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and the economies of care in Indian oncology.

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# The inequalities of medical pluralism: Hierarchies of health, the politics of tradition and the economies of care in Indian oncology

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## Abstract

India has an eclectic health system that incorporates biomedical as well as traditional, complementary and alternative medicine (TCAM). Our understanding of the co-existence of these therapeutic modalities in this diverse, postcolonial and developing nation is extremely limited, and in the context of cancer care, to our knowledge no sociological work has been carried out. Contemporary Indian oncology represents a fascinating site for examining the interplay and articulation of forms of tradition/modernity, economic progress/structural constraint and individual beliefs/cultural norms. In a context of an increase in the prevalence and impact of cancer in an ageing Indian population, this paper reports on a qualitative investigation of a group of oncology clinicians' accounts of 'pluralism'™ in India. The results illustrate the embeddedness of patient disease and therapeutic trajectories in vast social inequalities

and, indeed, the intermingling of therapeutic pluralism and the politics of social value. We conclude that notions of pluralism, so often espoused by global health organisations, may conceal important forms of social inequality and cultural divides, and that sociologists should play a critical role in highlighting these issues.



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## Keywords

India; Cancer; Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM); Oncology

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