

Jadana

- wholesome care -

DHULIKHEL HOSPITAL AND TRADITIONAL HEALERS

Connecting indigenous medical knowledge
with western medicine



Marlouk van Gooswilligen en Myra Pieters-Engelkes

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The best of both worlds

'Sophisticated knowledge of the natural world is not confined to science. Human societies across the globe have developed rich sets of experiences and explanations relating to the environments they live in. These 'other knowledge systems' are today often referred to as traditional ecological knowledge or indigenous or local knowledge. They encompass the sophisticated arrays of information, understandings and interpretations that guide human societies around the globe in their innumerable interactions with the natural milieu: in agriculture and animal husbandry; hunting, fishing and gathering; struggles against disease and injury; naming and explanation of natural phenomena; and strategies to cope with fluctuating environments.

Nakashima, D., Prott, L. and Bridgewater *UNESCO Sources*, 125, July-August, p. 12

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Dhulikhel Hospital

Dhulikhel Hospital is an independent, not for profit, non-government institution which was conceived and supported by the Dhulikhel community, as a quality health services provider. The hospital was inaugurated by the late king HM Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev in 1996, as a collaborative project of the Municipality of Dhulikhel, NepaliMed International and Dhulikhel Health Service Association.

The Hospital is guided by the principles of social equity, sustainable development and harmony with nature. Through its trained staff, it provides cost effective, compassionate and quality health care services. The hospital believes in the fact that quality health services need not always be an expensive commodity and limited only to those who are rich enough to afford it.

Dhulikhel Hospital is located in Dhulikhel. It is situated 1650 meters above sea level and 30 Km Northeast of Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal.

The hospital covers the population of approximately 1.9 million people from Kavrepalanchowk, Sindhu-palchowk, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Ramechhap, Bhaktapur and other surrounding districts. Nevertheless, Dhulikhel Hospital has already provided services to people from more than 50 out of 75 districts of the country. Dhulikhel hospital is also the university hospital for all the medical programs run under the collaboration with Kathmandu University.



Nepal

Nepal, officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, is located in the Himalayas between India and China. The southern part of Nepal is on the Indian subcontinent.

Capital: Kathmandu

Currency: Nepalese Rupee

Population: 28.51 million (2015) World Bank

Prime Minister: Sher Bahadur Deuba

Official language: Nepali

1. Introduction

Dhulikhel Hospital requested to develop a training for the Traditional Healers who are working in the communities in the rural areas near the hospital outreaches. There is a decrease of patients coming to the outposts and it threatens the outposts in their existence.

With training facilities for the traditional healers in the community Dhulikhel Hospital hopes to stimulate the influx of patients to the hospital. Currently many patients in the rural areas prefer to consult their local healers and don't feel familiar enough with the hospital culture and the western health care system and only seek this medical help when their traditional healer gives them permission to do so. By then their medical condition has often worsened and sometimes there is little left that can be done to treat them. The training is meant to introduce Western medicine to the traditional healers with the aim to enhance their knowledge of Western medicine and to promote their discernment as to when to refer a patient to the regular medical care in the hospital.

The other request formulated by Dhulikhel hospital is, to develop and implement a training to the medical students at Dhulikhel hospital that focuses on reintroducing values as compassion and patient-centered care. In a way that the future doctors will learn to be more aware of their own traditional Nepali values and how they can integrate it into their working field. It is about heart to heart contact and integrating the human aspect in relation to their patients. The course will be integrated in the curriculum of medical training.

2. How it all began

In February 2017 Marlouk van Gooswilligen went to Nepal for three weeks to spend some time in Dhulikhel Hospital where a health care system with holistic principles is being combined with mainstream medicine. She was also very interested in the Hospital Outreaches of Dhulikhel Hospital and the Traditional Healers of the people in the communities in the rural area and wanted to get the chance to meet and observe their indigenous medical knowledge.

To be part of the hospital and the outreaches for a while, has given her the opportunity to observe to what extent the traditional health care system is integrated in the hospital culture and how the traditional people of Nepal experience it. She investigated how it is being translated into practical terms. How is the relationship between the doctor and his patient? What kind of role does the family play during the period a patient suffers from an illness? How has the medical staff integrated their personal identity with the Nepali culture as background in their profession and in what way does this traditional and religious culture influence the healthcare system of Dhulikhel Hospital?

She organized several active meetings with the students of medical training and had interviews with the medical staff.

Marlouk van Gooswilligen is a pedagogue and a therapist and works as an energetic healer. In her work she has experience in working with people to reconnect them with their inner values of life. She is interested in the enrichment of the different traditional cultures in the world and her mission is helping to preserve the diversity of different cultures and connect them with one another.

Soon after her return in Holland she shared her findings with Myra Pieters-Engelkes who is a colleague and a friend, and she was very interested in participating in this project. They decided to

establish a foundation together that could do research into finding ways to build a bridge between the traditional indigenous medical knowledge and the existing Western oriented medical health care.

Myra Pieters-Engelkes is a licensed psychotherapist and a healer. For the past 17 years she has been working in her private practice where she combines traditional psychotherapy with Eastern oriented development of consciousness. Working in the field of human interest in the broadest sense of the word has her interest. 'Being a midwife to whatever wants to come to life' is often how she experiences her work.

In July 2017 Jadana Wholesome Care was founded. A foundation that holds as her mission:

'Wholesome care at all levels by expanding horizons on the basis of shared humanity and mutual respect.'

3. A brief Summary of meetings with medical students February 2017

In the interactive meetings we discussed the following topics:

- The traditional medicine of the Healers in the communities and the need of the people of the communities;
- The traditional medicine and the different aspects, personal insights and believe systems;
- The traditional culture of Nepal and the way they have integrated this into their working field;
- Passion and motivation about the medical profession
- Personal perspective on health care in the future;
- The western influence on the healthcare system in the hospital;
- The development of healthcare worldwide.

During the interactive meetings the aim was to obtain a clear vision on how the students and the medical staff find their way in the health care system that is described in the hospital curriculum of Dhulikhel Hospital. In what way is this complementary vision recognizable and is it reflected back in the workfield. Marlouk created a circle of trust where the medical staff shared their personal experiences and believes personally and professionally. Sharing and listening with compassion has created an incredibly clear insight into the intrinsic motivation of the people who are working in this health care system. Open sharing about why they have become a doctor in the first place and how this relates to the current situation. Topics like the values of human connection in the relationship with their patients during the treatment and in what way this is visible in daily practice.

It was obvious that a group of students has chosen for this profession because it created a better perspective in life in terms of individual development and working ambition. It was clear that the western culture was already starting to influence the way of thinking of these young ambitious and intelligent students. Also there was a big group of students that made the choice for this profession rooted in their own highly valued culture: taking good care of the people in Nepal and giving them

the opportunity to get proper treatment when they are ill. Here their personal purpose was to bring the health care in Nepal to a higher level.

It was incredibly valuable to experience that most of the young people were still deeply connected to the values of their own Nepali culture. During the exchange the students were touched by hearing each other's stories and it inspired them to integrate it more into their workfield. A lot of students and doctors feel very compassionate about the suffering of their patients. Consciously and unconsciously they feel the need for connection from heart to heart in the relationship with their patients and are aware of the value of the presence of the family during the healing process.

At the end of all meetings, a clear desire was noticeable in the students to highlight this topic during their medical training. The students felt inspired and involved and felt the value of integrating and retaining this topic in their field. It made them feel much more aware of the real meaning of their profession and how to take care of their patients.

Something that also had a great impact on the students was confronting them with the need to create a new healthcare system in the hospitals worldwide and to emphasize the consequences of the one-sided focus of mainstream medicine. The important role of the traditional Nepali culture and the indigenous medical knowledge of the Traditional Healers cannot be highlighted enough. The necessity of preservation was an important topic during the meetings. Educating the students in this way will enhance their awareness and will make them feel much more responsibility for contributing to their own culture and integrate it in their profession.

4. Background

The hospital culture of Dhulikhel Hospital

Originally Dhulikhel Hospital had a health care system where a complementary vision was integrated in the hospital culture: Western medicine and a holistic approach working together.

The holistic approach treats the patient as a whole person on different levels: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritual. A human being is seen as a multi-dimensional creature and illness as a disturbance of the balance between these different levels. Western medicine has a more technical view on illness with an emphasis on the physical body and has become increasingly leading in Dhulikhel Hospital over the past years.

The hospital has received a lot of support from hospitals all over the world where western medicine is the domineering system. Therefore, it has been possible for the hospital to develop a high quality health care system which complies with all western standards. The hospital culture of Dhulikhel however has lost touch with the holistic vision in their health care system. The medical training of students no longer gives priority to aspects of the holistic vision that used to be part of the vision in the hospital. All this is of major influence on the number of patients visiting the hospital, especially at the hospital outreaches, since patients don't feel comfortable with this Western oriented approach.

The Hospital Outreaches in the rural areas

Dhulikhel Hospital has twenty-one Hospital Outreaches in the communities of the rural areas. The Outreaches have been developed by Dhulikhel Hospital with the aim to develop better care for the traditional people in the communities in the rural areas in Nepal and to develop a multifunctional place for the community by means of microfinance projects and the development of agriculture.

Looking at the development of the Hospital Outreaches it's evident that the flow of patients visiting the Outreaches remains below expectation. It is a serious threat to the survival of the Outreaches. The people of the communities feel unfamiliar with the hospital system and the domination of Western medicine. They sometimes feel underestimated by the medical staff in their traditional way of living and the medical staff in the Outreaches is struggling to bridge this gap. Research into this area will be needed to support the existing policy that is still in its infancy to create a hospital where the people can feel safe and secure.

Research shows that 80% of the people in Nepal and especially in the rural areas depend on traditional medicine. Indigenous healing practices existing in various communities, ethnic groups that have been transferring their knowledge from generation to generation have been playing a major role. The community people will visit the Hospital Outreach only when they are referred by their healers. (Dr Rishi Ram Koirala, MD (ayu.) Sept. 2007)

The Indigenous Medical Knowledge is unique to the traditional culture of the community people in Nepal. Another name for it is Traditional Science. It has formed the basis for agriculture, food preparation, health care, education, conservation and a wide range of other activities to sustain the communities in the rural areas in Nepal. The Healers of the community are being highly respected by the community people and this keeps the community alive.

Nepali culture and its traditional Healers

Even though the trust of the community people in their healers is strong, this traditional science is threatened in its survival. The Western influence that is slowly entering Nepal, changes the way of living of the Nepali people in the cities and also of the people in the communities in the rural areas. Preserving their culture and their traditional way of living has no priority for the younger generation. They are more interested in a modern western life. Especially in the rural areas the community population consists mainly of elderly people and young women with children. The young men are leaving the communities to find jobs in the cities and they hope for a better life far away from their communities. Preservation of the traditional culture and their indigenous medical knowledge is of great importance for Nepal. It will maintain and sustain the Nepali culture and their traditional science and will create independency and self-sufficiency in the communities in the rural areas. It will increase the attraction for the young people to come back to their communities. Therefore it is important to make the Nepali people aware of the need to sustain and maintain their traditional culture.

5. Challenge

Developing a bridge between these different cultures and their different medical systems, can create an extremely powerful complementary healthcare system that will fulfill the needs of the people in Nepal and the medical staff of the hospitals. Equality, authenticity and compassion will be important values during the process of cooperation in the project and will strengthen their collective knowledge.

Mutual understanding and respect will characterize the collaborative efforts of traditional healers and medical staff to relieve the emotional and physical suffering of illness, there have been advances in

knowledge and greater satisfaction with treatment. (2009, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd) Recognition of the indigenous medical knowledge of the Traditional Healers by the medical staff in the Hospital Outreaches will lead to an increase of number of patients visiting the hospital. Educating the medical staff and students, especially the GP's is necessary to succeed. It will enhance the respect for the local culture, its wisdom and its ethics and will provide ways of teaching and learning locally relevant knowledge and skills.

An atmosphere of understanding, trust and respect should be created between modern health workers, traditional healers and the communities they serve.

Traditional practitioners were available and willing to work in primary care when trained, and established good working relationships with other health staff. Many projects indicate that there was an increase in trust and respect between nursing staff and traditional practitioners, and that working relationships between the two groups improved.

One of the recommendations related to the promotion of incorporating traditional healers into primary care teams is: government ministries and departments of health should take the lead in formulating policies and acting to promote the training and use of healers in primary care. They should ensure that TH's are incorporated as fully and effectively as possible into health care systems that meet the needs of communities. Activities such as informal meetings, seminars and workshops should be planned and key people representing the modern and traditional sectors should come together to express their views, establish common goals and develop ways of using TH's in primary care teams. The two sectors should establish a partnership in which all members are part of a team serving the community. Mutual referral systems can be established which can lead to an overall improvement of health services. Increased communication enables both modern and traditional health workers to learn from each other. (Hoff, W & Shapiro, G. 1990)

From a broader perspective Dhulikhel Hospital can also be an important example for the Health Care Development in the world. Research shows that in the western world more and more people are also using complementary medicine next to mainstream medicine. There is a need for a broader template of western medicine, the unilaterality of this medical model no longer suffices. More awareness and knowledge about different medical perspectives, leads to a different need in health care. People in the west feel the need for more connection between body and soul and are more and more curious about the spiritual aspect of their lives. Many people feel a lack of human contact during the regular medical treatment and the need for more heart to heart contact and compassion in our health care is growing. Research shows that integrating compassion in care makes patients feel more responsible for their own health. It activates their self-healing ability and has an incredible influence on the course of their disease.

The project is being developed for:

- The traditional people in the communities.
- Traditional Healers in the communities in the rural area near the outreaches of Nepal.
- The medical staff, especially the GPs of the Hospital of Dhulikhel and the Outreaches.

6. Intended results

For the traditional people and the Healers of the community:

- It prevents the Indigenous Medical Knowledge from extinction.
- It provides ways of mutually exchanging knowledge between the local healers and the medical staff of the hospital.
- It will provide a health care system that corresponds to the needs of the people in Nepal.

For Dhulikhel hospital and hospital outreaches:

- There will be an increase of visitors of the community people that will lead to the preservation of the outposts.
- The medical staff will work with a Health Care System that is close to their traditional values of their own Nepali culture.
- The students will be educated from a broader complementary medical perspective.
- The outreaches will be a hospital where the medical staff works with a high standard health care system that meets the needs of the people working in it.

7. Activities

The activities are a short summary of what is necessary and still needs further exploration:

Contact

- Contact with the Government

It's necessary to be in contact with the government about this topic. The following issues are mentioned:

"The situation of traditional medicine systems e.g. naturopathy, homeopathy, acupuncture, unani, amchi etc. are still in dilemma. Their contribution is remarkable, however the country has not formally recognized that yet. A clear policy, planning, rules and regulation, inter-sectoral networks are yet to be developed. The Nation has recognized these systems but overall development of traditional medical systems has been hindering due to lack of initiation and enthusiasm of concerned authorities."

Dr Rishi Ram Koirala MD, The traditional healers are mentioned in country monographs on traditional system of medicine.

- Institute Traditional Healers

The project needs to search for Traditional Healers who are already familiar with this topic and would like to support the project. It will make it easier to build a bridge between the different worlds of medicine.

Research

Research on Traditional Healers in the community

The first important step in the project, is to find and collect all the traditional healers in the community around the outreaches who are playing an important role for the people in the community. Individual and joint conversations will be conducted with the aim to do research into the

work field of the traditional healers. Gaining knowledge about their expertise, exploring what they need and what they want etc.

Traditional knowledge should be researched and documented in order to make its contribution available for the project.

Research Mainstream medicine

In order to achieve good results it is also important to talk with the management of the hospital about their future development plans and their policy concerning their health care system.

Awareness has to be developed concerning the implementation of bringing back the soul into the medical care.

Development of training and education

-Training development

Medical staff and Traditional Healers have to be trained in how they can work together with these two complementary disciplines.

-Training traditional healers

It is important that the TH's have training in the basic skills of western medicine. The knowledge of western medicine is important so they recognize in time when they have to refer their patient to the hospital.

-Training medical students

Students of medical training, especially in the GP training need an addition in the curriculum with the aim to educate the students in how to communicate with the patients. Human kindness, compassion and heart to heart contact is essential to develop in the working field to make it possible to connect with the traditional people of the communities so they will feel more comfortable coming to the outreaches. The focus in this training module is essentially relational: how is my relationship to myself as a Nepali doctor and how do I relate as a doctor to my patients? Training the students of medical training and the medical staff in bringing back the human aspect in the relationship with their patient. *'How can we take heart again so that we can give heart tot others?'* (2007 by Parker J. Palmer, Courage to be a doctor)

Traditional healers in Kathmandu

Traditional healers are the repository of culture and science, and are the wealth of the nation

B N Khaniya

Kathmandu

A significant number of traditional healers, having a family tradition going back generations, still exist in the Kathmandu Valley. These groups of traditional practitioners are deeply rooted in the culture of Ayurveda. They have aspired to reach the cultural values, norms, and respect of the people. They are readily available and work as relatives or family members and are capable of managing a diversity of health problems with locally available resources.

Traditionally, the healers are closely attached to their profession but under pressure from modern science, even members within the family do not want to continue the traditional profession. Due to changes in socio-psychological factors and education patterns, the present generation of traditional healers do not follow their parent's footsteps and practice this knowledge. This presents a realistic threat of extinction of this knowledge in our



country.

Traditional healers are able to treat a majority of common diseases, and they prepare a variety of drugs themselves. But those who have learned the knowledge from different sources treat only certain particular diseases like jaundice, stomach ache, and gastric. They don't have adequate knowledge or lack interest in other health disorders.

The majority of healers don't

charge a consultancy fee directly. They indirectly add the consultancy fee to the cost of medicine. However, the cost of medicine is also reasonable.

When allopathic medicines fail to then traditional healers come to mind. People with problems of joint pain, gastric, ulcers, stomach ache, asthma and some sexual problems including infertility and sterility consult such healers. People prefer traditional healers and natural drugs for such health problems.

However, jaundice is one disease for which, many people remember traditional healers.

The world has realised that traditional healers have been practicing knowledge handed down over the years and that it should be preserved. Such knowledge also needs scientific intervention for further research, as it may contribute even to the modern medical system. Such traditional knowledge should be documented and researched as it may play a very vital role.

Some articles:

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2156587214547575>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3227388?dopt=Abstract>

https://nccih.nih.gov/sites/nccam.nih.gov/files/NCCAM_SP_508.pdf

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/2003/fs134/en/>

Role of traditional and complementary medicine in universal coverage. Available from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283440377_Role_of_traditional_and_complementary_medicine_in_universal_coverage [accessed Jul 7, 2017].