



AYURVEDA FOR PUBLIC HEALTH: SCOPE, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda is an ancient medical science; sustainably producing evidences. It provides more individualized and person-centered approach to healthcare. World is facing many challenges like 'antibiotic resistance', 'steroid dependence', 'lifestyle diseases', 'autoimmune disorders', 'obesity', 'healthy progeny' etc. Ayurveda provides holistic approach for managing diseases by strategic management of diet, exercise, lifestyle and natural forms of medicines. However, the system also facing challenges which needs to be addressed by policy makers. Integration of science with conventional system of medicine i.e. Allopathy; for managing various health issues is need of hour. Ayurveda has the outstanding potential to reverse the worsening health status across the world and serve as better complimentary system for public health promotion. Present article discuss various scopes of Ayurveda for creating better healthcare system, challenges and possible strategies to overcome this challenges.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Challenges, Healthcare, Scope, Wellbeing

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda, the traditional medicine of India and first of all anthropological medical systems, emphasizes the necessity of a more person-centered, personalized approach in medicine.^{i,ii} The process of healing or curing constitutes whole bio-psycho-spiritual unity and equilibrium and its relation to the environment and perceive own existence, both in illness and health. In Ayurveda the determinants of health are biological, ecological, medical, psychological, socio-cultural, spiritual and metaphysical factors which are interrelated. The harmonization and integration of these determinants in a complex system allows the surfacing of what is known as health. The results of numerous surveys on health care quality carried out in the USA, Europe and Italy show that, assessment of the quality of the medical treatments is done on priorities like humanization, tailoring of the treatments, the need of attention from public institutions and adequate information in a comfortable environment for a free choice of the individual health program. Thus, concern on public health is important.

The comprehensive health concept of Ayurveda is in good accordance to Winslow definition of public health as “*the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, public and private organizations, communities and individuals*”.ⁱⁱⁱ This definition emphasizes on three important features viz. prevention of disease, prolongation of life and

promotion of health which have also been emphasized by Ayurveda. The prime objectives of Ayurveda are “*Swasthasya Swasthya rakshanam, Aaturasya Vikar Prashamanam ch* ” which indirectly defines public health and its objective. The hymn delineates two things; one is the protection of health of a healthy individual and second is the alleviation of disease of a patient. The aims of Ayurveda are shared by the focus of an ideal public health intervention. The sole purpose of this essay is to stress some methodological and philosophical, thoughtful issues pertaining to Ayurveda that can educe some considerations on public health management.

Material and methods

The review was done by referring various classical text stating salient remedies of Ayurveda for treating present lacuna and challenges in healthcare sector. Various articles and conference proceedings published in journals and monographs were reviewed.

Result and discussion**Scope**

For achieving the above said purpose Ayurvedic proponents advocates various lifestyle administrations. While defining lifestyle specific focus is given on various concepts like *Dinacharya* (Daily health promotional activities) and *Ritucharya* (Health promotional activities during specific season), *Aahara* (Specific dietary regimen), *Pathya* (Complementary to medications/diet), *Apathya* (Contradictory to medications/diet), *Viruddha ahara* (Incompatible food habits), *Vegadharana* (Suppression of natural urges) etc. which are not followed by society probably due to

unawareness. Not following the guidelines given by Ayurveda is found to be one cause of various diseases which mostly includes lifestyle disorders. By hitting this causes physician can achieve success of treatment. Many of these modalities basically define the health promotion strategies adopted in current era. Scientific validation of these concepts must be done also education must be given to society about importance of following healthy lifestyle.

The second part of the hymn describes about curative and preventive aspect for diseases. *Panchakarma*, a special therapy has been advised for both healthy individuals well as diseased one. The importance of concept of *Dehashodhana* (body purification) according to seasons and disease conditions for better health of society to be promoted and prove through research. *Garbhini Paricharya* (*Antenatal care*), *Sutika Paricharya* (*Postpartum care*) explained by Ayurveda must be propagated in society.^{iv,v,vi} The various cope of Ayurveda in present scenario is explained in figure 1.

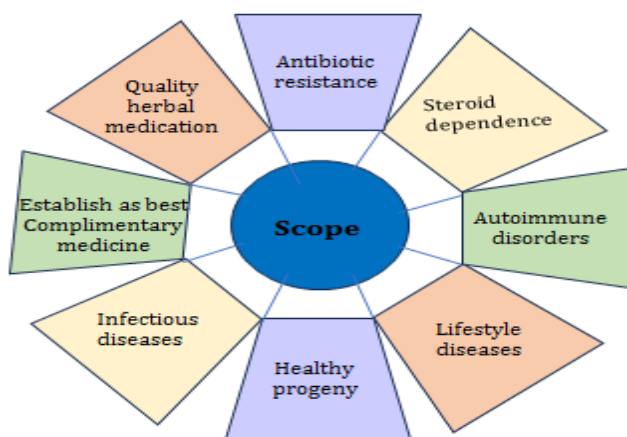


Figure 1: Scope of Ayurveda in current scenario

Challenges

Despite impressive health gains in almost all countries over the last few decades, the challenges facing the public health workforce are still great. The unfinished agenda of communicable disease control is greatly complicated by the emergence of new pandemics, notably HIV/AIDS, outbreaks of Ebola virus, avian influenza, H1N1 pandemic etc., non-communicable (NCD) diseases and global health threats such as harsh environmental changes; floods etc. greatly hampers public health.^{vii} The public health implications of violence add a new and difficult dimension to public health practice.

Today, one of the most burning needs of public health is to find alternative strategies for prevention and management of chronic diseases, autoimmune diseases, antibiotic resistance and steroid dependent cases which are going out of control from other pathies becomes challenge in front of Ayurveda physician.^{viii}

Ayurveda public health records on epidemiology, biostatistics, communicable diseases, health protection etc. are lacking and updating it soon within years is a need to establish pathy well in front of other system of medicine.

Recognition as a prime pathy and strong government support in Indian system of medicine itself is a big challenge in front of Ayurveda community. Implementation of diet and treatment modalities explained by ancient classics in current era is a task. To prove safety and efficacy of herbo-mineral formulations containing processed mercury which are getting banned from pharmaceutical market due to fear

of causing toxicities. It's a challenge for Ayurveda researchers to create evidence in front of scientific community. According to National Institute of Eye, prevalence rate of vision impairments is increasing day by day, thus protection of vision with help of Ayurveda therapies can be achieved. Treatment of cancer, chemotherapy and radiation therapy induced side effects are nowadays a great challenge.

Strategies

The prevention and control of challenges requires a population-wide and inter-sectorial approach. The public health workforce should be at the forefront of the response to these challenges, working in partnership with a wide range of governmental and nongovernmental agencies and across a variety of sectors is needed. Strategy planning for public health can be biological, behavioral, institutional, political and structural. However, for implementation of this strategies strength of Ayurveda academician, scholars, nurses and other associated staff can be used.

Biological strategies: This may be achieved, according to Ayurveda, through “*Swasthavritta*”, a low-cost-regimen of personalized healthy conduct en suite to the individual, involving nutrition, lifestyle, self-awareness and good relationships with society and environment. Many diseases are preventable through simple, non-medical methods, e.g. walking on greenery pleases mind, listening soothe music helps in sleep induction and laughter clubs heals person's stress etc. Thus, it is necessary to build a

framework that support patients' and family interactions at the micro-level and a well-coordinated policy and healthcare systems, with attention to social and environmental aspects.^{ix} Relationships between individuals eventually define individual themselves, contributing to awareness and self-realization and consequently, to the sense of social well-being.^x

Focus must be given on immunization, improved nutrition, mother and child health programs, improvement in sanitation and quality of water etc. For healthy development of child and enhancement of memory purpose an Ayurvedic concept of *Suvarnaprashana* must be more promoted and advertised all over India and across the globe with the help of all Ayurvedic institutes, government hospitals and social media.

Nutrition and digestion concept of Ayurveda depends upon *Agni* (Digestive power) is to be instil in the mind of parents. Concept of *Pathya ahara*, *Viruddha ahara*, *Vegadharana*, *Sadvrutta*, *Yoga* etc. should be taught in school syllabus. Importance of *Pathya ahara* advised by Ayurveda classics like *Mudga*, *Jivanti*, *Patola*, *Saindhava* etc. must be explained to parents while harmful effects of fast foods, chemically preserved food items, stale food etc. should be explained during parents meetings, medical camps. Importance of personnel as well as environmental hygiene should be explained to community.

Importance of breast milk for a growing child, causes for vitiation of breast milk should be explained to society. Concept of *Abhyanga*, *Dhoomapana* to keep

hygiene of baby as well as surrounding environment must be explained to avoid infectious diseases in newborn. Postpartum do's and don't's should be explained to avoid postpartum diseases in mother.

Behavioral strategies:

Daily lifestyle record of society can be prepared for which a common proforma to be followed by all healthcare professionals. This can be primarily done for patients reporting to OPD's and IPD's of Ayurveda clinics and hospitals. Necessary corrections in faulty lifestyle and guidelines of healthy lifestyle can be advised through lectures and practical demonstration by educating people in groups and through videos with help of social media. Few examples as follows; in order to protect healthy life, Ayurveda classic advise wake up time as *Brahma muhurta* i.e. second half of the last *Yama* (3 hours) of night or early hours of dawn approximately at about 4.24 A.M. An ayurvedic calendar or specially designed alarm clock can be developed in this regards stating each day wake up time. For cleansing teeth, Ayurveda suggests twigs of medicinal plants like *Arka* (*Calotropis procera* (Ait.) R.Br.), *Nyagrodhra* (*Ficus bengalensis* L.), *Khadira* (*Acacia catechu* Willd.), *Malati* (*Jasminum grandiflorum* L.) etc. which are commonly available in nearby vicinity. All these drugs are of *Katu* (Pungent), *Tikta* (Bitter) and *Kashaya* (Astringent) *Rasa* (Taste). Use of *Dantadhavana* is not practically feasible for public living in urban habitat thus powders or pastes of these herbs can be advised with honey. Even simple formulations like *Trikatu* (a combination of *Shunthi*,

Maricha and *Pippali*), *Triphala* (combination of *Haritaki*, *Bibhitaki* and *Amalaki*) or *Trijata* (Combination of *Twak*, *Ela* and *Patra*). All this herbs are easily available and economical thus all strata of society can implement it in their daily routine. Cleansing teeth must be avoided by those having indigestion, vomiting, dyspnoea, cough, stomatitis, diseases of heart, ears, heads and eyes and facial paralysis etc. This contraindication must be followed as a rule. Such patients can do gargles of medicinal decoctions for cleansing oral cavity. For protection of vision, *Anjana* (collyrium) has been advised after cleansing of teeth which is easy to follow for vision impairments problems. Daily use of *Anutaila* nasal drops can be projected as cosmetic treatment as it is helpful to reduce skin wrinkle, greying of hairs and strengthen sense organs, shoulder, chest, neck.

Ayurveda advise chewing of betel leaves once a day in morning along with betel nut (*Areca catechu* L.), *Jatiphala* (*Myristica fragrance* Houtt.), *Lavanga* (*Syzigium aromaticum* L.), *Karpura* (*Cinnamomum camphora* Nees.), *Kankola* (*Piper cubeba* L.), *Pudina* (*Mentha spicata* L.) for keeping clean oral cavity and secretion of digestive juices. Nowadays, health clubs promoting gymnastic. Ayurveda have advised *Abhyanga* (Oil massage) before exercise which is not followed by public thus creating more dryness in body. Seasonal impact (i.e. winter and summer) on exercise capacity must be implemented as a guideline in gymnastics. People are nowadays very much health conscious and takes self-medications for burning fats. Instead, daily use of powder massage helps in

liquefying fats. For bath classics advised use of hot water for body and normal water for head. Use of hot water for head bath decreases strength of hair follicles and eyes also bath to be avoided in case of indigestion and immediately after food.

Sexual behaviour as mentioned by classics should be explained in couples and pre-marriage counseling regarding this must be done. Sex education and safety aspect must be especially among illiterate and teenage groups. For this activities use of television, radio, social media or school visits can be done.

For achieving happiness in life Ayurveda emphasize to follow 'Sadvrutta' (regimen of right conduct), avoidance of sinful acts. Compassion towards all living beings, attitude of sacrificing for others; controlling the activities of body, words and mind are sufficient for good conducts. This behaviour definitely builds up inter-personnel and social relationship strong and this is important for maintaining social wellbeing.

Institutional strategies: Emphasis must be given on making health records of society with the help of postgraduate students of Ayurveda of respective colleges. All Ayurveda institutes across India should collaborate with each other. Various survey studies on biological, environmental, emotional aspect of public can be conducted as dissertations. Before conducting surveys, scholars must be trained by an experienced field-based senior practitioners as role models. Various projects and thesis can be done on safety aspects of herbo-mineral formulations having

potent actions. Groups can be made to conduct specific surveys. Leadership training programmes must be conducted for students.

Government strategies: Ministry of AYUSH must develop health schemes for sensitizing public for adopting the healthy lifestyle. Incentives schemes must be given to the healthcare professional involved in various campaign and surveys, thus they can maintain their working efficiency throughout the projects rather than making shortcuts and returning home with insufficient or faulty data. Funding to various research projects, survey, training programme must be taken care by authorities. A group of strategic management and planning must be assigned to review all works.

Field Epidemiology Training Programmes (FETPs) and Public Health Interventions Network (TEPHINET) must be implemented for training field epidemiologists. ^{xi} Tie up can be done with International Clinical Epidemiology Network (INCLIN).

Political strategies: For health promotion, campaign and programs must be conducted with the help of local politician or a well-known social person who can facilitate the work of health care providers to every strata of society. Financial funding for conducting awareness programs, camps etc. can be achieved from political groups. Facility required for improved standard of living e.g. housing, toilets etc. can be implemented through local politician voice in remote villages.

Conclusion

Ayurveda is a personalized medicine having principle focus on predictive, preventive medicine, a well-respected concepts in modern molecular medicine. It is based on universal principles and not limited to a particular ethnic group or culture. Being both person-centered and intercultural, it can be used as an

integration of the existent healthcare systems as well as a template to rescue faulty lifestyle traditions in order to meet the needs of public health.

Conflict of interest: Nil

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