TRIBES HEALTH STATUS: A CASE STUDY IN CHAMARAJANAGAR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The widespread poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, absence of safe drinking water and sanitary living conditions, poor maternal and child health services and ineffective coverage of National Health and Nutritional Services have been traced out in several studies as possible contributing factors to dismal health conditions prevailing among the tribal population in India. In this article, the author focuses on certain interacting factors like the infant mortality rate, life expectancy, genetic disorders, sexually transmitted diseases, nutritional status, forest ecology, child health and health care practices which are generally responsible for determining the health status and health behaviour of tribal communities.

KEYWORDS

This Study has been conducted on Tribes Health Status.


INTRODUCTION

Health is the major pathway to human development, which is the cornerstone for a healthy, wealthy and prosperous life. Health is also a well-reflected and self-evident in the proverbial saying Health is Wealth. There is no magical mechanism, which can bring good health overnight. It is a gradual process, which takes time and hinges on many things. As a multifaceted aspects health has been defined by WHO as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The health of an individual or of a community is concerned not only with physical and mental status, but also with social and economic relationship. What is considered as being healthy in one society might not be considered as healthy in another society. What kind of disease an individual acquires and what kind of treatment he receives depend largely upon social factors. The common trust, customs and practices connected with health and disease have found to be intimately related with the treatment of disease. In order to bring holistic development of a society, the cultural dimension of the health of a community should be given importance.

The health problems of rural, especially of the tribes need special attention because the tribal people have distinctive health problem, which are mainly governed by their traditional beliefs, practices and ecological conditions. Rural people in India and tribal populations in particular have their own beliefs and practices regarding health. Some tribal groups still believe that a disease is always caused by hostile spirits or by the breach of some taboo. They therefore seek remedies through magic and religious practices.

However, the socioeconomic, cultural and political onslaughts, arising partly from the erratic exploitation of human and material resources have endangered the naturally healthy environment. The basic nature of rural health problems is attributed also to lack of health literature and health consciousness, poor maternal and child health services and occupational hazards.

In tribal societies, the system of cure is not only based on magic-religious means, but also on treatment with different herbs and plants. Tribal societies have developed their own medicine system and some rudimentary knowledge based on medical techniques including the diagnosis of the disease at individual level. Both these techniques, i.e. magic-religious and herbal medicine are used to cure the sick either together or separately. People have knowledge about the plants in their surroundings and also attribute cultural beliefs and practices to the plants.

Health and Illness

Health is a common term in most of the cultures, in fact all communities have their own concepts of health and illness as part of their culture. Based on their earlier experiences with illness, various training on symptoms, different people of different societies has different conception of health. What is considering as being healthy in one society might not be considered so healthy in another.

Health and illness are two antagonistic concepts; one is defined as the absence of other. Similarly, health and illness are two poles of a continuum. An individual can be identified as ill when she/he lacks the condition, which is specified in the definition of health, but people giving first preference to local treatment. During the field visit it was found that most of the villagers are not accessing the modern health care system. Dependency on quack and local medicine man is very high.

Illness perception on the one hand and treatment choice on the other are interdependent. Thus, discourse on the native perception regarding illness is a necessity for understanding folk therapeutic behaviour. Based on their earlier experiences with illness, different people of different societies have different conception of health and illness. What is considered as being healthy in one society might not be considered healthy in another society.

Etiology

From time immemorial, human diseases and illnesses are said to have originated out of discrepancies related to religious beliefs, magical mysteries and supernatural dogmas and that too having a variety of references in different cultural domain. Illnesses such as malaria have been conceptualized differently by different communities in traditional societies throughout the globe.
The perception about the causes of malaria varies not only among different cultures, but also among individuals depending on their socioeconomic background. From time immemorial human diseases are said to be originated due to discrepancies pertaining to religious beliefs, magic mysteries and superstitious dogmas that have a variety of refreshes in different culture domain. Hence, we need to understand the agenesis of their culture before looking into their diseases in respective healing ointments.

The villagers believed that the reasons of the diseases were from the surrounding environment, seasonal variations and black magic. People mostly preferred to go to treatment rather than medical practice. In village people mostly used herb product, local medicine and indigenous medical practices for medical treatment. Some villagers were unable to express the reason for different diseases and they do not know how to get treatment for a particular disease. Role of women in decision making for health seeking behaviour is less and most of them are not participating in family decision making. Even in some houses, they are not preferring for medical treatment for girls or ladies of that house.

Tribal culture flourishes in the specific ecological function. The natural environment plays an important role in the formation of tribal culture in different eco-setting. So the health seeking behaviour for diagnosis and treatment of various diseases is related to the cognizance of their environment. In most of the cases, the villagers were not able to say the cause of disease. Only some villagers are able to explain the right meaning of their diseases. According to cultural beliefs and view of the villagers and native health care specialists in the causes of illness are: Hereditary flow, Religious beliefs, Black magic, Man-made and Seasonal variations.

Seasonal Vary
Certain diseases are found to be caused due to fluctuation of temperature and flow of wind. Prickle is believed to be an epidemic, which occurs by the flow of wind and rise of temperature in rainy season. A disease may be attributed to one cause on one occasion and to another cause on other occasion. Due to deep forest and dam is the main cause for many diseases like malaria, jaundice, etc.

Health Seeking Behaviour
Indigenous people perhaps everywhere consider ritual remedies for diseases caused by supernatural agents and counter magic for those caused by witchcraft and sorcery practices. When patient suffers from certain chronic diseases like TB, stomach pain, high fever is believed to have caused for bad deeds in past life. Then, the patient suffering from those diseases goes for offering rituals. They offer some flowers, coconuts, fruits, etc, pray God and Goddesses to cure the patient.

When a patient suffers from high fever, in order to appease the village deity and ancestors they used sacrifices of hen/goat and also offered some feast to villagers. Sometimes they take something from the consume or tie it up. Their healing methods used to be influenced by certain factors like age, sex, source of earning, severity of diseases, etc.

The diseases caused by natural factors like environment, food and behaviour, the traditional herbal remedies are considered to be appropriate as it has been observed among many different communities. The medicine man diagnose diseases and provide some medicine. Sometime he takes his charges as monetary or some as kind. The tribals of this area practice both modern medicines and traditional practices for treatment of diseases. Now-a-days, they are willing to avail modern medical facilities due to non-available of traditional practices of medical care. They also have developed a faith on modern medicines and injections. The local quack also provides better health treatment, on which most of villagers depend.

Health Care and their Therapy
Since the beginning of the civilization, mankind has always been able to find some medicines in the nature around them to cure diseases. The early healing treatments were derived from the surrounding environment of the human, who were forest dwellers. They made use of plants, animals and other substances naturally available to them to treat illness. Complex health care system of the simple societies evolved based on deep observation of the nature and environment. The medical system in simple societies is structured on the lines of herbal and psychometric treatment. The healing practices include a touch of mysticism, supernatural and magic resulting in specific magic religious rites, etc.

CONCLUSION
The concept of health, illness, etiology and health seeking behaviour show the complexity of the tribals’ medical system. Their traditional medical system of late has come in dispute with the modern medical system. The villagers’ perception regarding sickness, illness and disease to a great extent is still traditional. The cause of illness and healing system are found to be associated with the magic-religious beliefs. Along with herbal treatment, magic-religious practices are still occupying a significant position in their indigenous methods of treatment. In the context of decision making process, head of the household play a dominant role.

Though, mother takes the decision in the absence of counter person, but the dominance of male in the case of health seeking is still prevailing. The analysis of the case studies and observations have shown the factor like age, sex, education of the patient, types of illness, severity of diseases, health care facility, beliefs regarding the cause of diseases and previous experiences effect selection of different ways of treatment. It is shown that lack of adequate modern health care facilities keep people away from modern medical care. Finally, it can be concluded that villager’s responses to illness behaviour is guided and conditioned by their culture.

Suggestions
- Proper communication facilities should be developed.
- Health centre should be established near to their village.
- Proper health care facilities should be provided at local area.
- Health awareness should be created in rural area.
- Proper health education should be given to the villagers.
- Government should extend support to local herbal medicine practitioners.
- Government should provide health training to local quack.
- Panchayat should take care of the local environment to avoid the spread of mosquitoes.
A mobile health unit should be introduced to take care of villager’s need.

REFERENCES