

Recuperation Tourism from Healers' and Care Recipients' Perspectives: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Background: Recently, health tourism has become one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Egypt occupies a distinguished location on the chart of therapeutic tourism. However, this discipline suffers from a sort of skepticism in general interest of public health. **Aim of the study:** Explore healers' and care recipients' perspectives about recuperation tourism. **Subjects and Methods; Design:** A qualitative approach was adopted to address the research question, which allowed for in-depth exploration of the unique perspectives of 10 healers and 10 care recipients using recuperative therapeutic techniques as Sulphurous water springs, Salt caves, or Sand burial. **Setting:** The study took place in three famous recuperative districts affiliated to New Valley Governorate; they are Dakhla, Kharga and Farafra. **Tool of data collection:** An individual semi-structured inductive interview was used; it included two parts for each category of participants. Part I: Face sheet; and Part II: The main study questions (experience). Data analysis began with verbatim transcription, then data was sorted into codes and then into higher order themes. **Results:** Healers' passion, belief in the therapeutic power of natural resources, plus their expertise were remarkable perspectives. Meanwhile, care recipients suffering from persistent health issue, and their confidence in the healing ability of these recuperative techniques were two main driving forces to use it. **Conclusion:** Egyptian healers' expertise and care recipients' confidence in therapeutic techniques healing ability, as well as the Egyptian government's interest in raising awareness about it, has increased the demand for recuperation tourism as a promising issue. Also, it is noteworthy that both healers' and care recipients' perspectives crisscrossed in the importance of science for the evolution of recuperation tourism. **Recommendations:** Recuperative therapeutic techniques are better to be taught in universities to be on scientific base. Moreover, from researchers' point of view, license of competence must be given to healers to guarantee high level of safety of care recipients.

Key words: Care Recipients, Healers, Perspectives, Qualitative research and Recuperation Tourism

1. Introduction:

Health is seen as the most valuable and vital resource for human existence and growth, and it is something that cannot be bought or sold. It stands for a person's own worth and fortune. People in today's culture are showing a stronger desire for upscale products and services that help them get healthier. One of the most significant trends in the tourist sector is the growing interest in health tourism ⁽¹⁾.

In recent years, health tourism has become one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Concern for the preservation of health and quality of life (rest and recuperation) are leading tourist motivations ⁽²⁾. Health tourism is a branch of tourism in general whereby people aim to receive specific treatments or seek an enhancement to their mental, physical, or spiritual well-being ⁽³⁾.

Health tourism is based on the use of natural medicinal factors, which may be marine factors (sea water, algae, promenades, vegetation, sand, salt peloid, sea peloid, air quality and climate), spa or balneological factors (thermal-mineral waters, medicinal mud, naphthalene, climate, vegetation, air quality, promenades and solar radiation) and climate factors (change of climate, air quality and solar radiation) ⁽²⁾.

Therapeutic tourism has three types: preventive, recuperation, and medical tourism. Recuperation tourism depends mainly on the idea of alternative treatment and reliance on natural rich active elements that have a great impact in the treatment of some diseases such as sulfur water, burial in the sand,... etc. ⁽⁴⁾.

Egypt occupies a distinguished location on the chart of therapeutic tourism and has become a popular destination for those who want to get treatment all over the world. Egypt has 16 inland and coastal locations, such as Helwan, Ain Sokhna, Hurghada, Fayoum, Oasis, Sinai and Safaga on the Red Sea. These places have sand dunes, sulfurous and mineral springs, which have unique chemical compounds that exceed the rate of all sulfurous and mineral springs in the world in terms of depth, capacity, and temperature (30-73 Celsius). Also, there is clay in these sulfurous springs to cure many bone diseases, digestive and respiratory systems diseases in addition to the skin and rheumatic diseases by burring the patient in the hot sands ⁽⁵⁾.

The New Valley Governorate is one of the biggest governorates in Egypt. It represents 37.6% of the whole area of Egypt. The Egyptian history is engraved in the New Valley. The New Valley climate is dry, moderate and the sun is always shining, and the area is free from air pollution. The sandy area includes some of the rarest kinds of plants that are used as medicinal ingredients. There are also springs and natural

water wells; their temperature is about 34 Celsius containing some useful minerals ⁽⁴⁾. In this regard, the estimated number of springs all over Egypt reached 1356 including 827 in New Vally alone distributed as 564 in Dakhla Oasis, 188 in Kharga, and 75 in Farafra ⁽⁵⁾.

The use of natural mineral waters, gases and peloids in the form of bathing, inhalation, drinking, etc. is now internationally called Balneotherapy. It represents a specialized field of physical training and therapy, used to achieve functional recovery using the properties of water ⁽⁶⁾. Balneotherapy is a treatment with healing waters, which includes bathing and physiotherapy in thermal water, therapeutic drinks, medical massage, and water jet massage. The mechanism of balneotherapy is not yet completely understood. Balneotherapeutic procedures are mainly performed for the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal diseases, but they have also proven useful for various other indications such as for the treatment or rehabilitation of dermatological diseases, immuno-inflammatory diseases, chronic pain syndromes, chronic cardiac diseases, and metabolic syndromes or neurological diseases, muscle tension as well as in the rehabilitation of patients with psychiatric conditions ⁽⁷⁾.

A sand bath is natural therapy, mainly used as an analgesic treatment for chronic rheumatism and neuromuscular pain. The history of this practice dates back to the Pharaohs and the ancient Greeks. The bath consists of covering the body with sand from the chest to the toes, in a hole of about 30 cm (1ft) deep ⁽⁸⁾. Patients relax in the shade before treatment, which includes massages by the feet of health workers who also submerge their patients up to their neck in the desert. Average time spent bathing in the sand ranges from

10 to 15 minutes, and treatments usually take between three and five days. During that time, patients are not allowed to shower or come into contact with cold air⁽⁹⁾.

Salt therapy has been used for millennia, but modern salt therapy can be traced to the salt mines and caves in Europe and Russia from the early 19th century. The inhalation of natural pure sodium chloride (NaCl) in a controlled environment (air temperature 18° to 24°C and relative humidity 40% to 60%) is called halotherapy⁽¹⁰⁾.

In the field of alternative medicine, halotherapy plays a significant role. The healing effects of halotherapy, also known as salt therapy and cave therapy, have been the subject of numerous scientific investigations. Patients spend 45 minutes in a salt room or salt cave, breathing in air that has been saturated with salt and then directed into the nasal passages and the tiniest bronchi. The air in a halotherapy room is low in humidity and comfortable at 22 to 24 degrees Celsius. The relative humidity of the room must be kept low. There's no need to outfit self in specialized gear. Exposed areas of the body are best for treating skin diseases. Patients will benefit more from this treatment if they go barefoot⁽¹¹⁾.

Nurses have a dual role in medical tourism, namely, to help clients find appropriate sites in which to obtain the desired care and also to warn clients of possible risks and ethical/legal dilemmas. Serving as a client coordinator may become a more common nursing role in medical tourism as this phenomenon expands⁽¹²⁾.

Significance of the study:

The concept of medical-health-wellness tourism has emerged relatively recently as a scholarly field of enquiry in tourism. Much of the research related to this has traditionally focused on medical aspects with inadequate consideration

given to travel or tourism⁽¹³⁾. Academic interest in health tourism and the healing properties of destinations is currently increasing. However, limited research has focused on how tourists can improve their health by visiting specific destinations or the factors that influence the healing process. Moreover, little research has been conducted in Eastern contexts⁽¹⁴⁾. Ultimately, this discipline suffers from a sort of skepticism at the national level, whose real origin should be discussed in the general interest of public health. Hereafter, the current study aimed to explore the healers' and care recipients' perspectives about recuperation tourism.

1.2. Research Question:

What are the healers' and care recipients' perspectives about recuperation tourism?

1.3. Aim of the study:

The current study aimed to explore the healers' and care recipients' perspectives about recuperation tourism.

2. Participants and Methods:

2.1. Research Design:

A qualitative research approach was used (descriptive exploratory design). In this stream, **Leavy**⁽¹⁵⁾ cleared up that when there is a new or relatively under researched topic, exploratory research is a way of learning about it. As it can help in filling the gap in knowledge about a new or under searched topic or approach the topic from a different perspective to generate new and emerging insights.

2.2. Study Setting:

The current study was conducted in three districts affiliated to New Valley Governorate, Egypt. They are Dakhla, Kharga and Farafra.

The therapeutic techniques used according to place are:

- **Dakhla and Kharga:** Sulphurous water (Thermal-mineral waters) springs.
- **Kharga:** Man Made Salt caves (Halotherapy).

- **Dakhla and Farafra:** Sand burial (sand hammams [bath]).

2.3. Sample and Sampling:

A purposive sample of 10 healers and 10 care recipients was used. In this context, **Benoot et al.** ⁽¹⁶⁾ clarified that information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations.

The sample size was determined by completeness of data (theoretical saturation), where recruitment and data collection continued until no new themes emerged from the interviews.

2.4. Tools of data collection:

Two tools were used, one for healers and the other for care recipients. Each tool was prepared

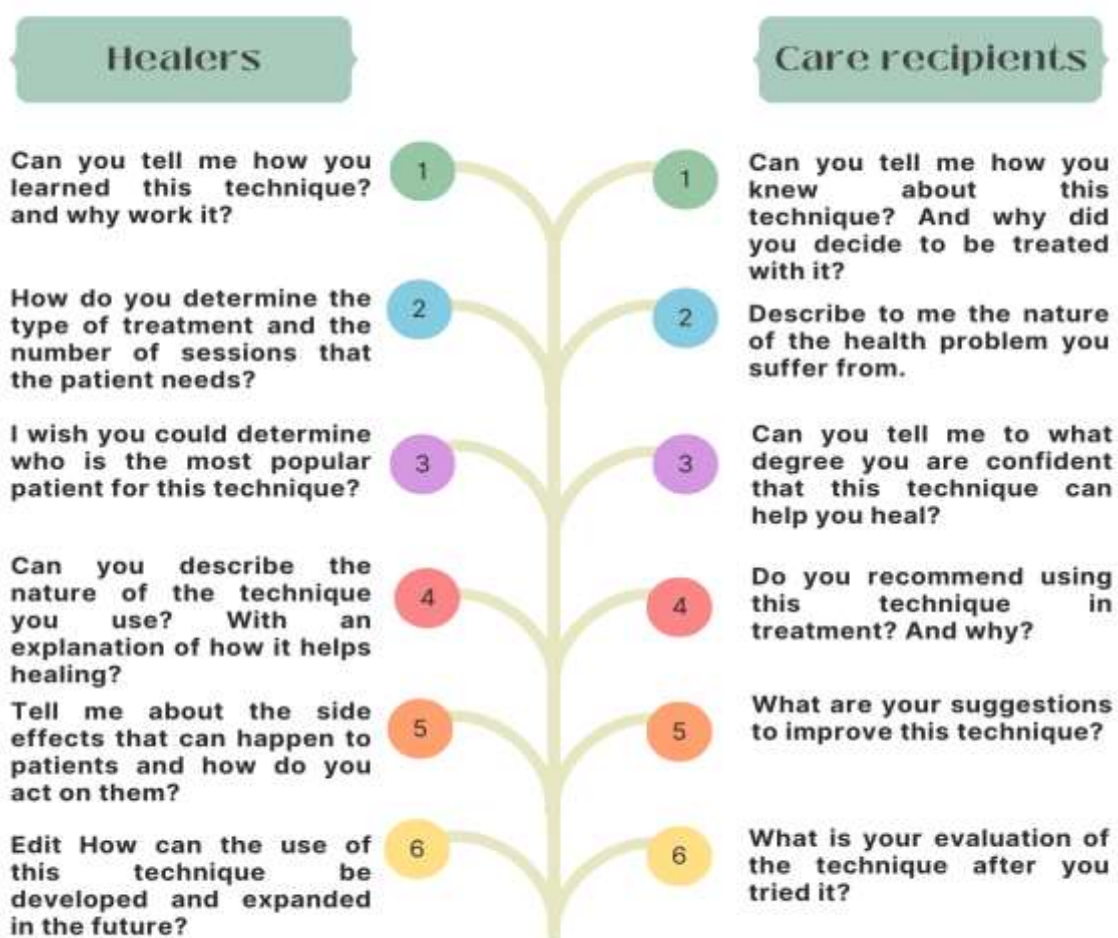
beforehand as a semi structured questionnaire (topic guide) and included a face sheet and open-ended questions.

1. Face sheet:

- **Healers:** it included some personal data as age, sex, education, type of therapeutic technique used.
- **Care recipients:** it included some personal data as age, sex, education, type of therapeutic technique used and the health problem.

2. Open ended questions:

This part was prepared to shed light on the selected techniques to open a window on therapeutic tourism healers', and recipients' perspectives in terms of types, benefits, and future. The open-ended questions used were as follow:



2.5. Field Work:

Before starting the data collection phase, researchers collected all the available data about therapeutic techniques used and their places. After that all selected places were spotted on the map, and a deliberate plan of work was prepared to start data collection. Being familiar with the places and the accent of participants was guaranteed as one of the researchers is already from the residents of the New Valley Governorate.

The sessions usually started with a brief preface about the aim of the interview and also a short dialogue as an ice-breaker activity to make participants ready to engage in the discussion. Also, it is noteworthy that seeking the informants' permission was an appropriate way of finding reliable and suitable informants.

Considering data recording it was done by one of two ways, either audio recording or handwriting by facilitator. Audi recording was done with participants who agreed with the researcher to audio record their responses. Those participants who refused, a facilitator recorded the responses to help the researcher to be more attentive in the interview.

Ten healers and ten care recipients voluntarily participated. With a condition of being practicing the therapeutic technique used for more than 5 years for healers to guarantee richness of their experiences. Considering recipients, with the condition of attending the therapeutic technique for at least three sessions to ensure that they don't rush to prejudice because of their enthusiasm to the therapeutic technique.

To take the interview into deeper territory, query questions were used as "I don't think I know what you mean, can you explain?" or "Please tell me more about that". Moreover, active listening, and silence were the researcher's tools to distill and obtain detailed responses. Each interview ranged from 40 to 60 minute (The duration of the interview was determined based on the interaction of the interviewee with the researcher), where each participant was interviewed once. Recruitment and data collection continued until theoretical saturation (no new themes emerged). Data collection ran over 11 months period, starting from beginning of July 2023 to end of Mai 2024).

2.6. Ethical Considerations:

First of all, an ethical approval was granted from Research Ethics Committee (REC), Faculty of Nursing, Zagazig University, Egypt. Next, participants were informed that research results will be anonymous to assure secrecy of their data, their participation is voluntary, and there is no penalty for refusing to take part in the research.

2.7. Pilot Study:

Prior to the beginning of the actual data collection, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the participation of two healers and two care recipients to test the clearness of questions. Those who participated in the pilot study were excluded later, since minor modifications were made in questions.

2.8. Administrative Design:

No official letter was done because healers work is private sector, and no defined organization or agency exist for approval letter. So, healers

and recipients who accepted were enrolled in the study.

2.9. Analysis:

Upon gathering the data, the researchers established a permanent written transcription to facilitate further analysis. Then, the data were subjected to what is known as thematic analysis as illustrated in the following six steps: firstly, researchers started reading transcripts (familiarization), then data were coded, after that much time was spent by researchers reading and re-reading transcripts searching for a pattern (theme). Subsequently, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally writing them up.

2.10. Validity:

At the end the researchers revised the emergent themes, and findings were again presented to the study participants to be sure that all participants agreed about their experiences.

3. Results:

Here's a brief profile of the 10 healers who participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 37 to 65 years, with a mean age of 49 years. They were all males, and their level of education was high school (diploma). Regarding the type of therapeutic technique they practiced, two of them practiced the **salt cave technique**, while the remaining eight practiced both **sand burial** and **Sulphurous water techniques**. In general, those healers have been practicing these techniques for at least 20 years, as the techniques have been passed down in some families, as will be narrated later.

With respect to care recipients, the ten participants ranged in age from 22 to 65 years, with a mean age of 41 years, six had a university education, three had a high school education (diploma) and one was illiterate. In terms of sex and therapeutic technique used, there were five males and five females. Of the males, two came to the salt cave recuperation (aged 45 and 22 years), two came for Sulphurous water therapy (aged 35 and 36 years) and only one for sand burial therapy (aged 40 years).

Of the females, the two older came for sand burial (65 and 55 years old), the other two for Sulphurous water (34 and 28 years old) and one for both Sulphurous water and sand burial (47 years old). Overall, the eight who came for the Sulphurous water and sand burial treatments suffered from back, neck and knee pain. Meanwhile, the two who pursued salt cave recuperation did so because of stress and mood problems.

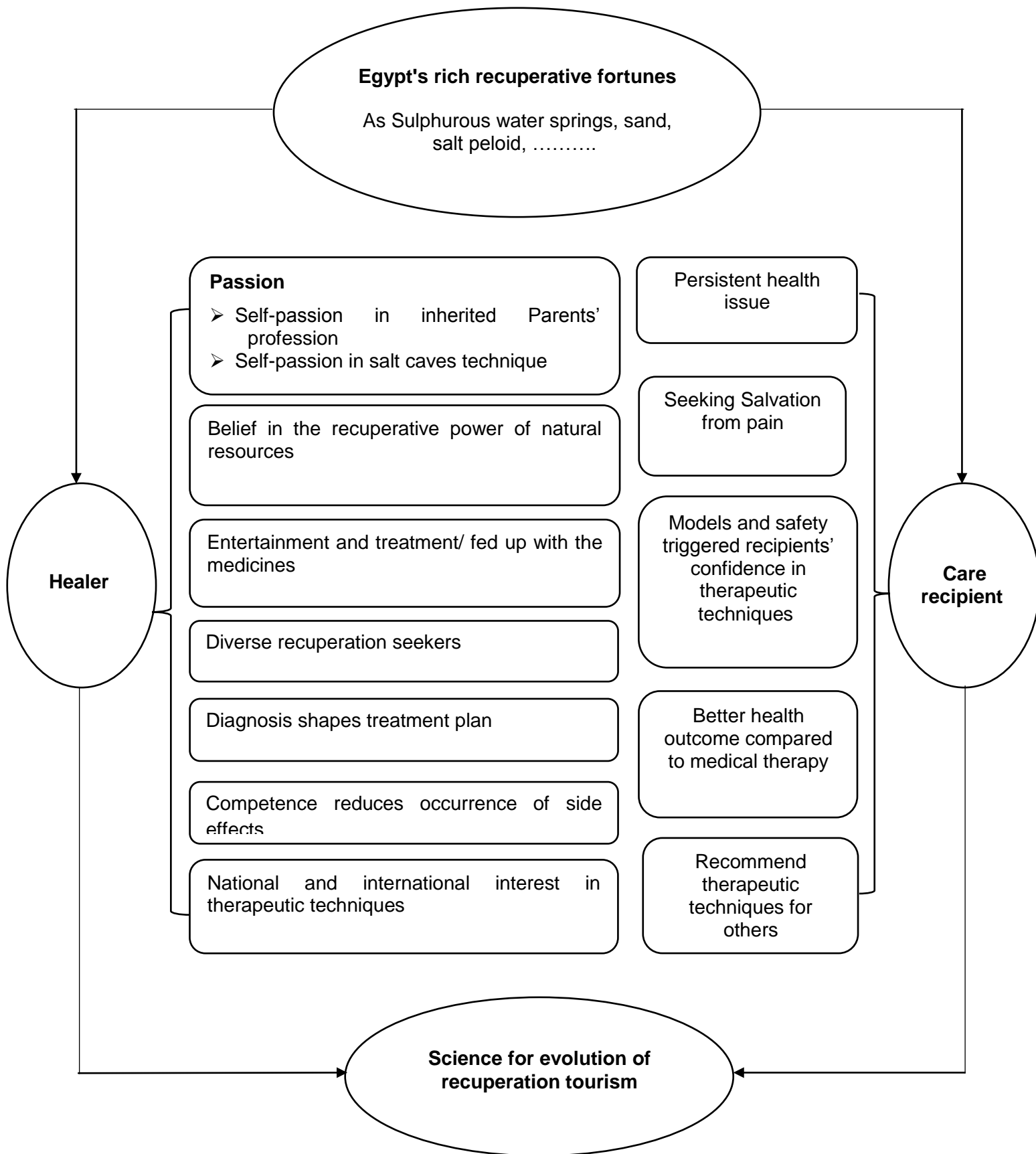


Figure 1: Flow charting healers' and care recipients' perspectives about recuperation tourism

❖ Healers' perspectives

I. Passion

The story began with a passion for either the parents' profession or the salt cave technique itself. The matter was not restricted to the limit of passion but was nurtured by learning and practicing at the hands of specialists.

A. Self-passion in inherited Parents' profession

Concerning the eight healers who practiced sand burial or Sulphurous water their story began with passion with a Folk medicine technique which was passed down from generation to generation in family. Where a collection of skills, knowledge, and practices that draw primarily on experiences, beliefs and culture were practiced aiming to preserve health as well as prevent, diagnose, improve, or treat various physical and mental illnesses.

Healer 1 said: *"I learnt it from my grandfather, and I used to go out with him and watch him deal with people, and I used to follow him as he asked patients about their aches and pains and when they got sick, and I started to learn from him. After that, I started doing it on my own and treating orthopedic and rheumatological patients well. It's my parents' profession and I love it, and I do it for free."*

Healer 4 said: *"I picked it up from my grandmother, God rest her soul, I used to watch her treating people at home and then I got to know a doctor from Germany who was coming to Dakhla on a safari trip, she was a physiotherapist and once she saw me treating tourists while we were on the trip, she asked me to travel to Germany, I travelled and worked with her and learnt from her."*

B. Self-passion in salt caves technique

In this regard the two participated healers who practiced salt cave technique did so because of internal passion with this technique. Of course, it didn't stop at passion, but extended to seeking knowledge and training at the hands of specialists in the field before starting the actual practice.

Healer 2 said: *"I read about it and started asking about it and how to use it. Then I met a physiotherapist in Marsa Matrouh, and he started explaining it to me and showed me that it is a very useful thing. It feels good to do this technique, especially when people come and hope to be healed by my hands, which is very important to me."*

Healer 6 said: *"Initially, I read about it, then I trained with someone who works with this technique and started dealing with the cases. It is a useful and interesting subject, and the field is good and comfortable."*

II. Belief in the recuperative power of natural resources

Recuperation mainly depend on the idea of alternative therapy and relying on nature rich in active elements that have a great impact on the treatment of some diseases, such as sulphuric water, which is useful in the treatment of pain, joint infections, diseases of the skeletal system, rheumatism and some skin diseases, and there is also sand therapy, which has distinctive results in the treatment of rheumatism and arthritis through sand baths. Also, salt peloids have great recuperative power as improving mood and relaxation beside treating other functional problems such as sinusitis.

Healer 6 said: *"It is known that rock salt contains 84 mineral elements that the body needs, and a single session of 40 to 45 minutes is equivalent to 3 days of swimming in the sea. These elements help to relax and extract negative energy, as well as help relieve bone pain, respiratory diseases such as sinusitis, and treat many skin diseases."*

Healer 8 said: *"Sulphurous water contains certain elements, from magnesium and potassium plus it is naturally hot water in which the patient is positioned for a certain period of time on such a session, and it withdraws pain, strengthens the bones and reduces rheumatism."*

Healer 9 said: *"We bury the patient in sand, but not in July and August because the sand is too hot, and not in the winter months as the sand is too cold. The hot sand draws coldness from the body, and this helps to relieve rheumatic pain, treats back pain and stiff knee, and extracts negative energy. The most important thing is that the patient does not have heart disease or respiratory problems. Also, I must make a protective shield on his/her head so that doesn't get sunstroke. The patient never takes a bath or gets exposed to air-conditioning."*

III. Entertainment and treatment/ fed up with the medicines

This is the reason behind the popularity of this technique. The treatment takes place in nature, without drugs. In other words, the patient receives treatment in an enjoyable way other than the hospitals, medications, surgeries and its side effects.

Healer 1 said: *"There are people who come to swim, take advantage of the*

opportunity, and ask to be buried in the sand because of what they have heard about it. There are people, who come specifically because they are sick and need treatment and don't want to go to the physicians, or they have gone and there is no effect, and they are fed up with the medicines."

Healer 3 said: *"Firstly, it is a kind of entertainment and therapy at the same time. Secondly, the severity of the pain and illness, the hopelessness of treatment and doctors, as well as their need to relieve pain and lead a normal life without medication."*

Healer 5 said: *"Sometimes for non-Egyptians, it is for tourism. For Egyptians, it is for treatment because it is safer for them than treatment and surgeries, or for those who have been to the physician several times with no improvement and the pain is the same as before. In addition, they may have had stomach problems from medications, as well as operations that failed."*

IV. Diverse recuperation seekers

Regardless of sex, age, education, disease stage, or nationality people seek recuperation.

Healer 5 said: *"For Egyptians, its mostly men, especially young men, but also women. But I have a lot of women from European and American countries."*

Healer 10 said: *"Both sexes and all educational levels. And at any stage of the disease, it can be at the beginning or after it has become chronic."*

V. Diagnosis shapes treatment plan

There is certainly no single pattern for treating all patients' health issues. However, the treatment plan is customized as per the healer's vision

and based on the type and duration of the patient's condition, taking into account the patient's overall health status.

Healer 2 said: "Depending on the patient's condition and the type of disease. The technique (salt cave) varies from an orthopedic patient to a patient with respiratory issues to a patient who comes for psychological comfort and the release of negative energy. Patients need 3 to 5 sessions depending on the type and duration of the disease."

Healer 3 said: "As I have learnt, the type of disease and the condition of the patient determine the number of sessions, as well as the number of hours per session. The patient's health condition is important to see if he can tolerate the sessions or not, i.e. if he has pressure, diabetes or heart disease, it is not possible to use the technique (sand burial or Sulphurous water)."

Healer 7 said: "I honestly don't specify the number of sessions (sand burial or Sulphurous water) until after I have diagnosed the condition. As the case progresses, I will know whether or not it needs more than one session. There are cases with one session, and others with five, six, or more sessions, depending on the severity of the case."

VI. Healers' competence reduces occurrence of side effects

The healers emphasize that they have never experienced any side effects from the techniques used. They take precautions before the initiation of the session by assessing the patient's condition, as well as following up with the patient during and after the session.

Healer 1 said: "Thank Allah, it didn't happen (side effects), some patients may have high blood pressure for a few hours before the session and I follow up with them. Or if the patient has lung issues and gets tired and can't breathe, it is my responsibility to take care of him/her and follow him/her during the session."

Healer 10 said: "Thank Allah, there are no side effects because I pay attention to the number of hours I bury the patient in the sand and follow up with the patient, especially with cardiac and respiratory patients. After all, this is a patient I have to worry about."

VII. National and international interest in therapeutic techniques

Recently, there has been international and local interest in medical tourism. At the local level, the Egyptian state has held initiatives and conferences to increase community awareness and promote multiple hospital methods enjoyed by Egypt.

Healer 1 said: "Now there are educated people who are starting to work in these technologies along with the expertise they got from their parents, so that's good. We can also integrate it into education and capitalize on people's interest in it, whether in Egypt or abroad."

Healer 5 said: "The whole world is now turning to physiotherapy, and the Egyptian government is paying a remarkable attention to therapeutic tourism, which means that the future belongs to these techniques. Also, the increasing number of patients opting for physiotherapy means that we need to learn more about it to avoid any issues that may arise."

Healer 6 said: *"I believe that going back to nature and using alternative medicine is more appropriate than using long-term medications that harm the body and have side effects. Increasingly, more and more people are turning to rock salt therapy, and the demand for it has increased dramatically recently."*

VIII. Science for evolution

All healers affirmed that the future of the advancement of these techniques lies in their teaching in universities such as medical study, physical therapy and pharmaceutical.

Healer 1 said: *"It is good the Egypt's state concern and good for us. They can make special faculties for it, such as the Faculty of Medicine and Physiotherapy. Even the doctors themselves come and get treated this way."*

Healer 7 said: *"I'm sure that over time there will be a faculty teaching these techniques, like faculty of medicine and physical therapy. Also, there must be more books that can help people gain more knowledge about it."*

Healer 9 said: *"I am sure that one day it will be taught in universities and be on scientific ground beside the experience."*

❖ Care recipients' perspectives

I. Persistent health issue

The issue started with a health issue, and despite medical attempts to treat it, the complaint still persists.

Recipients 1 and 6 said: *"There is severe pain in the neck, and sometimes it feels like it is standing stiff, with pain in the shoulders."*

Recipients 2,4,5,9, and 10 said: *"I always feel pain in my legs and back, and I can't walk on them properly."*

Recipient 3: *"I have knee pain and stiffness, and I can't walk well on my leg."*

Recipients 7 and 8 said: *"I'm always feeling depressed and tired, with pain all over my body and shortness of breath."*

II. Seeking Salvation from pain

As the pain persists and there is no improvement from pharmacological or surgical treatments, patients started their journey to find relief from pain. Either the chance led them to come across these therapeutic techniques, or family member or people they knew had an improved health condition after the use of such techniques.

Recipient 1 said: *"I stumbled upon it online, and then I started asking and gathering information from people. I said I would try it and inshallah it would be better than medications and surgeries."*

Recipient 10 said: *"A growing number of people even in my family are talking about it, and I know people who have been treated with it. The people who have already tried it confirmed that it's really good and that it can cure me easily."*

III. Models and safety triggered recipients' confidence in therapeutic techniques

The safety factor of these therapeutic techniques and those models (people who already treated with it) helped in triggering recipients' confidence in it and the possibility of finding a solution to their health issue prompted them to give it a try.

Recipient 2 said: *"The people who have already tried it confirmed that it's really good and that it can cure me easily."*

Recipient 4 said: *"I decided to give it a try as it has no side effects like medications and surgeries, so I decided to give it a try."*

Recipient 6 said: *"I'm sure it will work out well, especially since I've seen people like me turn out well. I've also heard that doctors and officials are coming for treatment."*

Recipient 8 said: *All those who used these techniques emphasized that it helped them greatly in relieving pain and the best thing is that it has no side effects, on the contrary, it improved their spiritual aspect as well."*

IV. Better health outcome compared to medical therapy

All recipients confirmed that these recuperative techniques are better than medical therapy in many aspects as safety, affordability even in terms of money and distance.

"Despite the long distance and travelling for the sessions, it is more tolerable compared to medicines and surgeries. At least we don't get exhausted, and it's better than surgeries and medications that upset the stomach."

"Now, I feel much more better than before."

V. Recommend therapeutic techniques for others

Definitely, after the marked improvement in their health, all the recipients confirmed that they would recommend this technique to other patients in the same state of health.

"Of course, I would certainly recommend it to everyone as it is very effective and has a quick effect."

VI. Science for evolution

This is where the perspectives of both healers and recipients of care intersected, as they both emphasized that the future of the advancement of these techniques lies in science.

Recipients 2 and 8 said: *"I hope it will be taught at Universities and people learn more about it, because with education, more people will be benefited."*

Recipient 7 said: *"I hope it will be through scientific methods, research that will benefit people on an ongoing basis."*

To conclude, it is noteworthy that both healers' and care recipients' perspectives crisscrossed in the importance of science for the evolution of recuperation tourism.

4. Discussion:

Recuperation tourism relies on natural elements in treating and healing patients, such as mineral and sulfur springs, sand, and sun for the purpose of recovering from a variety of diseases. Therapeutic tourism is called for both recuperation and medical tourism ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Egypt has not taken its rightful place on the global map of recuperation tourism due to the lack of sufficient promotion and the absence of an independent entity to overcome the obstacles it faces ⁽¹⁸⁾. In this stream, the findings of the current study regarding interest in therapeutic tourism clarified that recently international and local interest has increased as reported by healers. Where, at the local level, the Egyptian state has held initiatives and conferences to increase community awareness and promote multiple hospital methods enjoyed by Egypt. Likewise, Egyptian study ^[19] clarified

that A project named "Tour n' Cure" is one of the promising initiatives to attract medical visitors to Egypt. The Tourism, Aviation, and Health and Population Ministries oversee organizing the program. In an effort to draw medical tourists to Egypt, the government is particularly optimistic about this project. In this regard, **Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center** ⁽¹⁸⁾ reported that, the foundation stone was laid for a specialized international eco-healing center in Bahariya Oasis.

Concerning the driving force triggered study participants from healers to work these techniques, either self-passion with new technique or passion with a Folk medicine technique was prominent. Possible explanation of this point is that passion encourages enjoyment of one's work and aids in overcoming challenges encountered at work. Also, nearly all participants acquired their experiences from a figurehead in the family as father, grandmother, ... Noteworthy; these therapeutic techniques are passed down from generation to generation in the families.

Pertaining to study participants in terms of therapeutic techniques used, results of the current study disclosed that the eight care recipients who came for the Sulphurous water and sand burial treatments suffered from back, neck and knee pain. In this regard **Carbajo and Maraver** ⁽²⁰⁾ clarified that sulphurous mineral water-based balneotherapy significantly reduces limb spasticity and pain. These observations are compatible with the regeneration and anti-inflammatory activity of Sulphurous mineral waters. In the same stream, **Bender et al.** ⁽²¹⁾ highlighted that Hungarian researchers conducted

a meta-analysis of studies involving Hungarian thermal waters and concluded that their review appeared to confirm that Balneotherapy reduced pain in degenerative joint and spinal disease, osteoarthritis of the hand and knee and chronic low back pain.

In this context, the existing study participants from healers ascertained that Sulphurous water contains certain elements, from magnesium and potassium plus it is naturally hot water in which the patient is positioned for a certain period of time on such a session, and it withdraws pain, strengthens the bones and reduces rheumatism. Harmoniously, **Nghargbu** ⁽²²⁾ stated that bathing in mineral-rich waters has been practiced for centuries to help ailments ranging from skin conditions to rheumatic diseases. Common minerals found in waters used for balneotherapy include magnesium, potassium, sodium and natural salts.

Considering salt cave technique, the results of the present study revealed that the two who pursued salt cave recuperation did so because of stress and mood problems. Meanwhile, healers affirmed that rock salt contains 84 mineral elements that the body needs, and a single session of 40 to 45 minutes is equivalent to 3 days of swimming in the sea. These elements help to relax and extract negative energy, as well as help relieve bone pain, respiratory diseases such as sinusitis, and treat many skin diseases.

Possible explanation of this point is that reported by **Vladeva and Panajotova** ⁽²³⁾, who clarified that passive salt rooms provide an environment suitable for relaxation, meditation and improve the psycho-emotional condition of a person. As

a result of many scientific searches, it is proven that salt therapy is based on the inhalation of salt particles into the upper and lower parts of the respiratory system and penetration through the skin of micronized particles.

Congruently, Clinical trials have confirmed that salt therapy is an effective option for relieving symptoms and improving functional parameters in sinusitis, bronchiectasis, chronic bronchitis, mild and moderate asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease ⁽¹⁰⁾. Moreover, **Vladeva** ⁽¹¹⁾ bring up that how many sessions a patient needs are determined by their specific health situation and the nature of their disease. The typical recommended number of sessions is 12-20, with each session lasting 45 minutes.

As for sand burial, healers confirmed that the hot sand draws coldness from the body, and this helps to relieve rheumatic pain, treats back pain and stiff knee, and extracts negative energy. The most important thing is that the patient does not have heart disease or respiratory problems. Also, healer must make a protective shield on recipient head so that doesn't get sunstroke. Also, the patient should never take a bath or gets exposed to air-conditioning.

Possible clarification of the treating power of sand burial is that of **Hanaoui** ⁽⁸⁾, who simplified that, initially the sand is very hot, but after a few minutes the body adapts to the temperature of the sand and a generalized sweating begins and the patient feels a comfortable relief. During the bath, patients drink small sips of mineral water to cool off and rehydrate. After 10 minutes, the patient leaves the bath, and the healer

covers the patient with a wool blanket to fight against the cold caused by difference in temperature between the sand and the air. Then the patient enters a tent to rest and drink tea with medicinal plants. During this rest, the sweat continues strongly and mixes with the sand attached to the body to form a mud that covers the cutaneous surface, creating a thalassotherapy effect.

Compatibly, **Pitrelli** ⁽²⁴⁾ highlighted that sand hammams (bath) are not advisable for anyone with blood pressure or heart-related medical problems, due to the intensity of the heat. From back pain to stress relief, sand hammams are believed to have a number of wellness benefits.

Concerning the way by which healers know about the therapeutic techniques, either the chance led them to come across these therapeutic techniques, or family member or people they knew had an improved health condition after the use of such techniques. In a similar vein, **Ayoub** ⁽¹⁹⁾ in Egypt ascertained that, on the one hand, social media and the Internet are essential for marketing and promoting a certain medical tourism location. On the other hand, family and relatives rank among the most important factors to consider while selecting a certain medical tourism destination.

Ultimately, science for evolution is where the perspectives of both healers and recipients of care intersected, as they both emphasized that the future of the advancement of these techniques lies in science. All healers affirmed that the future of the advancement of these techniques lies in their teaching in universities such as medical study, physical therapy and pharmaceutical. Congruently,

Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center ⁽¹⁸⁾,

affirmed that there are some suggested policies for implementation/recommendations for the decision maker as scientific and practical training through expanding Tourism Diploma Accreditation in collaboration with TEMOS at governmental universities. Also launching a range of initiatives, such as "Nurture You in Egypt", to revitalize medical and hospital tourism. As well, **Ayoub** ⁽¹⁹⁾ stated that the creation of undergraduate, graduate, and short courses for medical and nonmedical staff members should be a part of the education strategy to give them the skills they need to deliver services in compliance with industry standards. Training programs on medical tourism concepts and abilities are required for professional physicians and paramedical workers.

5. Conclusion:

Healers' passion, belief in the therapeutic power of natural resources, plus their expertise were remarkable perspective. Meanwhile, care recipients suffer from persistent health issue, and their confidence in the healing ability of these recuperative techniques were two main driving forces to use it. Moreover, Egyptian healers' expertise and confidence in the ability of these techniques to help them heal, as well as the Egyptian government's interest in raising awareness about them, has increased the demand for them as a promising recuperative technique.

6. Recommendations:

Based on healers' and care recipients' perspectives it is recommended that recuperative therapeutic techniques be on scientific bases, so it is better to be taught in

universities as medical faculties. From researchers' point of view, there must be an entity to give license of competence for healers to guarantee high level of safety of care recipients. Finally, further studies are required either quantitative or qualitative are required for more extensive understanding of the issue.

Limitations of study:

Scarcity of literature and researches about the concept of recuperation tourism, where there is misunderstanding/confusion between therapeutic, medical, wellness and recuperation tourism.

Conflict of interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authorship contribution statement:

Fatma Mohammed Ahmed: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing original draft, Writing review & editing.

Manal Mosalem Saleh: Conceptualization, Data collection, Writing review & editing.

Huda Ibrahim Abd el-fattah: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing original draft, Writing review & editing.

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