Challenges in Globalizing Panchakarma.

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The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) – molded in 2014 – is designed with developing pedagogy, research, and promulgation of native alternative medicine systems in India.¹ The reformation has ushered some optimistic results in terms of growth of AYUSH hospitals, awareness among masses, and overall push in the direction of a scientific approach in the application of the system. However, it has also revealed the challenges around the principles and global practice of Ayurveda. One of the prime exports/attractive of the system lies in the coveted practice of Panchakarma. This article deals with the challenges and intricacies in the globalization of Panchakarma.

Panchakarma Ayurvedic Epistemology:² The tenets of Panchakarma rely on a ground-up knowledge that outpours from Ayurveda. Ayurveda epistemology is distant from the rubrics that guide modern philosophy and society. With proper manpower training and a better approach through translated texts, the knowledge of Ayurveda can be propagated on a global scale. This has currently been the approach of the AYUSH ministry and many Ayurveda experts as well.

We should also not discount the possibility and challenges of Panchakarma education in the modern setting. The integration in terms of pragmatics and education may be one of the most important reforms towards globalizing Panchakarma. This allows for a scientific as well as pragmatic outcome even in epistemologically Ayurvedic topics adding to the magnitude of globalization.

The value of research: Ayurveda interestingly remains – despite its many successes – an uncharted subject. Interestingly, the research presents itself as one of the emerging buzzwords in the field. This positive attitude of core Ayurveda experts allows for a better standing of Ayurveda in terms of global prospects. Though Ayurveda research presents some challenges – like improper funding, lack of clinical trials, lack of expertise – this seems to be rapidly changing and bodes well for the prospects of globalizing Panchakarma.

The impact was borne by minimal research activity especially outpours into the field of governance.

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Some countries only allow for external application of various Panchakarma techniques but the intake of Ayurvedic medicines is restricted. Research can act as a guiding light towards policies that are more lenient towards a holistic practice of Ayurveda.

Lack of technical personnel: Ayurveda highlights the need for experienced technical personnel for the proper treatment of the patient. These requirements are dubbed as “Chikitsa Chatuspa” – the four pillars of treatment. Invariably proper practice of Panchakarma mandates a qualified Bhishaka (Physician), patient Paricharaka (~physician help), unadulterated Ausadha (~medicines), and Rogi (~the patient). The ever-growing popularity of Panchakarma demands an ever-growing crop of physicians and physician help which the present educational scenario doesn’t account for – the scarcity of these might serve as a hindrance to globalizing Panchakarma.

The practice of Panchakarma is highly technical and demands an individualistic approach from the physician and whosoever comes in contact with the patient before, during, and after the session of Panchakarma (be it masseur, pharmacist, nurses, etc.). It is commendable that several institutes are conducting training to fulfill this ever-growing demand of Paricharaka – the scope of which needs to be expanded for a rapidly globalizing field. The latitude of M.D. Panchakarma also needs an augmentation through government funding or private partnership.

Technical difficulties: These difficulties carry various shapes and forms. From cutting a Panchakarma table of right proportions (specific to countries) to disposal of patient fomites (oil, towels, sheets specific to a patient), to introducing and convincing a patient to a treatment like Shirodhara, Nasya, Basti, etc., to assess a patient based on their all-encompassing environment and culture (Desh, Kala, Bala) requires a technically sound mind, a fearless heart, a tolerant ear, and a keen eye. These need to be accounted and introduced through a merge between pragmatic Ayurveda practices and education.

REFERENCES

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