

# Mainstreaming of Ayurveda in National Health Missions: Need of the Hour

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## Introduction

Government of India has recently established Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy). This ministry looks after the welfare of AYUSH systems for the formulation, co-ordination, development and promotion of research on scientific lines. The Ministry of AYUSH was formed on 9th November 2014 for providing better healthcare to the public. The Department of Indian Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H) was created in March 1995 and renamed as Department of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) in November 2003, with a view to providing focused attention to development of Education and Research in Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy systems.<sup>1</sup>

## AYUSH Research Portal

AYUSH RESEARCH PORTAL is an evidence based research data of AYUSH Systems at Global Level which is functioning under the guidance of Ministry. It is an authentic website about clinical research, pre clinical research, drug research and fundamental research activities of the AYUSH systems. Ayurveda (13921), Yoga and Naturopathy (1396), Unani (2104), Siddha (628), Homoeopathy (2246) and Sowa Rigpa (0) systems and their research works number bracketed with each system. The Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India intends to disseminate the merits of AYUSH systems across the globe. A web based AYUSH Research Portal has been initiated to showcase the related information of these systems viz. evidence based Research data, CCRAS headquarter and the National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage (NIIMH) Hyderabad are coordinating and maintaining the web portal in collaboration with National Informatics Centre, Hyderabad. It is an authentic website that provides information about clinical research, pre clinical research, drug research and fundamental research activities of the AYUSH systems- Ayurveda (13921), Yoga and Naturopathy (1396), Unani (2104), Siddha (628), Homoeopathy (2246) and Sowa Rigpa (0) systems and their research works number bracketed with each system.<sup>2</sup>

## Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS)

The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), an apex research body for the formulation, coordination and development of research in Ayurveda on scientific lines was established in March 1978 after reorganization of Central Council for Research in Indian Medicine & Homoeopathy. It is an autonomous organization that functions under the Ministry of AYUSH. The Scientific/ Research Programs of the council is supervised by its scientific Advisory Board. The Council has been executing its research programs with a network of 30 peripheral Institutes/ centers/ units with the headquarters office responsible for control, monitoring and supervision. Research work of the Council is executed by 931 officers and staff, though the sanctioned strength of officers and staff is 1813. The broad areas of Research under this comprise Medicinal Plant Research (Medico-ethno Botanical survey, cultivation, Pharmacognosy), Drug standardization Research, Pharmacology Research (Pre clinical Safety/ Toxicity and Biological Activity Studies), Clinical Research, Literary Research & Documentation and Literature Research. The extension activities include Tribal Health Care Research, Health Care Services, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) etc. The Council has been publishing periodicals "Journal of Research in Ayurveda and Siddha", "Journal of Drug Research in Ayurveda & Siddha" and "Journal of Indian Medical Heritage". So far about 235 books, monographs, technical reports etc. have been published besides IEC material like brochures, booklets etc. for dissemination of Ayurveda among masses.<sup>3</sup>

## National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) Survey

The NSSO survey clearly states that a higher inclination towards allopathic treatment was prevalent (around 90% in both rural and urban areas). Only 5 to 7 percent usage of 'other' including AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga or Naturopathy Unani, Siddha and homoeopathy) has been reported both in rural and urban areas. It was however, interesting to

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note a higher usage (1.5 percentage point) of such 'Other' treatment by urban males than by their rural counterpart while less usage of the same (0.8 percentage point) by urban females than rural females.<sup>4</sup> Authenticity of this survey needs to be validated because in larger experience AYUSH system is still preferred.

The NSSO survey also states that urban India has taken a lead over rural areas in use of these alternative forms of medicine, including for hospitalized treatment. This suggests that AYUSH has a growing market and should not be dismissed out of hand. Alternative forms of medicine are gaining in popularity across the world. Growing costs and side effects of modern medicine (Allopathy) and drug resistance of the allopathic drugs paved the way for growth of alternative system. In countries like China, traditional and western medicines are practiced alongside each other at every level of the healthcare system, with one complementing the other. An AYUSH system lags behind in terms of availability of standard and quality drugs along with lack of proper training of the graduates. Poor clinical exposure by the graduates of AYUSH is one of the biggest challenges faced in order to train them adequately to practice these systems. Some of the universities/centers/ colleges are giving adequate clinical exposure as a result these graduates are practicing AYUSH system in their practice. Research is one of the potential areas to attract global acceptance of these streams. Collaborative research should be conducted to provide scientific basis for AYUSH systems. I hope AYUSH ministry would work on these challenges to gain more acceptance and popularity to these streams and also to make AYUSH a key component of its global soft power. Personalized medicine helps to develop new safe and effective treatments for genetically defined sub-groups of patients and it is also true that different medicines work for different people. This is the challenge in the 21st century to treat diseases in a unique way. Hence AYUSH systems provide holistic approach to patient care. Integrating alternative medicine in the healthcare system makes economic sense as well as faster recovery from ailments and to prevent complications by enhancing the immune status of the patients.<sup>5</sup>

### **Integrating Alternative Medicine in the Healthcare**

Integrating alternative medicine in the healthcare system makes economic sense as Allopathic treatment is expensive for poor patients and

Ayurvedic medicines are abundantly available in nature in various parts of India. Certain diseases can be cured effectively with the medicinal plants available in rural areas. Traditional practice in rural area is declining due to lack of knowledge of the usage properties of the plants. This task should be taken seriously to educate the rural people about medicinal value of plants. There are medicines which should be consumed in fresh to get desired result. It is possible only if people are aware about their medicinal properties. Earlier in rural areas, people were using plants abundantly to cure common ailments. Due to abundant availability of modern medicines, plant use in rural area diminished. Still many people are practicing traditional medicine to cure different diseases. India must leverage its vast knowledge reservoir of traditional medicine to not only boost domestic healthcare but also make AYUSH a key component of its global soft power. AYUSH increases medical choices and adds to holistic wellness options. For the growth of economic and social development and to improve the quality of life of our citizens, the Government of India must launch the AYUSH systems in National Rural Health Mission, National Vector Borne Disease Control Program (NVBDCP), Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) program, Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP), NACO etc. to carry out necessary architectural correction in the basic health care delivery system and to boost the immune system of the individuals. Rasayana therapy (Rejuvenative therapy) enriches body tissues and cells with nutrients to increase the life span, improves memory, intelligence/ intellect, health, youthfulness, brilliance of luster, complexion and voice, optimal development of physique and sense organs, mastery over phonetics, respectability and brilliance. In a nut shell, rasayana enhances the overall energy levels, immunity and general health. This therapy should be implemented in all National Health Missions.

### **Conclusion**

Good proportion of the people in India prefers AYUSH treatment. Keeping this in mind, Government of India recently established Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy). AYUSH Systems provide holistic approach to patient care. Integrating alternative medicine in the healthcare system makes economic sense as well as results in faster recovery from different ailments and prevention of complications by enhancing the immune status of the patients. Hence AYUSH should be promoted and implemented in all National Health Missions.

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