

# Healing Preferences among Tribal Patient with Mental Illness in India

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Belief is the best therapy for healing. In India, belief is highly associated with spiritual practices. Healing is a practice and process to get relieved from pain by preventing and putting an end to the deterioration of the human organs and restoration of the health.<sup>1</sup> Every society has its own belief in the health care system for any kind of disease or illness, and belief includes the causation of illness, norms governing for choice and evolution of healing, socially legitimated statuses, roles, power relationships, and so on.<sup>1</sup> India consists of different kinds of healing methods (both traditional and modern) for mental illness and these methods are practiced in different ways depending on the culture. Due to this cultural ascendancy in India, traditional healers are the first and foremost choice among two-thirds of the patient with mental illness.<sup>2–4</sup> Traditional healers have the upper hand in the healing process due to easy availability and proximity with community people. These traditional healers are predominant in most of the rural and tribal areas due to accessibility and cost-effectiveness when compared with other kinds of healing methods. Nearly about eight out of ten patients are resorting to religious places to get relief from the mental illness.<sup>2</sup>

A descriptive study had been undertaken to find out the healing preferences among tribal patients on the onset of mental illness. Data were collected from 50 tribal respondents who came for treatment in the Department of Psychiatry, Ispat General Hospital (IGH), Rourkela, Odisha, India. Purposive sampling method was adopted and an interview schedule was administered to collect data. The study found that more than one-fourth of the patients (36%) with mental illness consulted the traditional healers on the onset of mental illness. In this study, traditional healers include faith healers, religious healers, astrologers, temple healing, and local herbal healers, who follow the nonscientific way of healing practices. Results reveal that 28% of the respondents did not consult any healers on the commencement of mental illness. The hard truth is that nearly about two-third (64%) of the tribal patient with mental illness have not preferred or consulted the medical professionals at the onset of the illness.

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Literature also reveals that traditional healing practices are widespread and foremost acceptability among all types of society and perceived supernatural etiology of mental illness compelled them to resort to traditional healers.<sup>3,5</sup> Though the experience of traditional healing is mostly dissatisfied among the respondents, it still stands as a first-line preference among the respondents.<sup>6</sup> To conclude, traditional healers and healing practices play a significant role in the healing process for treating mental illness among tribal patients in India.

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## Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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