

Is integration of various systems of medicine need of today?

Upgrading health standards and contributing to promote health-care systems is the main objective of any system of medicine. Remission or cure of the disease and providing a feeling of wellbeing remain the end goal of any medical science. Science needs continuous updating and hence continuous contemplations to maintain health is among the priority areas of research. This has resulted in massive information related to human health and diseases and for these reasons today exist several schools of thought that provide opinions regarding it. Looking at the history of the civilization, it can be traced that as per the need for time and available resources, continuous efforts have been undertaken to improve and advance the health-care system. As a consequence of it, different systems of medicine exist now in different regions of the world. Every day a new form of medicine or approach for existing diseases or newly emerging diseases are thought out and included in existing guidelines of health care after getting established by research or clinical trials. However, many of the conditions remain untreated and researchers are rigorously working to find the solutions for the same.

However, among various existing systems of medicine, modern medicine has done major advancements in the last few decades, and dominated other systems of medicines, and has become the primary health care provider in most regions of the world and is thus, widely followed system of medicine. This is the reason why modern medicine is termed as a conventional system or mainstream medicine and other coexisting medical systems are grouped under complementary or alternative medicine or traditional medicine. It is also many a time expected that these traditional systems of medicine shall keep pace with modern medical science, to keep itself existent. The main working system of modern medicine is to generate evidence and hence, proposed guidelines for diseases are evidence-based. The advancement of modern medicine has given benefits to other systems of medicine in understanding the human system more exclusively and has unfolded many mysteries related to human and its environment. However, the evidence-based approach of modern medicine has created a difficult situation for the previously existing systems of medicine and thus are now not accepted as scientific. On other hand, the traditional systems of medicines that are working either on the principle of holistic approach or treatment based on herbal or mineral resources are catering to the need of patients for many diseases and have positively benefitted society.

Further, conditions in developing countries indicate that there is an uneven distribution of medical and health services, and hence, there is a need for alternate approaches, strategies of

health care to resolve this imbalance. In most countries, this is the reason why there is the employment of more than one medical system. This chaos of existing multiple systems of functioning at various levels in many countries has generated complex and often-confusing choices when it comes to health and health-care concerns. The patients, and their families, are often confused to decide which treatment or other care option is best for them and need trustworthy information and thus over the last decades, awareness has increased about the need for medical pluralism and to integrate biomedicine and other forms of health care.

This can be achieved by defining the strengths and weaknesses of every system of medicine and stating its scope in the health care system. Further, if providing health to each individual of the society is the ultimate goal, then the best way is to integrate the various systems of medicine and treat the person as per the need and its condition under the same roof. This can happen in either way, based on the physician's expert opinion or the demand of the patient. For this educating experts of the various existing systems of medicine regarding other systems of medicine can be the first initiative. There is a need for bridging information among various existing health-care facilities in countries and understanding and updating the existing treatment approaches accordingly. For it, continuous interactions, workshops, and sessions of expert meetings can be organized where physicians share openly the strengths and limitations of their systems and discuss to find the best solutions to the diseases.

Further collaborative researches can be undertaken under the supervision of health experts to generate evidence of effectiveness and safety of integrated approach of management of commonly occurring diseases. Recent clinical trials on progressive, chronic, and degenerative diseases, have proved that Ayurveda can provide additional benefits and improve quality of life when given as an add-on to modern medicine. Certain researches carried out considering the role of *Rasayana* and holistic approach of diet and lifestyle interventions along with modern medicines has provided better overall improvement in the cases of noncommunicable diseases like Type 2 and Type 1 diabetes, hypothyroidism, obesity, dyslipidemia, cancer, and gastrointestinal related disorders. Taking a cue from these findings, the collaborative researches can be planned and data to elicit the chances of drug-drug interactions, or any adverse events, or to generate evidence of the effectiveness of integrated approaches of medicines can be established. This will boost the confidence of health experts and patients will have more choices to opt for their disease management.

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In today's era, maintaining health has become the major concern of society and merely defining guidelines for the treatment of diseases is not only the need. Most of the countries are spending huge amounts of money to fight common diseases and this has drastically increased the burden of health care. An approach to a healthy life by adopting principles that are mentioned in the traditional system of medicines can also be considered for planning guidelines for the treatment and prevention of certain diseases, especially noncommunicable diseases. Researches to generate evidence of medicines and approaches applied for health promotion and preservation will also boost the program of establishing wellness centers and change the scenario of health care systems in the countries. Efforts to integrate the various system of medicines have already been started by the policy-makers in many of the countries, and the experts of traditional medicine are paving their way to come along with the existing system of health care, but open-heartedness from experts of every system of medicine is required to strengthen the health facilities. A new beginning in this field may open a new arena of researches and will give a ray of hope to those who need this the most-the patients.

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