeopathic medicine at least once. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Bhavani and Kalpana, where a significant proportion of semi-urban residents preferred homeopathy for chronic and recurrent illnesses. [5] Urban populations often seek alternative therapies due to concerns regarding adverse effects associated with long-term allopathic treatment.

Family members and friends were identified as the major source of information regarding homeopathy

in the present study. Similar observations were made in previous studies where interpersonal communication and personal experiences played an important role in influencing healthcare choices. [2,4] Social media and internet platforms were also important contributors to awareness, reflecting the growing influence of digital health information in urban populations.

Respiratory illnesses, skin disorders, joint pain, and allergic conditions were the most common indications for homeopathic medicine use in the present study. Comparable findings were reported by Nayak et al., who observed increased utilization of homeopathic remedies for respiratory and immune-related conditions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. [6] Chronic illnesses often require prolonged therapy, and patients may perceive homeopathy as safer and more suitable for long-term use.

The majority of participants in the present study believed that homeopathic medicines are safe, affordable, and associated with fewer side effects. Similar perceptions were documented in studies evaluating public attitudes toward AYUSH therapies in India. [3,1] These beliefs may significantly influence healthcare-seeking behavior and treatment preferences. However, a large proportion of participants also believed that homeopathy acts slowly, which has been reported as a common concern in several earlier studies. [5]

A statistically significant association was observed between educational status and awareness regarding homeopathy. Participants with higher educational qualifications demonstrated better awareness and greater utilization of homeopathic medicine. Similar associations have been reported in previous studies where literacy and socioeconomic status positively influenced utilization of complementary medicine. [4,3]

Recommendations

1. Public awareness programs regarding homeopathic medicine should be strengthened through community campaigns, mass media, and digital platforms to promote accurate knowledge and rational utilization.
2. Health education activities should be conducted in urban communities to address misconceptions related to the effectiveness, indications, and limitations of homeopathic medicine.
3. Integration of AYUSH and homeopathic services with primary healthcare facilities may improve accessibility and promote informed healthcare choices among the population.

Limitations

1. Since the study followed a cross-sectional design, causal relationships between awareness and utilization could not be established.
2. The study mainly assessed awareness and utilization patterns and did not evaluate the clinical effectiveness or outcomes of homeopathic treatment.
3. Cultural beliefs and personal experiences influencing utilization of homeopathy were not explored in detail.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrated high awareness and considerable utilization of homeopathic medicine among the urban population. Educational status, social influence, and perceptions regarding safety and affordability significantly affected utilization patterns. Strengthening evidence-based awareness programs and promoting rational use of homeopathy may improve informed healthcare decision-making among urban communities

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