



A CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF MEDICAL THERAPIES

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ABSTRACT

Remedies for disease have been started in the earth since the existence of life. Peoples used plants products for the treatment of various illnesses. Drug and medicine are synonym of each other and commonly used interchangeable. Drug is a broad term and medicine is a part of drug used in human being for the clinical wellbeing. Indian system of medicine is oldest medicinal system of the world. Ayurveda is the documented Indian text which contains the description of large number of plants, herbs and minerals. Traditional medicine is the part of every culture. Currently we have large number of medicine based system to provide relief from disease. Each system has their benefits as well as disadvantages. After the advent of animal experimentation there is scope to search out scientific system of medicine. This originates the concept of evidence based medicine. Allopathy is the only scientifically proven evidence based medical system. Apart from allopathy, rest systems are kept under alternative medicines. Other systems are also popular in different community's in spite of their pseudoscientific basis.

KEYWORDS : Complimentary medicine, Pathy , Drug , Placebo , Pseudoscience.

Introduction

Medicine has been used by mankind since inception of human civilization. Bharat, China and Greek have written sculpture of medicinal texts. Ayurveda is the thousand years old tradition of Bhartiya system. Therapies are typically based on herbal compound and minerals which keep body healthy and fit¹. In old age peoples were realize on plants , herbs, minerals etc for various health related ailments which gives the birth of traditional or cultural system of medicine. Traditional systems of medicines have been always playing an important role in healthcare system. Scientific proved authentic system of medicine was originated after the advent of animal experimentations. Technology further enhances the medical system several fold but saga is still continuing.

Pathy is a very common suffix used in terminology of medical science. Pathy is derived from the Greek 'pathos' meaning 'suffering or perception'. It is used in medical conditions such as myopathy, retinopathy, neuropathy and lymphadenopathy etc. A closely related prefix is patho used commonly as pathology, a discipline of medical subject. Moreover, pathy is concern to describe a particular system of medicine such as Allopathy, Homeopathy and Naturopathy etc²

Allopathy is scientific, evidence based medical therapeutic system. Except Allopathy all other system are pseudoscience and have been grouped under alternative medicine which includes Homeopathy, Unani and Ayurveda etc. Present article highlights an critical analysis of various medicinal systems used by medical persons and health experts for the benefits of human beings.

Drug Vs Medicine

In medical science we have used two term very frequently 'drug and medicine' although both are interchangeable and serve same purpose. There is slight but significant difference in between these. Drug is a broad term and includes all substances used for prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure of a disease. Drug is always being a pharmacological active substance.

Medicine is used for any things which provide relief from medical problem. In this sense medicine includes both pharmacological active drug and pharmacologically non-active placebo. In nutshell, drug is a broad term while medicine is the part of drug.

Allopathy

Allopathic medicine refers to scientific based modern science. The term Allopathy was coined by German physician 'Samuel Hahnemann' in 1842, (inventor of Homeopathy in 1810), in opposition to his earlier coinage Homeopathic. This description continued to be used to describe anything that was not homeopathy.

Allopath stand for 'other than disease', and based on principle of curing disease by administrating substances that produces other symptoms than the symptoms produce by disease. Allopathic medicine now refer to the broad category of medical practice that is sometime called 'Western medicine, evidence based medicine or modern medicine'³.

Allopathy Vs Alternative Medicine

Allopathy, employs the scientific method to test plausible therapies by way of responsible and ethical clinical trials, producing evidence of either effect or of no effect. Alternative Medicine describes any practice that aims to achieve the healing effects of medicine but which lacks scientific basis and has not tested. Most of the perceived effect of an alternative practice arises from a belief that it will be effective, the placebo effect or from the treating condition resolving on its own i.e. the natural course of disease.

Terminologies related with Alternative Medicine Allied

Alternative medicine, Complementary medicine, Naturopathic medicine and Traditional medicines are common terminologies used for different modes of treatment options beyond the evidence based Allopathic Medicine. Integrated medicine and holistic medicine are more or less the same. There is no clear cut demarcation between these terms and all field overlaps with each others⁴.

- An **alternative medicine** is distant from experimental proved medicine and represents all modalities other than Allopathy. Thus alternative medicine is the treatments that are used instead of standard medical treatment.
- **Complementary medicine** is the, treatments that are used along with main stream medical treatment but are not considered to be standard treatment.
- **Integrative medicine** is combination of standard treatment assisted with complementary medicine.
- **Naturopathic medicine** or Naturopathy is a form of alternative medicine that employs an array of

pseudoscientific practices branded as natural and non-invasive. Thus Naturopathy is a system of health care which promotes the body own self healing mechanism. Naturopathy means natural care. It uses natural therapies such as nutrition, herbs, fasting, spa, exercise and life style modification⁵.

- **Traditional Medicine** also known as 'indigenous or folk medicine' comprises medical aspect of traditional knowledge that developed over generations within various societies. Majority of world population relies on traditional medicine for their primary healthcare need⁶.

AYUSH

Apart from allopathic medicine, all other systems of medical therapies have been classified under alternative medicines and related disciplines. Common alternative medicine practice includes Ayurveda, Yoga, Homeopathy, Unani, Siddha and Acupressure etc.

The Ministry of Health, Government of India regulate these system of medicine viz Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy and grouped collectively as AYUSH⁷. Here, we present a brief description of various modes of alternative medicine.

Homeopathy

Homeopathy is a system of alternative medicine based on the belief that the body can cure itself created in 1796 by Samuel Hahnemann. It is based on believe that a substance that causes symptoms of a disease in healthy people would cure similar symptoms in a sick people, this doctrine is called 'like cures like'. In other words something that brings on symptoms in a healthy person in a very small dose treats an illness with similar symptoms. Homeopathic preparations are made by using repeated dilution⁸.

Ayurveda

Ayurveda is an ancient system of medicine originated from Bharat. Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word meaning 'knowledge of life'. Ayurvedic medicine was documented in the sacred spiritual text known as Vedas, many centuries ago. Dhanvantari, Sushruta and Charak was well known ancient physicians. Ayurvedic therapies are typically based on complex herbal compounds, minerals and metals. Ayurveda texts also taught surgical techniques such as rhinoplasty and kidney stone extraction. According to doctrine of Ayurveda, unique balance of three doshas kapha, pitta and vata keeps the body healthy while their imbalance will results disease. Overall fundamental concept of Ayurveda is to maintain health and does not look at the disease. Integration of Ayurveda with meditation and Yoga is the success of good health⁹.

Unani

Unani medicine, also called as Unani-tibb, Arabian medicine and Islamic medicine. It is a Perso-Arabic system of medicine as practiced in India since Mughal period. Unani practitioners are commonly called as hakims. According to Unani medicine, management depends upon the diagnosis of disease. Proper diagnosis depends upon observation of the patient's symptoms and temperament. Unani medicine is based on theory of presence of elements in the body, their balance leads to health while imbalance leads to illness¹⁰.

Yoga

Yoga is a group of physical, mental and spiritual discipline which originated in Ancient India by Maharshi Patanjali. Yoga better to say Yog is derived from Sanskrit yuj means to attach, join, union or harness. Yoga is mentioned in Rig-Veda and in Upanishads. It is developed into a posture based physical fitness, relaxation along with stress relief. Yoga also has spiritual and meditation core. The typical Yoga postures or

poses are known as asana¹¹.

Siddha

Siddha Medicine is a traditional medicine originated in Bharat and practiced over centuries. The word Siddha comes from the Tamil word for perfection. Treatment is aimed at restoring balance to the mind-body system. Yoga, diet, meditation and life style plays the major role not only in maintaining health but also in curing disease¹².

Apart from common AYUSH mode of alternative medicine, some other forms of therapies have been practiced in different communities. Some of them are -

Acupressure

Acupressure is a technique form of massage originated from China. It is based on concept of life energy which flow through meridians in the body. In this method pressure is applied to special points with the aim of clearing blockage in these maridians. The pressures may be applied by hand, elbow, thumb and with special devices. Acupressure may be helping to relief nausea, low back pain, tension headache and other pain¹³.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a form of alternative medicine and a key component of Chinese Medicine. This is the form of treatment that involves inserting very thin needles through a person's skin at specific point on the body to various depths. It is most often used to attempt pain relief¹⁴.

Aquatic Therapy

Aquatherapy refers to water based treatments or exercise of therapeutic intent in particular for relaxation, fitness and rehabilitation. Aquatic bodywork, exercises and other movement based therapy are performed while fluting partially submerged or fully submerged in water. This type of modulates is supported the orthopedics, muscular dystrophy and rheumatologic disease¹⁵.

Aromatherapy

This special form of holistic therapy is based on the usage of aromatic materials such as essential oils and other aromatic compounds for improving psychological or physical wellbeing. Aroma therapist utilize blends of therapeutic essential oils that can be used as topical application, massage, inhalation or water immersion. This therapy is used to relive stress, anxiety and depression. It also used to improve sleep and boost the feeling of relaxation¹⁶.

Art Therapy

It is distinct disciplines that incorporate creative methods of expression through visual art media. It is psychotherapy can be used to improve cognitive and sensory function as well as self awareness. Emotional resilience and reduce distress. A closely related term is Arts therapy which includes other creative therapy such as drama therapy and music therapy¹⁷.

Balneo Therapy

It is a method of treating disease by bathing, a traditional medicine technique commonly practiced at spas (spa therapy). Balneotherapy may involve hot or cold water massage through moving water. Balneotherapy may involve hot or cold water sometime mixed with particular minerals such as silica, sulfur and selenium. This mode of therapy is particularly used for the treatment of chronic skin disease and musculoskeletal conditions. Medicinal clay is also used, a practice known as fango-therapy¹⁸.

Cryo therapy

Other name is cold therapy. It is local or general use of low temperature to treat verity of tissue lesions. It can be range of

treatment from application of extremely of ice packs to immersion in ice baths. Most prominent use of the term refers to the surgical treatment, specifically application of very low temperature to destroy diseased tissue is known as cryosurgery or cryo-ablation¹⁹.

Physiotherapy

Also known as physical therapy is one of the allied health professions that by using evidence based electro therapy and shock wave modality. This method focuses on movement and helps people to restore, maintain and maximize their physical strength, function, motion and overall well being. It treats condition such as chronic or acute pain , joint mobilization ,soft tissue injuries , cartilage damage , gait disorder, and arthritis. It is practiced by physiotherapists²⁰.

Thermotherapy

It called as heat therapy is nothing but use of heat in therapy. It can take the form of a hot cloth, hot water bottle, heating pad or whirlpool baths. It can be beneficial to musculoskeletal disorder. Heat therapy is most commonly used for rehabilitation purpose²¹.

Light Therapy

It is commonly known as phototherapy, classically referred as heliotherapy. There is two methods (I) expose to day light or some equivalent form of light and (ii) expose to specific wavelength of light . People used light therapy to treat seasonal effective disorder (SAD). The most common indication of phototherapy is neonatal jaundice²².

Medical Nutrition Therapy

Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) is most commonly called as diet therapy. It is evidence based use of special diet to treat a particular illness. This service is given by dietician & nutritionist. Diet therapy has numerous roles to assist the medical therapy. Some examples are- low glycemic index diet in diabetes, DASH diet in hypertension, ketogenic diet in epilepsy and low lactose diet in lactose intolerance²³.

Massage Therapy

Massage has been practiced since thousands of years .Massage is nothing but the manipulation of soft body tissues. Massage techniques are commonly applied with hands, fingers, elbow, knees and feet.The benefits of massage is concern with relieve from body stress and pain. Massage is commonly used for backpain, headache, muscular pain and osteoarthritis²⁴.

Magnetic therapy

Magneto therapy (bio-energy therapy) is a pseudoscientific alternative medicine practice involving a weak static magnetic field produced by a permanent magnet. This therapy is used in neuropathy and musculoskeletal disorders²⁵

Mud Therapy

Mud therapy is concerned with use of mud for the treatment. Mud is an important element of nature which contains important minerals that have positive impact on health. Mud therapy is given by mud pack and by mud bath .Benefits is muscle relaxation, loosen stiff joints, relieve pain and inflammation²⁶.

Music Therapy

Music therapy is basically the part of arts therapy by use of musical interventions to improve quality of life. Music therapists use music and its many facets – physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual to improve cognitive, emotional , social communicative and educational domains . Music therapy provides individualized treatment to treat illness and improve well being²⁷.

Reiki

Reiki also called as energy healing is a Japanese technique

for stress relaxation. It is administered by lying of hands (palm heeling) .Reiki is a simple, natural and safe method of spiritual healing and self improvement that everyone can use²⁸.

Miscellaneous Therapies

Apart from available scientific and pseudo science based system mentioned above , some other systems are also used in special circumstances likes abortive therapy, biotherapy, chiropractic therapy, chrono-therapy ,climate therapy , crystal therapy, herbal therapy , sweat therapy and wake therapy etc.²⁹.

Conclusion

Medical therapy is an important scheduled of routine life. Everyone needs some sort of treatment in the life. Traditional medicine system is prevalent almost in all the cultures. There are number of therapeutic options available. Allopathy is authentic, scientific system of therapy. Homeopathy, Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha are commonly used alternative medicine. These have been kept under AYUSH . Numbers of other therapeutic options have been available in different communities.

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