

Editor Speak

Dear Readers,

PHARMACY COURSES IN HOMOEOPATHY

Reliability of the drug substance is an important prerequisite to the physicians to treat the patients and researcher to conduct clinical trials. Pharmacopeia is the book of standards that prescribe methods of collection and preservation of the raw materials as well preparation and storage of medicines. It also lay down the analytical methods to test the quality of the finished products. The preparations of homeopathic medicines undergo the process of extreme dilution and dynamisation, whereby the original solute goes beyond any detectable limit. That makes difficult to detect any drug substance after certain potencies even with sophisticated analytical methods. Therefore, the homeopathic pharmacopeia prescribes process standards on preparation of medicines. The Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) notified by the DCG(I) is an additional safeguard intended in that direction.

Medical education in Homoeopathy started in India as early as 1938 and got standardized through the educational regulations of the Central Council of Homoeopathy in 1983. Some State Governments conducts short-term courses in homoeopathic pharmacy for the local needs; however, a systematic training of pharmacists is yet to evolve. The pharmacists compounding/ dispensing medicines in the dispensaries, hospitals or working at manufacturing and sales outlets now are engaged on the basis of experience gained elsewhere or after short term local training. They are not exposed on scientific aspects of dispensing, compounding or manufacturing of medicines. Thus, handling of homeopathic medicine that need utmost care, is at the hands of ill-trained people, though maintaining best practices should the responsibility of qualified pharmacists.

Pharmacy education in homoeopathy was identified as a priority area in the IX Five Year Plan (1997-2002). The Central Council of Health and Family Welfare, the apex body on Health, in their meeting held on 8-10 January, 1997 recommended that the Central Govt. should take immediate steps to introduce organized training course to train the pharmacists in homoeopathy. This was further reiterated by the State Health Minister's conference held in February, 1997.

Based on the above, in 1997, the then Secretray (ISM& H) constituted an expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr M P Arya to prepare a project report on the homoeopathy pharmacists education and draw a model syllabus and curriculum for a three-year diploma course. Other members of the committee were Dr. K. A Joseph, Dr. V.K.Gupta and myself as the Convener.

The Committee held extensive deliberations and consultation with experts such as Dr. Jugal Kishore, Dr. K.P.Muzumdar, Dr. V.T Augustine, Dr. P.N Verma, Dr. D.P.Rastogi, Dr.S.P.S. Bakshi, Prof. Dr. R. Zafar, Dean, Faculty of Pharmacy, Hamdard University, Dr. Vikramaditya, Dr. A.K.Misra, Dr. Pappachan Elias, Shri. G.S Bhar etc and submitted a project report for a Diploma course in Pharmacy with the course content, feasibility of conducting the course, the authority who can be entrusted this education. There was also provision for the existing dispensers who have no qualification, to undertake an off campus training to qualify the examination. The committee felt either the Pharmacy Council of India or a separate Board should regulate the education and practice of homoeopathic pharmacy. Consultations did happen with PCI, who showed reluctance to undertake the additional responsibility. Therefore, the Government initiated steps in 2005, for enactment of "Indian Systems of Medicine and

Homoeopathy Pharmacy Act". The Parliament considered the bill and sent it to the Standing Committee who made certain observations. When the Ministry was in the process of modifying the bill based on the observations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the Indian Medical Council Act 1956, came up for amendment. At that stage, a decision was taken that all Bills related to ISM&H such as IMCC Act 1970, the HCC Act, 1973 also need amendment and the ISM & H Pharmacy Bill would be taken after the amendment of IMC Act.

In 2009, the National Institute of Homoeopathy initiated to draft a modified curriculum for course in homoeopathy pharmacy and took steps to introduce the course. Unfortunately, the then CCH opposed such a move and therefore, the initiative was shelved.

Various institutions are conducting Diploma, Degree and PG courses in Ayurveda pharmacy even without a regulatory council. Recently one institution in Delhi has started a Diploma course in homeopathic pharmacy under affiliation of the Delhi Board of Homeopathic Medicine.

Subsequently, the Dept of ISM& H was upgraded in 2014 to Ministry of AYUSH. The IMC Act, the HCC Act and IMCC Act got amended. It is, now the appropriate time to revive the pending ISM& H Pharmacy Bill.

There are about 3 lakh institutionally qualified practitioners, nearly 250 teaching institutions, approximately 12000 public funded dispensaries, and about 350 manufacturing units in the country. Apart from these, there is large number of sale outlets. The inventory of homeopathic medicine is too large. The classical medicine alone is about 4000. There are three scales of preparation namely, decimal, centesimal and LM potencies. Due to peculiar nature of preparation, the finished products cannot be tested for quality. The preparation and dispensing need to be done with utmost care and caution. Not only the manufacturing pharmacists, but the regulators and Drug Inspectors need to be fully conversant and competent to understand the peculiarities of homeopathic medicine preparations to enforce regulations. Qualified pharmacists shall also undertake innovation through research and facilitate upgrading the techniques through improved technologies. Thus, there is an urgent need to introduce pharmacy education in Homoeopathy. Pending the passage of ISM& H Pharmacy Bill, the Ministry of AYUSH may allow at least one Homeopathic Medical college in each state to start Diploma/ Degree courses in homeopathic pharmacy. An interim body may be constituted directly under the Ministry for better co-ordination and speedy implementation of the regulation of pharmacy education through an executive order. This will enhance the skill of the pharmacists, enhance the credibility of quality of the medicine and fill the gap in the sector.

Dr. Eswara Das
Chief Editor