



Continuous Medical Education Activity to Upgrade the Knowledge of Unqualified Medical Practitioners (UMPs) in Promoting Scientific and Rational Use of Medicine: An Ongoing Project in Eastern India

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Opinion

Volume 9 Issue 3

Received Date: July 25, 2024

Published Date: August 08, 2024

DOI: 10.23880/apct-16000242

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Education of people in science of medicine and also in use of medicine is the key determinant to foster not only the concept of scientific use of medicines but also the concept of essential medicine and rational use of medicine. Sound and objective information about medicines are not available to the dispensers and even to the prescribers [1]. A major sector of prescriber (about 4 million or more) in India are unqualified medical practitioners (UMPs) who have no training in medical colleges, but who prescribe medicines in both rural and urban communities [2]. They usually prescribe without having adequate, scientific knowledge on medicine, therapeutics and rational use of medicine. On this background, the present interventional project was undertaken in West Bengal, India, to disseminate objective knowledge to unqualified medical practitioners about science of medicine use and rational use of medicine by organizing workshops.

The project was started in 1985 with organization of scientific workshops (duration 1-5 days) on science of medicine use and rational prescribing. Rural medical practitioners association (RMPA) was established in almost all districts of West Bengal. A curriculum was developed by the RMPA members and experts working on this area to implement the continuing medical education program and updating knowledge of UMPs. Workshops were conducted by Indian Medical Graduates of modern medicine. Outcome

of this project was not assessed by statistical parameter, but the intervention has caused tremendous, long-lasting social impact; it has successfully created awareness among the UMPs in scientific use of medicines and rational therapeutics; now they have raised the slogan – ‘we want to learn’.

Since 1985, more than 100 workshops (with about 10000 participants) have been conducted in 22 districts of West Bengal, India. Members of RMPA have organized school programs in different schools of West Bengal. RMPA members have established Rural Medical Library at different villages of Hoogly (Senpur, Dongal, Gohat, Pursura, Tarakeshwar, Singur) and Jalpaiguri (Panbari) district of West Bengal, India.

Conclusion

State is unable to deliver healthcare to all the people, on the contrary UMPs are illegal practitioners as per state laws. The UMPs may act as part of the state healthcare delivery system if their knowledge is strengthened by continuous medical educational activities like one which the social activists have initiated.

Conflicts of Interest

None



Source of Funding

Nil

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