



HOLISTIC MEDICINE- NEED OF THE HOUR FOR COMPREHENSIVE, "HEALTH".

Dr Vijay Kumar Barwal

Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine, IGMC Shimla

Dr Gopal Ashish Sharma

MD Community Medicine, IGMC.

Dr Sumala Kapila*

Assistant Professor, Department of Radiology, IGMC Shimla.*Corresponding Author

KEYWORDS :

WHO defines *Health* as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity".¹ Spiritual component is also added recently in this definition to address most vital aspect of life. So we have to approach health comprehensively keeping in mind "holistic view" of this definition. Most of the Practitioners of Modern medicine ie allopathy usually suffer from a superiority complex what can be appropriately termed as an "*Allopathic ego*".² In their opinion all other systems of medicine are inferior to modern state of medicine.

It is also an established fact that Allopathy doesn't have cure for every disease- like Diabetes mellitus, Hypertension, Chronic skin diseases like Atopic dermatitis, Arthritis, etc these clinical entities are just controllable, urinary stones (except surgical). But the patient is seldom communicated vividly that such diseases had no lasting cure. Impending fear of losing the patient as well as their reputation forces them to continue otherwise. If alternative systems are strong, popular enough and advocated properly among masses benefits can be delivered to larger extent to all patients. If we know the advantages of each system we can "cross refer" the patients to other pathies as well. For example if allopathy doesn't have a permanent cure for psoriasis or lichen planus and there is cure for these in homeopathy, we should be able to guide the patient to seek treatment from alternate available systems.

Although allopathy is proven good for emergencies particularly for surgical aspects, but side effects associated with its treatment modalities sometimes outweigh the benefits.³ Whereas Homeopathy is still considered very good for chronic conditions like skin diseases and empirical evidence also indicates faith among communities availing homeopathic treatment for such ailments.

Ayurveda is also considered good enough to treat the root cause of the condition and renders long term benefits to patients. At same time, Ayurveda also lays down strong foundation for preventive aspects of any disease emphatically.

Acupuncture and Massage therapy is good for headaches, stress, joint pains and injuries, healthy weight gain of an infant etc. It is better than taking a pain killer and anti-inflammatory which just gives symptomatic relief. Mushrooming of massage centers across metropolitans also reflects that people are opting to pay hefty prices to get them relieved from stressful conditions.

Ultimate aim of any clinician should be the long lasting benefit to patient with whatever pathy he opts his treatment after deliberations or we advise him accordingly. Good clinicians should practice this with larger interest of the patient at his disposal.

Allopathy is considered '*Evidence Based*' on published evidences but these are available in just past one century or more. Although allopathy is evidence proven but there are still many medicines which are toxic and have deleterious side effects. On the contrary Ayurveda or traditional medicine like Chinese, Unani etc are also

sustaining with hundreds of years of empirical evidence although most of the evidences may not be available on literature or published which demands further research⁴. It needs to be considered as *valid evidence* for effective advocacy of alternative medicine. This failure of documentation has led to many established and practiced formulas of ayurveda being patented by foreign multinational pharmaceutical companies and thereby being hijacked for promotion purposes and monetary gains.

Government is also promoting AYUSH on one hand whereas on other hand proposes a bridge course—both are contradictory. All system of medicine should be treated at par having their own existence. One or other system should not be considered superior or inferior rather they should be promoted with clearly defined pros and cons among treatment seekers.

Similarly, the role of traditional healers in psychological counseling cannot be brushed aside altogether. There is very important role of religion in spiritual and mental health of a person⁵. Even WHO considers spiritual dimension as important component for judging quality of life in an individual with framing of WHO-SPRB questionnaire encompassing questions on spiritual cum religious beliefs of an individual and their impact on health. The traditional knowledge and wisdom to use home remedies for minor ailments have also a major role to play, to achieve long term objective of holistic health.

The concept of modern medicine as isolated patient and disease. This doesn't go down well to find out the root cause of the problem. Here it is pertinent to mention the importance of public health to bridge this gap. Social determinant of disease affects mental well being of all individuals and governments are also now focusing more on these to address health holistically under health systems. Promotion and acceptance of Yoga as way of life is step in right direction by international community for addressing lifestyle related disorders. All of this can further be supplemented by good diet, healthy food and active lifestyle.

On the other hand doctors of allopathy can be encouraged to go for alternative courses pertaining to different pathies and can enhance their skills so that they can practice integrated medicine, for overall benefit of the patient. A minimum basic understanding of other common pathies is essential for cross referral. For this the medical education curriculum of (AYUSH) and allopathy has to be revised. But the reality today is that just a handful of the doctors/practitioners who are really worried and care about our health, will recommend alternative therapies before dangerous medical procedures. A majority of practitioners keep monetary benefits in mind and will recommend expensive, unnecessary investigations, medicines and surgeries just to fill up their wallets.

In the end, the patient should be aware enough and look into alternative medicine or therapies or ask the treating physician about them. The future of their health may depend on it. Holistic health is need of the hour for comprehensive Holistic health but at same time

warrants active promotion and acceptance by all stakeholders be it practitioner, patient or provider.

References

1. Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no.2,p.100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948
2. Sultan A, Nisar B, Sajjad N (2016) Allopathy Versus Homeopathy: A Never Ending Tacit War. *Med chem (Los Angeles)* 6: 239-240. doi:10.4172/2161-0444.1000352
3. Merrijoy Kelner, Beverly Wellman, *Complementary and Alternative Medicine: Challenge and Change*, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2014, pp.25-255
4. WHO, *Traditional Medicine, Report by the Secretariat, A 56/18*, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 2003
5. R. P. Das, "Indische medizin und spiritualit'at," *Journal of the European Ayurvedic Society*, vol.2, pp.158-187, 1992