

Homeopathy and Patient Perspectives: Exploring Beliefs and Healthcare Choices

Choi Yu-Ri

Westmoor University, United Kingdom

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Abstract

Patient beliefs, values, previous experiences, trust, cultural influences, and perceptions of treatment can shape healthcare choices, including the decision to use complementary practices such as homeopathy. This paper explores patient perspectives on homeopathy and examines how beliefs influence healthcare decisions, treatment preferences, communication with healthcare professionals, and attitudes toward integration with conventional medicine. Qualitative research has reported that some homeopathy users associate health with mind-body balance and describe dissatisfaction with conventional treatment, family influence, perceived benefits, holistic care, and affordability as reasons for seeking or continuing homeopathic care. [cite]turn0search6[A large survey of 1,352 patients attending government homeopathic hospitals in West Bengal found that 88.6% favored integration of homeopathy into conventional healthcare settings, while knowledge concerning safety and interactions was comparatively limited. [cite]turn0search2[A later Indian study across conventional healthcare settings found that 82.4% of 659 respondents favored integration, while also identifying uncertainty about side effects and concurrent use with conventional medicines. [cite]turn0search9[At the same time, contemporary evidence assessments report little reliable evidence that homeopathy is effective for specific health conditions, and some products labeled homeopathic may contain active ingredients capable of causing adverse effects or interactions. [cite]turn0search0[The paper argues that understanding patient perspectives is important, but informed healthcare choices require respectful communication, evidence awareness, safety considerations, and avoidance of replacing effective medical care with unproven alternatives.

Keywords

Homeopathy; Patient Perspectives; Healthcare Choices; Health Beliefs; Complementary Medicine; Patient Preferences; Integrative Healthcare; Health Literacy; Shared Decision-Making

Introduction

Healthcare decisions are influenced by more than clinical evidence alone. Patients interpret illness through personal experiences, cultural values, family traditions, trust, expectations, cost, accessibility, and previous interactions with healthcare providers.

Complementary and alternative practices can become part of these decision-making processes.

Homeopathy is a medical system developed in Germany more than 200 years ago and is characterized by individualized treatment and highly diluted preparations. NCCIH notes that there is little evidence supporting homeopathy as an effective treatment for any specific health condition, while some products labeled homeopathic may contain substantial active ingredients. [cite]turn0search0

Despite scientific controversy, patients continue to use homeopathy in different countries. A qualitative study of long-term users in Brazil found that dissatisfaction with conventional treatment, family influence, perceived therapeutic results, holistic perspectives, preventive beliefs, and low cost were among reasons associated with seeking or continuing homeopathic treatment. [cite]turn0search6

Indian patient research provides further insight into healthcare preferences. Among 1,352 patients attending government homeopathic hospitals in West Bengal, 88.6% expressed a favorable attitude toward integration with conventional healthcare. [cite]turn0search2
Another survey of 659 patients in conventional healthcare settings across four Indian cities found that 82.4% favored integration, despite uncertainty about safety and interactions. [cite]turn0search9

This paper examines nine dimensions of homeopathy and patient perspectives: beliefs, motivations, personal experience, trust, family and social influence, integration preferences, health literacy, shared decision-making, and safety.

1. Beliefs and Perceptions of Health

Patients develop personal explanations of health and illness through cultural experience, family knowledge, education, religion, social networks, and previous healthcare encounters. These explanations can influence whether a person accepts conventional medicine, complementary medicine, or a combination of approaches. A qualitative study of homeopathy users in Brazil found that participants commonly described health in terms of balance between body and mind. Their beliefs were closely connected with their understanding of homeopathic principles and their relationship with practitioners. [cite]turn0search6 Understanding these beliefs can help healthcare professionals communicate more effectively without dismissing patients' perspectives.

2. Reasons Patients Choose Homeopathy

Patients may choose homeopathy for multiple reasons rather than a single belief in its effectiveness. These can include perceived previous benefit, interest in holistic care, dissatisfaction with conventional treatment, family recommendations, accessibility, cost, or a preference for individualized consultation. Qualitative evidence from Brazil identified dissatisfaction with conventional treatment, family influence, perceived therapeutic outcomes, holistic care, preventive expectations, and lower medicine costs among reported reasons for homeopathy use. [cite]turn0search6

These factors demonstrate that healthcare choice is often shaped by social and experiential considerations as well as scientific information.

3. Patient Experience and Perceived Effectiveness

Personal experience can strongly influence healthcare choices. Patients may interpret improvement following treatment as evidence that the treatment was effective, even when other explanations such as natural recovery, placebo effects, concurrent treatments, or changes in behaviour may also contribute. A systematic review examining how homeopathy might be understood in relation to placebo effects noted that users report benefits but that clear evidence of efficacy over placebo has not been established.

□cite□turn0search1□ Respecting patient experience does not require treating subjective improvement as definitive evidence of clinical efficacy.

4. Trust and the Practitioner-Patient Relationship

Trust is an important element of healthcare. Homeopathic consultations may involve detailed discussions of symptoms, lifestyle, personal history, and individual concerns. Some patients may value the time and attention provided during these consultations. Research has described a strong bond between some homeopathy users and practitioners, with this relationship contributing to the way patients understand treatment and continue care. □cite□turn0search6□ Similar communication principles can strengthen conventional healthcare. Listening carefully and explaining evidence clearly can help patients make informed choices.

5. Family, Social Influence, and Cultural Context

Healthcare decisions are often socially influenced. Family members, friends, community networks, social media, cultural traditions, and previous generations can affect perceptions of homeopathy. The Brazilian qualitative study identified family influence and suggestions from others as reasons for seeking homeopathic treatment. □cite□turn0search6□ Social influence can provide emotional support but may also spread inaccurate health information. Contemporary health communication should therefore encourage patients to evaluate claims using reliable sources while respecting cultural contexts.

6. Preferences for Integrating Homeopathy with Conventional Care

Some patients prefer homeopathy to be available alongside conventional healthcare rather than as a replacement. This preference is particularly visible in Indian survey research. In the West Bengal study, 88.6% of 1,352 patients favored integration of homeopathy into conventional healthcare settings. □cite□turn0search2□ In a later survey involving 659 patients attending conventional healthcare facilities in Kolkata, Mumbai, Kottayam, and New Delhi, 82.4% supported integration. □cite□turn0search9□ These findings describe patient preferences, not evidence that integration improves clinical outcomes. Integration should therefore be considered alongside evidence, safety, regulation, and appropriate clinical boundaries.

7. Health Literacy and Awareness of Safety

Informed healthcare choices require knowledge about potential benefits, limitations, side effects, and interactions. Patient surveys suggest that knowledge concerning homeopathic safety and interactions can be incomplete. In the West Bengal study, 32.5% of participants believed homeopathic medicines might cause side effects, while only 13.3% believed they might interact with other medicines. [cite turn0search2] The later Indian study also reported uncertainty about side effects and concurrent use. [cite turn0search9] NCCIH notes that some products labeled homeopathic may contain substantial active ingredients and could cause side effects or drug interactions. [cite turn0search0]

8. Shared Decision-Making and Healthcare Communication

Shared decision-making involves communication between patients and healthcare professionals about options, preferences, evidence, benefits, risks, and uncertainty. Complementary medicine use should be included in these conversations. Patients should feel able to disclose homeopathy use without fear of judgment. Healthcare professionals can then identify possible interactions, clarify evidence limitations, and ensure that necessary conventional care is not delayed. A respectful approach can maintain patient autonomy while supporting safer and more evidence-informed healthcare choices.

9. Beliefs, Evidence, and Responsible Healthcare Choices

Contemporary patient-centred healthcare must recognize that beliefs and preferences matter while distinguishing them from scientific evidence. NCCIH reports little evidence supporting homeopathy as an effective treatment for specific health conditions and advises against replacing proven conventional care with homeopathy. [cite turn0search0] A 2025 study of homeopathy users found distinct groups in their beliefs about whether homeopathy should be used alone or alongside conventional treatment for serious diseases. Approximately 9% supported standalone use for serious conditions, while other groups favored supplementary or more cautious approaches. [cite turn0search12] The responsible approach is to respect patient autonomy, communicate uncertainty clearly, evaluate product safety, and ensure that evidence-based diagnosis and treatment remain available.

Illustration

The following illustration presents healthcare choice as the interaction of patient beliefs and values, personal experience, trust and communication, and evidence and safety.

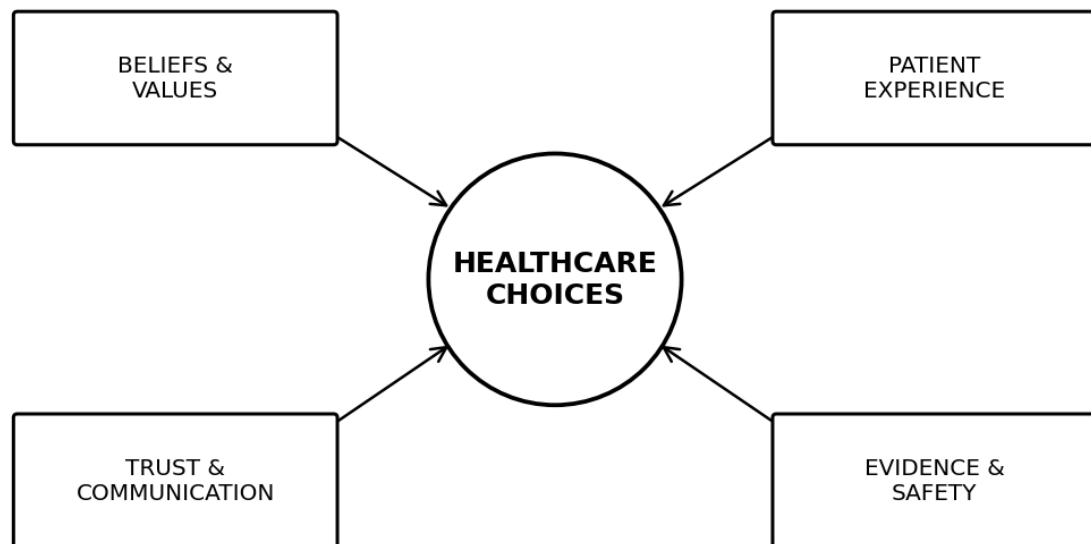
HOMEOPATHY, PATIENT PERSPECTIVES AND HEALTHCARE CHOICES

Figure 1. Homeopathy, patient perspectives and healthcare choices.

Conclusion

Patient perspectives are an important part of understanding why homeopathy remains present in contemporary healthcare. Beliefs about health, personal experiences, family influence, practitioner relationships, affordability, and expectations can all shape decisions to use homeopathy.

Research from India demonstrates substantial patient interest in integrating homeopathy with conventional healthcare, while also identifying gaps in knowledge concerning safety and medicine interactions. [cite]turn0search2[turn0search9[Qualitative research further shows that users may value holistic care, perceived benefits, and strong practitioner relationships. [cite]turn0search6[

At the same time, patient preference should not be confused with proof of clinical effectiveness. Current evidence assessments report little reliable evidence for homeopathy as an effective treatment for specific conditions. [cite]turn0search0[Responsible healthcare choices therefore require respectful communication, accurate information, attention to safety, and continued access to proven medical care.

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