

Medical Pluralism and Health Services in Ladakh

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ABSTRACT In most parts of India, multiple therapy systems and a diversity of health behavior patterns co-exist and Ladakh is no exception. The status, growth and evaluation of co-existing therapy systems have been influenced by cultural ideology, ecology, political patronage, changing social institutions, disenchantment with and romanticization of values represented by therapy systems (or their supporters). In the present paper an attempt has been made to describe the ways in which a common Ladakhi thinks about medicine and how these perceptions effect the utilization of alternative therapy systems. This paper examines the alternative resources and treatments utilized by various population groups in Ladakh. The study reveals a multiple and simultaneous usage of home remedies and multiple therapy systems. The multiple dimensions of healthcare described in terms of medical behavior of health sector and the practitioners and healthcare strategies employed by the patient. Medical pluralism may be defined as the synchronic existence in a society of more than one medicine system grounded in different principles or based on different world views. In the Indian context the important component of medical pluralism are allopathy, *ayurveda*, homeopathy, and *unani*. In the Ladakhi context components of medical pluralism are allopathy, or bio-medicine, shamanism (Locally known as *Lhawaism*), lamaism, and scholarly *amchi* medicine. Among Ladakhis, choice of therapy depends on illness specific patterns of resort.