



## Awareness among people regarding Holistic approach to Healthcare: A Study in Patna Town

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Received : November 2017

Accepted : March 2018

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**Abstract:** *Holistic medicine refers to the therapies that attempt to treat the patient as a whole i.e. instead of treating an illness, as in orthodox allopath. It looks at an individual's overall (physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional) wellbeing before recommending the treatment. There is no limit to the range of diseases and disorders that can be treated in a holistic way and these techniques are non-invasive. Holistic practices basically include techniques like homeopath, ayurveda, chiropractic, massage therapy, reiki, etc. Although many wonderful advances and discoveries have been made in modern medicine, they have a very poor record for producing optimal health because they are designed to attack illness and not the whole system. Therefore an attempt was made, in this*

*study, to find out the awareness level of people in Patna town regarding holistic methods of treatment, their preference of this technique over conventional allopathic method and the benefits they have achieved by using this technique. This study included the views of 100 adults (age-30 to 45 years) from Patna town. An interview schedule was used to understand their perspective. The study highlighted the facts that although, the people in Patna Town were unaware of the term 'holistic treatment', they were aware of certain common techniques such homeopath, ayurveda, yoga, meditation etc. They were also unaware of the fact that holistic treatment is a form of healing that considers and cures the whole person i.e. body, mind, spirit and emotions. Zero side effects is the biggest advantage of this treatment. It was also seen that they practiced these techniques as a preventive measure or to cure minor health related issues but for severe problems and immediate relief they still preferred allopathic mode of treatment. They further stated that the slow healing process, lack of awareness to such centers and insufficient focus on advertisements are the few reasons behind the lack of popularity most of the holistic techniques. Therefore, it is clear from the study that Holistic approach is not very popular any more due to the invention of modern pharmaceuticals and treatment. Hence an attempt should be made by the people and the practitioners to re-evaluate the efficacy of these age old holistic healing practices so that they can be used as complementary to conventional health care.*

**Keywords:** *holistic medicine, mental wellbeing, ailment, allopathic treatment, healing, mind-body-spirit.*

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## Introduction:

Holistic medicine is a term used to describe therapies that attempt to treat the patient as a whole. That is, instead of treating an illness, as in orthodox allopath, holistic medicine looks at an individual's overall physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing before recommending treatment.



Fig. 1. Focus of Holistic mode of Treatment

When an individual goes through a holistic treatment for a particular illness or condition, other health problems improve without direct treatment, due to improvement in the performance of the immune system, which is one of the goals of holistic medicine. It is based on the belief that a person is ultimately responsible for his or her own health and well-being. The treatment involves fixing the cause of the condition, not just alleviating the symptoms.

There are no limits to the range of diseases and disorders that can be treated in a holistic way, as the principle of holistic healing is to balance the body, mind, spirit and emotions so that the person's whole being functions smoothly.

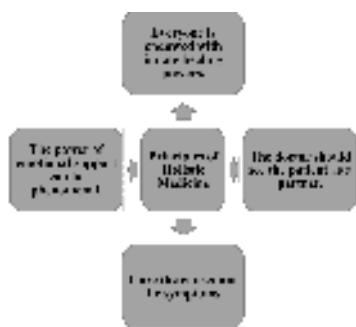


Fig. 2. Principles of Holistic Medicine

## Types of Holistic Practices :

There are literally hundreds of types of holistic healing practices that come under the umbrella of

“holistic medicine”, with new therapies or variations emerging continuously. The National Centre for Complementary and Integrative Health , which is part of the National Institutes of Health, at one time grouped most of these therapies and practices into five categories.

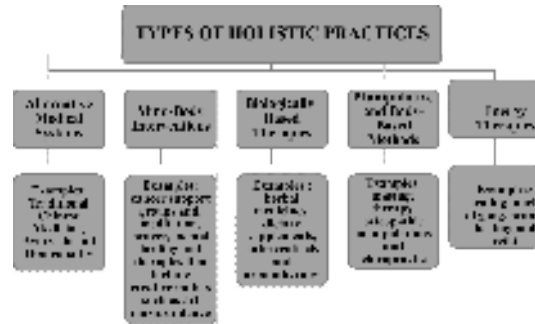


Fig. 3. Types of Holistic Practices

## Problem of the Study :

Today everyone prefers conventional methods of treatment over alternative medicine because these are easily available and give faster results. Although, many wonderful advances and discoveries have been made in the field of modern medicine, surgery and drugs; yet they have a very poor record for producing optimal health as they are designed to attack the illness and not the whole system. Still, the first thought that comes to our mind as an immediate solution to health care problem is the conventional medicine. This is because most of the techniques of holistic medicine are either not known to people, forgotten by them or due to lack of faith in such medical practices.

## Purpose of the Study :

Therefore, an attempt was made in this study to find out the level of awareness among people regarding holistic therapies, and also to help them move towards an integrative healthcare approach where the best of both, the conventional allopathic therapies and holistic healing practices are made available to all. This would help the public to view holistic healing practices as complementary to conventional care and a key part of integrative healthcare.

## Objectives of the Study :

1. To find out the awareness level of people regarding holistic methods of treatment.
2. To find out people's preference of holistic medicine over conventional allopathic methods of treatment.

- To find out the benefits they have achieved by using holistic practices.

### Hypothesis :

- Awareness level of people regarding most of the techniques of holistic medicine is not very good.
- Most of the people prefer conventional allopathic methods of treatment over holistic methods.
- Absence of side effects is the biggest benefit of using the holistic therapy.

### Methodology :

**Area of the study:** Men and Women (age-30 to 45 years) from the following areas of Patna were taken for study:

- Boring Road (50 samples)
- Kankarbagh (50 samples)

### Sampling:

- Sample:** The sample of the present study consisted of 100 adults (30-45 years of age) from two areas of Patna- Boring road (50 samples) and Kankarbagh (50 samples).
- Nature of the sample:** These respondents belonged to the middle socio-economic group.
- Sampling technique:** The sample was collected by incidental cum purposive sampling method.

**Tool for data collection :** Interview schedule was used to collect information.

Details of the interview schedule- Responses in the interview schedule were categorized in the following manner-

- General information
- Response based on various objectives

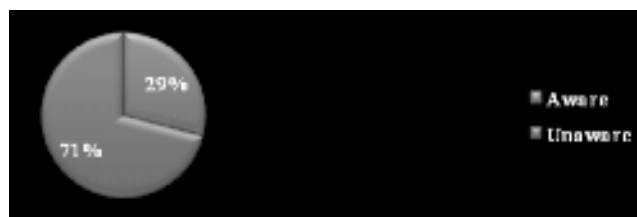
### Data analysis technique:

- Bargraphs
- Pie charts
- Tables

**Statistical analysis:** Percentage was drawn from the respondents' orientation.

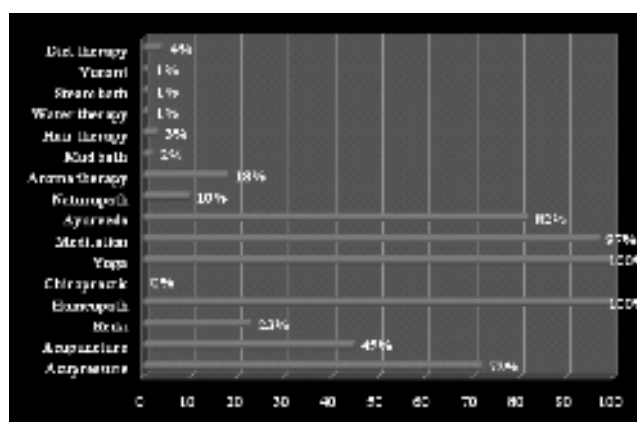
### Results and discussion :

The objectives of the study were 1. To find out the awareness level of people regarding the holistic methods of treatment. 2. To find out the preference of this method over the conventional method of treatment. 3. To find out the benefits they have achieved by using the holistic practices.



**Fig.1. Awareness level of respondents regarding the term 'Holistic Treatment'**

From the above given figure it is quite clear that majority (71%) of the respondents were unaware of the term 'Holistic Treatment'. Although when further probed, it was found that a few of them were familiar with the term 'alternative', but 'holistic' was altogether a new terminology for them.



**Fig.2. Awareness level of respondents regarding various holistic techniques**

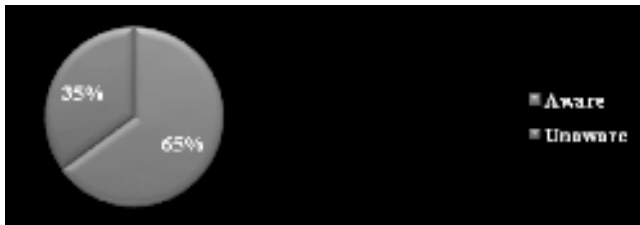
The figure above indicates that the respondents were familiar with the following holistic treatments : homeopath (100%), yoga (100%), meditation (97%), ayurveda (82%), acupressure (72%), Therefore, it is clear from the figure that out of a number of holistic treatments majority of the respondents were aware of a few techniques. Rest of the techniques like reiki (23%), hair therapy (3%), mud bath (2%), chiropractic (0%), etc. were something new for most of them.

**Therefore, the first hypothesis –'Awareness level of people regarding most of the techniques of holistic treatment is low' - is approved.**



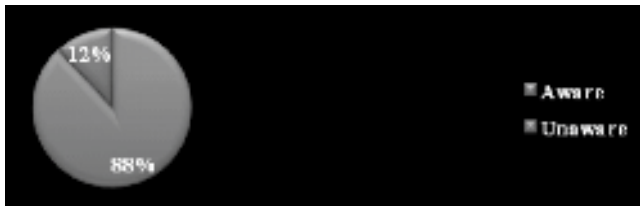
**Fig.3. Awareness level of respondents regarding the use of holistic techniques**

The above given figure highlights the fact that 92% of respondents were aware as to where the certain holistic techniques are used. Like many of the respondents shared that: meditation is used for peace of mind, to relieve stress and to increase concentration; homeopathic treatment is used to cure chronic diseases without any side effects and yoga is practiced for overall fitness (mind and body). But again it was seen that their knowledge was limited to very few techniques of holistic treatment.



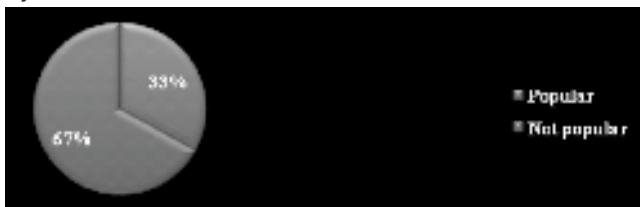
**Fig. 4. Awareness level of respondents regarding the working of holistic techniques**

The figure indicates that 65% of the respondents were aware of how the specific holistic treatments worked. They further highlighted that acupressure is a technique in which nerve endings located in various parts of the body are pressed to cure an ailment, yoga is based on the principle of breathing techniques and ayurveda is based on prescribing herbal medicines. It is again clear that the knowledge regarding working of the holistic treatment was quite limited to a few techniques only.



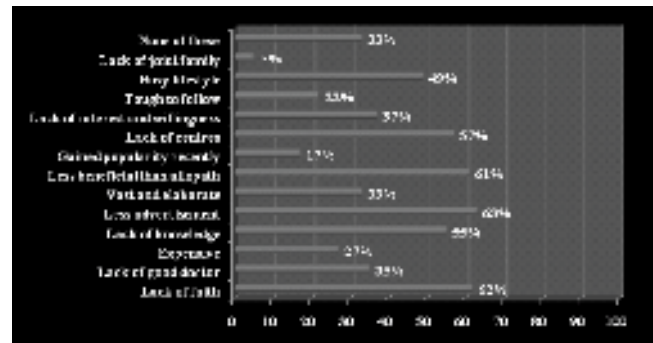
**Fig. 5. Awareness level of respondents regarding the centers of holistic treatment**

Although the figure indicates that 88% of respondents were aware of the centers of holistic treatment in Patna, but it was again seen that they were aware of centers of very limited techniques. These mainly included homeopath, yoga, acupressure and ayurveda.



**Fig. 6. Views of respondents regarding the popularity of holistic treatments in Patna town**

The above given figure clearly indicates that, majority (67%) of respondents agreed that apart from a very few, most of the techniques of holistic treatment were not very popular in Patna town.



**Fig.7. Reasons for lack of popularity (of holistic treatments) among people in Patna town**

When asked about the declining popularity of alternative treatments, some outlined responses were; less focus on opening new centres (57%), very little awareness due to lack of promotional programmes (63%), it is less effective (61%), hard to accommodate in ones busy life style (49%), dearth of good practitioners (35%), an expensive method (27%), but a few percentage of respondents (17%) said that it has gained popularity in recent years.



**Fig.8. Respondents' preference of the type of treatment on a regular basis**

When enquired from the respondents about their preference it was found that, they (67%) preferred a combination of holistic and allopathic methods approach on a regular basis and for minor health related problems (cold, cough, indigestion, headache, etc.). However it was further specified by a few (11%) of them, that they preferred a total holistic approach, especially for small children (which included homeopath and home remedies for minor health problems); since they believed that it had no side effects.



**Fig. 9. Respondents mode of treatment during major illness**



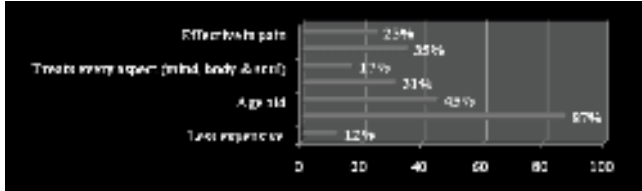
The above given figure highlights the fact that during severe health problems majority (81%) of the respondents preferred allopathic treatment only. The reason that they specified here was allopathic treatment gives faster results and it is easily accessible than holistic treatment.

Therefore the second hypothesis- 'Most of the people prefer conventional allopathic method of treatment over holistic methods' is approved.



**Fig.10. Respondents' views regarding benefits of holistic treatment**

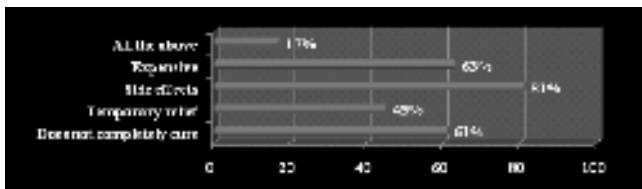
The above given figure clearly indicates that majority (91%) of respondents agreed that holistic medication was quite beneficial when practiced on a regular basis. Yet, they also stated that during severe problems the process of healing is slow as compared to allopathic mode of treatment. Therefore allopathic mode of treatment generally comes in their mind when they face any severe health related problems.



**Fig.11. Respondents' views regarding the benefits of holistic treatment**

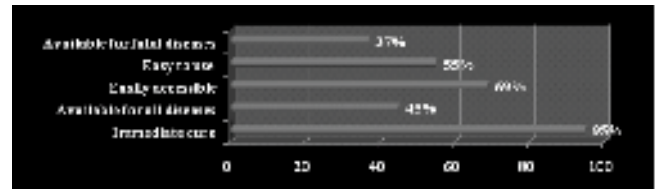
The above figure indicates that according to majority (87%) of the respondents the main benefit of using the holistic mode of treatment was the absence of side effects. The other important benefits of this treatment were that it cures a disease from its root, treats every aspect of human body (mind, body and soul) and is less expensive.

Therefore the third hypothesis – 'Absence of side effects is the biggest benefits of using this technique' is approved.



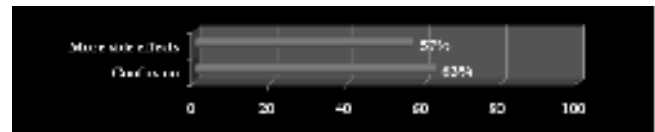
**Fig.12. Respondents' views regarding the drawbacks of allopathic treatment**

The above given figure clearly implies that majority (81%) of the respondents felt that side effects were the biggest drawback of allopathic mode of treatment. Apart from that they (61%) also stated that this mode of treatment does not completely cure a disease and provides temporary relief from ailments (45%). According to them even after taking allopathic medicines for a specific disease, in many cases, the disease keeps recurring.



**Fig.13. Respondents' views regarding the benefits of allopathic treatment**

From the above figure it is clear that the major benefits of using allopathic treatment is that it provides immediate cure to a disease (95%), is easily accessible (69%) and is also easy to use (55%).



**Fig.14. Respondents' views regarding the drawbacks of using combination of both treatments during severe ailments**

When enquired about the drawbacks of using both the techniques together during severe ailments, 63 % respondents stated that the certain holistic treatments in which medicines are to be taken such as ayurveda, homeopath, etc. cannot be used along with allopath as they were afraid of some kind of reactions and side effects. Another factor which the respondents discussed was that they would be confused as to which of the treatment is helping them more and which is not.

Conclusion :

1. It is very clear from the study that majority of the people were unaware of the term holistic treatment and their knowledge regarding holistic treatment was limited to very few of the techniques.
2. The major reasons behind lack of popularity of most of the techniques were: people considered most of the techniques slow as compared to conventional mode of treatment. The samples which were surveyed opined that holistic practices were meant for

specific diseases only. The lack of advertisement by practitioners and lack of centres, made the process difficult. Moreover, the elaborate holistic methods could not be practised by them because of a busy lifestyle. They also lacked faith in such techniques.

3. The study also highlighted the fact that most of the people were practicing both the modes of the treatments i.e. allopath and holistic on a regular basis as a preventive measure and to treat minor health related problems (such as cold, cough, indigestion etc). Yet during a serious ailment majority of them went for an allopathic mode as they believed that allopathic mode of treatment gave fast relief for serious diseases.
4. The main principle behind the age old holistic mode of treatment is to achieve optimal health and overall wellness (body, mind and spirit). Yet, a very few respondents agreed with this. However, according to most of them, the biggest advantage of this treatment was the absence of side effects.
5. The study also revealed that, for most of the people, the biggest benefit of allopathic mode of treatment was that, it provided immediate relief from any disease. Further, easy usage, accessibility and availability for all kinds of diseases are the other benefits of this mode of treatment. As far as the drawbacks are concerned, the major drawbacks experienced in this method of treatment were its side-effects, recurrence of disease and was an expensive method of treatment.

#### **Suggestions :**

1. Holistic practitioners (to create awareness regarding their mode of treatment) should advertise more about the specific mode of treatments.
2. Allopathic practitioners should also consider including some of the alternative methods in their treatment plan.
3. State Government should keep an online record of these holistic centres which should be made easily available to people.
4. The practitioners should get themselves registered under such authorities so that they could be easily contacted by people.

5. People should approach trained and experienced holistic practitioners to experience better results.
6. Once they are made aware of holistic healing practices people should use it as a complementary method to conventional allopathic.
7. The practitioners should contact academic institutes (schools and colleges) where they can conduct seminars, certificate courses and workshops to create awareness amongst the young generation regarding this age old method of treatment.
8. Such programs should also be introduced in offices and other work places on a regular basis.
9. General awareness programs regarding these methods should be conducted in our city for the awareness of general population.
10. These authorities and the practitioners should make sure that all available techniques are included in their program, not just the common ones.

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