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Amalgamation of ayurveda with allopathy: A synergistic approach for healthy society

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In wake of the fact that despite the availability of advanced technologically aided modern medicine system, our society is witnessing a rise in various lifestyle disorders, chronic diseases and development of resistance to the existing remedies; integration of ayurveda with allopathy seems the need of the hour. A novel comprehensive system, if generated by fusion of rich traditional therapies with modern medicine system, can utilize the best of both the systems without disrespecting any and can provide care in disease management, disease prevention, preservation, protection and health rejuvenation. Amalgamation of ayurveda with allopathy will certainly be able to create a healthy society by developing a healthcare system that is more effective than either system used alone as well as less expensive and less toxic.

Key words: Allopathy, ayurveda, symbiohealth

INTRODUCTION

Health of an individual is shaped by the complex interplay of biology, behaviour, socioeconomic and environmental factors.^[1] As per World Health Organisation (WHO) definition, health is not merely the absence of a disease or infirmity, but a state of physical, mental and social well being.^[2] Spiritual, emotional and environmental health are the additional components that must be taken care of while talking about true health. This holistic approach of health demands for a medical system that is competent enough to effectively target all the aspects together. This widened arena of health is not covered completely by modern medicine system as though it assures physical and mental health, but social, spiritual and environmental health aspects are ignored. Despite the huge advancement in technological and pharmaceutical sector in modern healthcare system, the world is witnessing a rising trend in global diseases. The basic reasons are allopathic medicine's incomplete approach towards health, inability to reach the root causes of chronic diseases and its general failure to provide safety and affordability.^[3] What is needed is a novel effective, safe and economical approach to assure complete health in the society.

In lieu of the fact that that no medicine system is complete in itself and that, besides this, no integration exists between the traditional and modern medicine system until now, it seems imperative to introduce the concept of symbiohealth in today's world, which means symbiotic interaction of allopathy and ayurveda.^[4,5] The idea behind collaboration of traditional and modern medicine system is the basic similarity in their idea about origin of life, which dictates the factors and the targets for healthy life. The origin of life from pre-existing living things, as demonstrated by ayurveda, '*nasato vidyate bhavo, na bhavo vidyate satam*' presents the same views as '*omne vivum ex ovo*' of modern science.^[6] Collaboration of these two medicine systems can adequately balance the human ecosystem, in which all action at all the three levels of ice cone is needed for healthy life. At the upper level of the human ecosystem meditation, pranayama and yogic exercises are required, whereas, the intermediate level can be balanced by appropriate food, external treatments and detoxification therapies like *panchakarma* and rejuvenation therapies like *rasayana tantra*. The last level is the only level that is addressed by modern medicine system, surgery, transplants and gene therapy for effective disease management.^[5] Balanced human ecosystem demands for integration of allopathy and ayurveda, which needs basic understanding of their fundamental ideas along with advantages and shortcomings of both the systems so as to extract the best of what is available in both the practices without bringing the hierarchies or disrespect to any, for introducing achievable, affordable and accessible global healthcare solution.^[7]

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HOW MODERN MEDICINE SYSTEM WORKS?

Presently, allopathy, the modern medicine system, which is 100-years-old, is the most acceptable medicine therapy by majority of people.^[8] Modern allopathic medicine originated from Greco-Roman Medicine and northern European traditions consists of the science of anatomy, physiology and biochemistry and the structure-function relationship between cells, tissues and organs. It focuses on diagnosis, treatment and cure for acute illnesses via potent pharmaceutical drugs, surgery, radiation and other treatment modalities.^[9] Allopathy is based on major three steps: Hypothesis, experimentation and observation and, finally, the theory or the conclusion.^[10] It works in hand with technology that aid to devise diagnostic procedures, drugs with specific actions, vaccine, sophisticated surgical procedures and transplants, hence, imparting it the top position among all medicine systems.^[5] Allopathy follows offensive rather than defensive strategy for creating a healthy society.^[4] It acts by finding out the cause of disease and its elimination with the help of drugs.^[5]

Allopathy bears a number of advantages that makes it to the top of most medicine system in the present time, but it has flaws like inefficacy in curing certain chronic diseases and unavoidable adverse effects, which need to be addressed seriously to generate an efficient and safe healthcare system [Table 1].^[3,5,11,12]

HOW AYURVEDIC SYSTEM WORKS?

Ayurveda is a combination of two words *Ayu* and *Veda*, meaning the knowledge of life.^[13] It is a comprehensive natural holistic healthcare, which is 5000-years-old and is commonly adopted in India, especially rural India, where

70% of population lives.^[14] It includes all aspects of life and environment through mind consciousness. It works by concept of *tridosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*), which has been validated with 90% certainty in a biostatistical study.^[15] Here, decision-making mainly depends on the imbalance in these three *doshas*, which are the physiobiological properties made through different combinations of mahabhutas. Their qualitative disturbance leads to *doshas'* disharmony, resulting in the occurrence of various diseases. Hence, for control and regression of the disease, balance in the *tridosha* has been considered as a basic target for therapeutics in ayurveda. According to ayurveda, the concept of *panch mahabhutas* has been found responsible for origin of all the living and non-living things, which means that every substance in this universe is made up of five basic elements; hence, every substance in nature has the potential to be a medicine. Despite using harsh chemical substances as in allopathy, ayurveda uses natural medicinal substances that are safer for human body.^[6]

Knowledge base of ayurveda originates from years of experience, observation, empiricism and intuition that is passed over generations.^[14] Ayurveda works by 'defense strategy' rather than 'offense strategy' by making the host body strong to deal with various physical and mental stresses to human body. By understanding the origin of the disease, ayurveda targets eating, breathing, digestion, thoughts, memory and sleep, which are easy approaches helpful to gain good health. It works at mind level and is therefore able to motivate the patient at mental level, which is very important for improving treatment outcome in drug dependence and lifestyle disorders like diabetes mellitus, hypertension, insomnia and acid peptic diseases.^[16] Ayurveda possesses comprehensive approach covering all the aspects of health with drawback of inadequacy in managing emergencies and lack of technology assisted diagnostic techniques [Table 2].^[3,5,14,17]

Table 1: Pros and cons of modern medicine system

Advantages	Disadvantages
Advanced technology with efficient and confirmatory diagnostic techniques	New drug discovery and development is time consuming and costly, leading to billions of dollars being spent on launching a new drug
Defining appropriate therapeutics by exploring and confirming the targets in disease initiation and progression	Use of modern system is associated with either partial response or non-responsiveness in some patients
Efficient management of emergency conditions	Some of the new drugs are found to be unsafe during post-marketing surveillance, hence making long-awaited discovery a failure
Effective surgical management of the patient	Inadequacy in treating chronic diseases such as allergies, arthritis, and hyperacidity
Identifying specific microorganisms involved in particular diseases and providing specific targeted action	Organisms becoming resistant to the drugs, leading to the lack in the remedies left with the modern system for resistant organisms
	Blind eye toward spiritual and social health

Table 2: Pros and cons of traditional ayurvedic system

Advantages	Disadvantages
Safe, sure, easily available, and cost-effective therapy	Delayed mode of action
Diagnose the disease at early stages when the disease is subtle. As per the ayurvedic concept of six stages of disease-accumulation, aggravation, dissemination, localization, manifestation, and disruption, Ayurveda can diagnose the imbalance in <i>doshas</i> at early four subtle stages even before a disease appear and prevents the disease occurrence	Lack of evidence-based data for effectiveness of therapies
Covers all the aspects of health that is in collaboration are a must for a healthy living being	Not good for emergency conditions as modern medicine system
Mainly targets the occurrence of the disease; hence, prevention before a problem arises	
Able to cure chronic illness efficaciously and safely	

Until now, ayurvedic therapies have not been given similar place as allopathy due to ambiguity and philosophical rationale behind its treatment strategies, which was not acceptable by scientific community, but the 21st century has witnessed a new era that is receptive to this traditional therapy. Hence, ayurveda has been rediscovered because of better understanding of fundamental principles and evidence-based presentation of its therapies.^[6]

WHY INTEGRATE AYURVEDA WITH ALLOPATHY?

The basic idea of integrating allopathy with ayurveda is to explore anything and everything from these medicine systems for the benefit of patient and to include in the mainstream medicine to expand the already existing therapeutic armamentarium for new challenges of the modern world. Prioritizing allopathy over ayurveda is similar as a warrior carrying only sword, but not the shield. This shield in healthcare system is provided by ayurveda, which mainly aims at prevention of the disease before it occurs. Prophylaxis in allopathy is only limited to either vaccination, where specific cause for infection is known or through periodic physical examinations, which again only aims to diagnose the disease at early stage and prevent its complication but does not target prevention of the disease occurrence.^[5] Hence, amalgamation of the two systems will assure both shield and the sword with the warrior, which is very important and necessary to create a healthy society. Collaboration of rich traditional ayurvedic therapy with evidence-based medicine system will also be able to assure all aspects of health along with appropriate diagnosis and safe management of acute as well as chronic diseases. Judicious combination of both the systems had been also found to show sustained improvement in health, requirement of smaller doses of medicine, or medicine-free treatment after some time.^[5] This amalgamation would utilize ayurveda's 'vision' to explore not just how to avoid disease but also how to proactively develop and maintain a healthy state.^[18]

Identifying, exploring and verifying various ayurvedic concepts by modern medicine are already helping healthcare systems grow better and wider. Ayurveda emphasizes the treatment of disease in highly individualized manner as it believes that every individual is unique in having different constitution.^[19] *Prakriti* (phenotype) concept of ayurveda has given a vision to the scientists to study the genetic makeup of a person deeply to mark an individual susceptible for predisposition to any disease, prediction of disease prognosis and also to govern the choice of therapy.^[20,21] Connection of phenotypic features with genotype can develop as 'personalized medicine' if two medicine systems work together.^[6] Similarly, nano drug particles are a recent thrust for scientific research for their rapid and targeted

action. Their discovery is based on reappraisal of the bhasma preparations given by ayurveda, whose typical features have recently been demonstrated through modern technology with the help of electron microscopy and atomic force microscopy.^[22]

There is an urgent need for allopathic and ayurvedic practitioners to work together and develop an understanding of the diverse healing traditions and enhancing the communication skills in order to optimize the risk benefit profile of the medicines.^[14,23] An intermediary is required at this early stage of amalgamation who can mutually understand both the traditional and modern sciences to retain the link while keeping the originality intact.^[6]

BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

For appropriate diagnosis of diseases:

- Ayurvedic pulse diagnosis, *doshas* subtyping when combined with allopathic technologically assisted investigations will certainly be helpful to reach the confirmatory diagnosis.

For effective management of diseases:

- Such amalgamation can be helpful in case of chronic inflammatory and immune diseases where causative organism is not known and use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and immunomodulatory drugs are the conventional strategies.^[5] Ayurvedic therapies like *Panchakarma* (which causes elimination and detoxification of *Ama* (harmful substances) in the human body) and *rasayana tantra* can be combined with acute care and evidence-based allopathic drugs to enhance their benefit.^[24-26]
- For infections non-responding to anti-microbial therapy, where lack of immunity is found to be the associated factor, addition of ayurvedic drugs by enhancing *Ojas* (immunity) can cause substantial improvement.^[5]
- In certain conditions, the addition of herbal drugs can accentuate the therapeutic effectiveness of standard allopathic regimes by their synergistic action. For example, cardiac patients can be given *Terminalia Arjuna* along with conventional cardiac regimen to enhance therapeutic benefit.^[27,28]
- Use of almost all drugs in the modern medicine system is associated with adverse effects. Use of ayurvedic drugs can prove to be an efficient prophylactic strategy to avoid such adverse effects of allopathy. For example, *Tinospora cordifolia* can be added with allopathic drugs to combat their hepatotoxic effects.^[28]
- Post-therapy rejuvenation and recovery can be assured by use of *rasayana* as *rasayana tantra* is found to increase vitality, strength and youthfulness of body tissues.^[5]

Hence, it seems that the integration of allopathy and ayurveda can be an important move in the direction of preserving, protecting and rejuvenating health along with effective and safe management of diseases. What is needed is to use the modern technologies to explore the ayurvedic concepts so that they can be interpreted in the light of modern healthcare. Let limping medicine system run toward a new era of medicine with enhanced clinical potential, clearly defined indication and do no harm strategy after incorporation of our old traditional ayurvedic system for providing best healthcare system to the society. This can only be possible if ayurvedic doctors, modern clinicians and pharmaceutical industries join hands right from manufacturing of the drugs to their clinical application.

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