

Biomedicine: A Springboard for Integrative Medicine

Sir,

With reference to the article by Kishor Patwardhan,^[1] I would like to make a few comments.

The author has brought an important topic for discussion. However, the article contains certain ideas, which are debatable. Overall the article carries an air of defensiveness.

He suggests Ayurveda, Yoga - Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) module to be introduced for MBBS course and the relevant biomedical subjects to be taught to AYUSH graduates. It raises two important issues.

- AYUSH is like a cocktail. Unless crosstalk occurs between the ingredients of AYUSH, AYUSH module is not conceivable
- Medicine is an applied discipline. Any knowledge area, unless it has relevance to practice, is meaningless for a student.

Therefore, let AYUSH experts demonstrate the relevance of biomedical subjects at bedside. Learning these subjects is not a difficult proposition.

Author has also suggested several knowledge areas to which (Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery) MBBS graduates need to be conversant with. Let us deal with it:

Regarding AYUSH interventions and their effects, we have to note that a patient visits another physician because he is not relieved. In that case even if MBBS graduate is aware of the benefits of AYUSH interventions in what way it is going to help him? Regarding the adverse effects of herbo-mineral preparations, is it not the duty of AYUSH practitioners to warn the patient of such effects?

If an AYUSH physician demonstrates the results, the MBBS graduates will refer the patients to them. We have to consider the ethical issues when we use AYUSH modalities

as complementary therapies. Recent advances in AYUSH systems in patient care are also important. Everyone is interested in knowing the number of papers with a series of cases of a particular disease with AYUSH intervention and the results. Therefore, the matter boils down to demonstrating the clinical benefits of any therapy. The question is how to overcome this deadlock?

Therefore, the matter boils down to demonstrating the clinical benefits of any therapy.

HOW TO OVERCOME THIS DEADLOCK?

Author has indicated alignment between AYUSH systems, current sciences and “system thinking.” System approach is a generalized experimental cum mathematical well-formulated approach for analysis and design of a large class of systems.^[2] We have attempted this approach to understand the principles and practice of homoeopathy. As human system is multi-input, multi-output self-regulating system regulating a large no. of variables, it is not possible to apply this approach to understand the human system in totality at any moment in time. However, we can use the basis of system theory to think on various therapeutic approaches and start crosstalk between homoeopathy and ayurveda.

Any therapy is an input. It does something to the human system (throughput) and the outcome of therapy is output. Comparator is something which estimates whether the output matches with the desired value qualitatively and quantitatively. Another question is how to start the talk with another medical system?

My suggestion is we can start with case study starting with the outcome. Outcome criteria can be decided upon. Next point would be to inquire into input and reasoning for giving that specific input. What happens in the system after that input needs research?

Difficulties are anticipated, especially in explaining inputs and the reasoning behind it. Here, if we are able to use the language of biochemistry, physiology, pathology etc., it will help bringing down the barriers. We have attempted it on our newly launched website program (<http://www.arhcm.org/LearningVideos.aspx>). We look forward to cross-talk with ayurvedic institutes through such a medium.

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