



Characteristics of physicians graduated from the stricto sensu graduate course in Homeopathy

Características de médicos egressos de curso de pós-graduação stricto sensu em Homeopatia

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ABSTRACT | INTRODUCTION: The incorporation of complementary medical practices with health services acts as an adjuvant, expanding the efficacy and effectiveness of the medical act in several areas of activity and specialties. The homeopathic method offers the possibility of using medication based on the totality of the symptoms of the case. In potentiated and diminished doses, these medicines are able to radically and permanently remove all the morbid symptoms of the disease, transforming it into health. **OBJECTIVE:** To describe the characteristics of the population and learn about the main reasons for choosing the course by physicians who graduated from the Specialization Course in Homeopathy in the state of Bahia. **METHOD:** This is an exploratory and descriptive study with a qualitative approach. Telepresence interviews were conducted with participating physicians, whose data were treated according to Bardin's thematic analysis technique. **RESULTS:** The results showed that egress physicians were aged 49.3 years on average, female, with up to 29 years of graduation, and Spiritism religion. The main reasons for choosing the course were personal experience, additional training, restlessness, and the limitation of allopathy. Changes in medical anamnesis were identified with the use of the Laws of Cure and Biopathography. **CONCLUSION:** The need for a lifestyle change and self-criticism to know how to deal with prejudices inherent to the specialty was affirmed. There are few homeopathy teaching courses in Brazil, and a complete doctor's training, which includes homeopathic training in integrative practices, can mean more complete and more humanized medical care, with less suffering for the patient.

KEYWORDS: Homeopathy. Physicians. Course. Teaching.

RESUMO | INTRODUÇÃO: A incorporação das práticas médicas complementares junto aos serviços de saúde atua de forma adjuvante, ampliando a efetividade e eficácia do ato médico nas diversas áreas de atuação e especialidades. O método homeopático oferece possibilidade de emprego de medicamento baseado na totalidade de sintomas do caso. Em doses potencializadas e diminuídas, estes medicamentos são capazes de remover radical e permanentemente todos os sintomas mórbidos da doença, transformando-a em saúde. **OBJETIVO:** Descrever as características da população e conhecer os principais motivos para a escolha do curso pelos médicos egressos de um Curso de Especialização em Homeopatia no Estado da Bahia. **MÉTODO:** Trata-se de um estudo com abordagem qualitativa, tipo exploratório e descritivo. Foram realizadas entrevistas telepresenciais com médicos participantes, cujos dados foram tratados segundo a técnica de análise temática de Bardin. **RESULTADOS:** Os resultados demonstraram médicos egressos com 49,3 anos, em média, sexo feminino, com até 29 anos de formado e religião Espírita. Os principais motivos para a escolha do curso foram experiência pessoal, formação complementar, inquietude e limitações da alopatia. Foram identificadas mudanças na anamnese médica com a utilização das Leis de Cura e Biopatográfico. **CONCLUSÃO:** Afirmou-se a necessidade de mudança de estilo de vida e autocrítica para saber lidar com preconceitos inerentes à especialidade. Existem poucos cursos de ensino da homeopatia no Brasil, e a formação completa do médico, o que inclui a formação homeopática em práticas integrativas, pode significar um atendimento médico mais completo e também mais humanizado, com menor sofrimento ao doente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Homeopatia. Médicos. Curso. Ensino.

Submitted 11/13/2022, Accepted 02/07/2023, Published 04/18/2023

Inter. J. Educ. Health, Salvador, 2023;7:e4915

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17267/2594-7907ijeh.2023.e4915>

ISSN: 2594-7907

Assigned editor: Iêda Aleluia

How to cite this article: Machado MSC, Oliveira MC, Silva MG.

Characteristics of physicians graduated from the stricto sensu graduate course in Homeopathy. Inter J Educ Health. 2023;7:e4915.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17267/2594-7907ijeh.2023.e4915>



Introduction

The physician has a mission to cure, according to Hahnemann, the creator of the homeopathic method. For him, the healing process involves the rapid, smooth, and lasting restoration of health, following true and understandable principles.¹ For this, the physician must act as an observer without prejudice. In order to cure a disease and transform it into health, the physician needs to observe the accessory circumstances that go beyond the symptoms.² It is believed that the harmony between the life force and the material organism presumes the state of complete health that is available to meet the highest ends of human existence. The moment a human being gets sick, his vital force suffers influences hostile to life that prevent him from performing his basic functions in a harmonious way. This is called disease.¹

Considering that the human being is the victim of his illness, the physician must consider the whole nature that surrounds the individual, the reaction to universal laws, and also individuality because each person has a reaction. The causes of illness must be sought not only in the diseased organ or organism but also in the most essential of the human being: the soul. The choice of remedy must be made considering the totality of symptoms and the modalities that accompany them in each individual. Medications act as remedies when they produce peculiar symptoms in this being, demonstrating their healing power. These remedies must be capable of exterminating the disease by producing an artificial morbid effect and removing signs and symptoms already present that one wishes to cure.^{3,4}

The homeopathic method offers the possibility of using medication based on the totality of the symptoms of the case. In potentiated and decreased doses, this medicine is able to radically and permanently remove all the morbid symptoms of the disease, turning it into health. The cure happens by similar medicine, which is the great basis of homeopathic treatment.⁴ The natural law of healing is a well-established fact based on every pure experience. Each disease is based on a dynamic and morbid alteration of the vital force and manifests itself through sensations and activities. The force majeure produced by medicines does not represent the unique condition to cure. It is necessary that they produce in the human body signs and symptoms as similar as the disease to be cured.

The essence of homeopathy includes permanent and certain healing based on the eternal law of nature.

For good professional practice, the physician must seek the ability to always listen to patients. Under the pretext of a sign or symptom, the patients seek the medical professional in search of a deepened human and professional relationship, of comfort to something that often does not even know how to explain that disturbs them.⁴ Thus, what must be cured is manifested as suffering and health-sensitive changes, that is, in the totality of symptoms. Medications can alter the state of health of the human being, producing peculiar morbid symptoms perceived in the clearest way when experienced in the healthy organism. In the homeopathic method, in which the totality of symptoms is considered, the medicine would be able to produce symptoms similar to those of the disease to be cured, acting on the vital force in a stronger way, perfectly, and permanently overcoming the dynamic disturbing irritations in the healing process.¹

The homeopathic physician must also observe the spontaneous demonstrations of physical, psychological, and emotional susceptibilities so that, together with the patient, he can seek the correct and individualized medicine.⁴ For many homeopathic physicians, the fact of being able to experience the physician-patient relationship and being able to share the subjective components related to human suffering is considered more pleasurable and rewarding than the practice of medicine itself.⁵

The use of integrative and complementary medical practices for the treatment of various diseases has increased in recent decades. In Brazil, although the Associação Médica Brasileira - AMB (Brazilian Medical Association) and the Conselho Federal de Medicina - CFM (Federal Council of Medicine) have recognized Homeopathy as a medical specialty since 1980 and 1995, its availability in the public and private health network is insufficient to the demand requested by the population, according to Teixeira.² The practice of medicine in Brazil is very dense and complex. The country's dependent economic development and social inequality contribute to an oligarchic policy that concentrates clientelistic power. The public policies instituted in Brazil faced impasses and contradictions over the years due to the socioeconomic and political changes that occurred in the country.⁶

Medical care has also undergone changes, both in private and public care, as well as in the sense of the specialization and technification of medicine. This whole context was accompanied by a process of dehumanization of medical practice, which resulted in the progressive loss of the true physician-patient relationship, especially in public health services.⁷

Faced with the variety of approaches to the ill patient and the disease, allopathic, enantiopathic, and homeopathic treatment, the physician in his training, most of the time, does not know in detail the approaches. The incorporation of complementary medical practices in the training of physicians and with health services would act in an adjuvant way, expanding the effectiveness and efficacy of the medical act in several areas of activity and specialties. There are few homeopathy teaching courses in Brazil, and the physician's complete training, which includes homeopathic and integrative practices training, can mean a more complete and also more humanized medical care and with less suffering for the patients.

Since its foundation, the Specialization Course in Homeopathy of the Escola Bahiana de Medicina e Saúde Pública - EBMS (Bahiana School of Medicine and Public Health) offers physicians the opportunity to knowledge and deepening in this medical specialty so important for humanity. As it is the only course with this profile in our state, it was considered important to identify the characteristics of the physicians who graduated from this course, the study population, including, in addition to sociodemographic aspects, subjective aspects, such as the reason for choosing the course, the practice of homeopathy in medical care, as well as to verify what has changed after the completion of the course and future prospects.

Therefore, the objectives were to describe the characteristics of the population and to know the main reasons for the choice of the course by physicians who graduated from the Homeopathy Specialization Course; also to identify the practice of homeopathy after medical training and the changes in anamnesis, perceptions and personal reflections on the subject.

Methodology

This is a study with an exploratory and descriptive qualitative approach, carried out at the Bahiana

School of Medicine in Salvador, Bahia, which provides assistance to the population and values quality and innovation in higher education.

As inclusion criteria, physicians who had completed the aforementioned specialization course were considered.

The data were obtained through interviews with physicians who graduated from the course, following a pre-determined script of questions arranged in two parts of the study instrument – Socio-demographic aspects, medical training, time since graduation, pre-formulated questions about the course, training in homeopathy, work in homeopathy, changes in care and personal reflections. The interviews were carried out by the same researcher, in telepresence format, through digital platforms, when the Informed Consent was read and accepted by the physicians included in the study from January to February 2021. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed *ipsis literis*.

For the treatment and analysis of the data obtained, the content analysis method theorized by Bardin⁷ was used. Among the modalities of this method, the thematic analysis was the one that best suited the objectives proposed in this study, considering that the theme, represented in the discourses by keywords or phrases are used as Registration Units (RU) to represent the motivations, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and trends. The analysis plan was organized according to the three stages composed of pre-analysis, material exploration, and treatment of results.⁷

Thus, in the first stage in which the pre-analysis of all the material obtained in the interviews took place, which was organized by composing the corpus of the research, a floating reading was carried out, taking into account the rules of exhaustiveness, representativeness, homogeneity, and pertinence, until the preparation of all the material. Also in this stage was the identification of the RUs – keywords and phrases – within the Context Units (CU) – which details the context in which the comprehension of the registration unit took place. In the second stage corresponding to the exploration of the material, a complete and detailed reading of all interviews conducted and transcribed *ipsis literis* was made. The exhaustive reading at this stage enabled the classifying operation; the RU obtained in the first stage were grouped according to the CU, which enabled the understanding of the meaning nuclei.

In the third stage, the treatment of the results took place through the synthesis and selection of the RU grouped in the second moment, which provided the categorization process itself, which consists of a classifying operation. This promotes the constitution of categories, considered classes that bring together groups of RU with a generic title, grouping them according to common characteristics.

This work was submitted and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Bahiana School of Medicine and Public Health - CAAE: 39463820.1.0000.5544, opinion number: 4.430.106. The secrecy of the participants was ensured through the concealment of their identities.

Results and discussion

The study population consisted of all physicians who graduated from the Homeopathy Course. The total number of graduate physicians was 17; one was excluded because did not finish the course, two physicians he did not respond to the researcher's contact made by e-mail and WhatsApp, and four did not accept the invitation to participate, and these were excluded from the work. The final population was 10 egressed physicians.

Regarding the sociodemographic characteristics of the physicians who graduated from the specialization course in homeopathy, there was a mean of 49 years, equally distributed between the two previous classes of the course, more than 10 years of medical training, and Spiritism religion reported by all physicians. This demonstrates that homeopathy would be a specialty that could complete the initial training of the graduate physician since a wide variety of medical training was reported in the study, such as Anesthesiology, Clinical Medicine, Cardiology, Gynecology and Obstetrics, Family and Community Health, Medicine Labor, Otorhinolaryngology and Pediatrics. The arrival of homeopathy in the Southern Cone occurred in the 1830s, initially intended for the treatment of slaves and those excluded from society, then passed through medical schools still very subtly because the professionals of the time were not physicians, according to historical sources.^{8,9} There is a current trend of strengthening the specialty with

the emergence of new specialization courses and medical residency programs in Brazil.^{9,10} Homeopathy has a long political and institutional history in Brazil, and today we have only fifteen Homeopathy Specialization courses and four Homeopathy Medical Residency Programs in Brazil, recognized by the Associação Médica Homeopática Brasileira - AMHB (Brazilian Homeopathic Medical Association).^{10,11}

When we began to evaluate the reason for pursuing the specialization course in Homeopathy, four physicians reported having a previous personal experience with the area, either by family, close friends, or by their own history. Another three physicians reported being in search of additional training, and another three showed concerns and identified limitations of allopathy as a reason for seeking the specialization course. The reports demonstrate that there was a close or personal experience or experimentation with homeopathy, which presented feasible results in a generalist view and aroused curiosity in learning either for personal use or for application in patients. The search for a more integrative, more natural medicine, more based on the subject, and on the symptomatic totality, represents a notorious reality nowadays and demonstrates the restlessness of many professionals in practicing a science focused on what the patients have to be cured, causing the least possible harm.⁵

Homeopathic Medicine, as a science of the Being as a whole, was progressively incorporated into health practices, including the Unified Health System. Its principles are based on the treatment of the subjects and not on the diseases. The pillars of the Homeopathic Doctrine, accurately described by Hahnemann, which today represent the basis of the understanding of homeopathy, were expressed in the reports of the graduated physicians when they seek the Medicine of the subject, of the symptomatic totality and the restlessness in the face of a scarce form of therapy.¹²

Unfortunately, in Brazil, we have a lack of Homeopathy teaching in medical schools, which was proven in the results of this research, in which all physicians who graduated from the course denied having had this content during medical school. Although the Homeopathic Method is millenary, it has not suffered

the advances of allopathy, and that's why the training courses are very important as they can contribute to the training of new homeopaths and strengthen the teaching of the specialty among physicians, benefiting more and more patients, reducing illness and the suffering of the world.

When physicians were asked to define homeopathy, responses were separated into four categories, according to the citations. Homeopathy has been described as healing; beneficial and integrative; broad and universal, and finally, as a perception of life, a state of consciousness. In the book *Organon of the Art of Healing*, Hahnemann states that "The highest and only mission of the physician is to restore health to the sick, which is what is called healing".¹ In homeopathy, the physician must be free of prejudice and have the sensitivity to perceive what is to be cured.¹ Homeopathy was cited as beneficial and integrative, with great action in the patient's psyche, which is a state of consciousness and perception of life that transcends the understanding of material phenomena, demonstrating the implementation of homeopathic concepts after the knowledge acquired in the specialization course. The breadth and universality of Homeopathy were also cited by graduate physicians. This definition expresses the contextualization of the subject's illness, the medicine focused on the individual as a whole. Finally, still in this topic, the graduate physicians defined the homeopathic physician as a perception of life, a state of consciousness, something they believe. Homeopathy must be individualized, and the physician must have the sensitivity to show what needs to be cured in each person.^{4,5}

Regarding the percentage of homeopathy consultations currently, after the specialization course, there was a variation between 10 and 99.9%. Two graduates do not attend homeopathy due to changes during the COVID-19 pandemic or due to the previous medical specialty that does not allow reconciling the doctrines, and one reported sporadic and punctual care, not related to work as a professor at the university. All graduated physicians, after learning and deepening the homeopathic science done in the course, reported applying this knowledge in some way in their medical care, whether in listening more attentively, valuing the context of the disease, or directing questions. Conventional medicine trains professionals to seek symptoms and

then make diagnostic suspicions of the pathology of the case. In homeopathic reasoning, the patient must be allowed to speak, seeking the context of the illness, in which the main focus of the anamnesis is not precise, but unexpected, modalized, and has no etiopathogenic explanation.¹³

Once we got to know Homeopathy, we asked the graduate physicians what changes occurred in their medical anamnesis after the course, and everyone, somehow, answered that there were changes. Almost all graduated physicians reported a different question and anamnesis. Changes were observed in the look, in listening to the patient, in the approach to mental symptoms, in the use of neutral language, avoiding direct questions. There were reports of a more comprehensive anamnesis, comprehensive history of individual and interpersonal subjectivity, and care with greater sensitivity giving greater attention to what is most particular in each patient. The homeopathic doctrine is based on the principles of individuality, on the look, on the differentiated hearing, so that the treatment already begins at that moment of the physician-patient relationship, and the cure is established in cases of absence of obstacles.¹ All graduate physicians, in some way, reported using the biopathographic aspect, but the laws of cure, for only one, it was not possible to apply due to the context of allopathic care restricted to the emergency.

After the Homeopathy specialization course and the deepening of the doctrine, there are possible personal reflections on the area. The homeopathic physicians who graduated from the course reported discouragement, frustration, and sadness, mainly because they perceived some kind of prejudice on the part of medical colleagues who were unaware of the doctrine. Others, consider homeopathy a pseudoscience, and still others for not being able to bring homeopathy to the entire population. People's ignorance, limitation, and backwardness were also reported as categories of personal reflections. There would be baseless criticism where people speak ill of what they do not know, ignorance even, as it was reported.

Nowadays, we observe that homeopathy is still seen as a complementary or integrative practice and that, in the common sense of physicians, it is intended for some sectors of the clinic where

there are no other resources for treatment or for “minor disorders” such as diseases of origin neurovegetative or psychosomatic. When it comes to Evidence-Based Medicine, homeopathy is also not recognized as an experimental clinical practice that allows reproducibility. Given the above, due to the various phases in the construction of its knowledge, the Medicine of the Subject can represent a way of interpreting and understanding the theory and practice of Homeopathy.¹²

The reflective feeling of revolt and contempt was mentioned by two of the graduate physicians, and two others stated that homeopathy would represent a change in lifestyle and philosophy and that not everyone would be ready to receive “this call”. There is a lot of work ahead, which certainly needs the process of self-criticism, lifestyle change, mobilization, and dialogue, as physicians who graduated from the course mentioned, to reduce prejudice, increase knowledge about the homeopathic practice and help more people to be better individuals. Two of the graduate physicians mentioned perspectives for the future on how to treat patients in the best possible way, demonstrating that the physician with training in Homeopathy also has a great mission to unite and multiply the doctrine. Finally, concluding this topic with a reflection on Homeopathy, of one of the graduates of the course, which sums it up well when he mentions:

Homeopathy is a branch of medical knowledge of the most complete, real, and comprehensive that, due to a predominant cultural, philosophical, and state of consciousness limitation in society, tends to narrow the possibilities of propaedeutic and therapeutic understanding, but the road of Evolution does not admit retreats, the natural tendency is that we start to embrace complementary forms of understanding, establishing bridges of knowledge [...] (E6)

To conclude the interview, as all the graduate physicians stated that they promote and indicate the completion of the Homeopathy Specialization Course at EBMS, they were asked what their feelings were during and after the course. The separate categories were positive in all cases, with reports of positive feelings such as well-being and happiness. In addition, the course was characterized as useful for self-knowledge, with benefits for personal growth.

Still, another report puts the experience as rewarding and pleasurable. One of the graduates signaled the efforts and the need to give up work situations to stay on course, and another reported feeling sad about the possibility of seeing people as they really are. Reports show that when you seek something you really want to achieve personal satisfaction, some kind of sacrifice will be required. Despite the efforts of some – job changes, shifts, and routine – the sacrifice was worth it because after the course “there was a feeling of nostalgia and the awareness that learning continues forever” as reported. Homeopathy is a philosophy of life.

Conclusion

The profile of graduate physicians from the Specialization Course in Homeopathy was female (80%), with a mean age of 49.3 years, with up to 29 years of training (70%), and Spiritism religion. The medical training prior to Homeopathy was quite varied, half of the graduates were part of the first group of the course, and 60% had the Title of Specialist in Homeopathy, obtained through the completion of the title test after completing the specialization course.

Personal experience, complementary training, restlessness, and limitations of allopathy represented the main reasons for choosing the Specialization Course in Homeopathy. Regarding the medical practice of homeopathy after the course, a percentage ranging from 10 to 99.9% was observed, two graduates did not attend homeopathy, and one reported sporadic and occasional attendance. Changes were identified in the medical anamnesis in 90% of the graduates of the course with the use of the Laws of Cure and Biopathography. Only one egress, despite recognizing homeopathic symptoms, did not modify the anamnesis after the course. The reflections that involve the homeopathy of the graduate physicians refer to sadness, discouragement, and frustration related to the philosophical ignorance of a part of the physicians. The need for a lifestyle change and self-criticism to know how to deal with prejudices inherent to the specialty was affirmed.

E6 - graduated doctor 6.

Authors' contributions

Machado MSC worked on writing, seeking ethical approval, conducting interviews, analyzing and interpreting data, and revising the work. Silva MG critically reviewed the work and offered important intellectual and methodological content. Oliveira MC guided the writing of the work, contributed to the search for ethical approval, and revised the work. All authors approved the final version to be published.

Conflict of interest

No financial, legal, or political conflicts involving third parties (government, companies, and private foundations, etc.) have been declared for any aspect of submitted work (including, but not limited to, grants and funding, advisory board participation, study design, preparation manuscript, statistical analysis, etc.).

Indexers

The International Journal of Education and Health is indexed by [DOAJ](#) and [EBSCO](#).



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