

Global healthcare needs integrative medicine tested on a scientific footing to shoulder the responsibility of holistic healing

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The roadmap for building a brighter and more sustainable future for everybody is laid out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. As pledged, we must accomplish the seventeen goals outlined therein by 2030, addressing the interconnected global challenges to positively impact every citizen. The third Sustainable Development Goal focuses on promoting and ensuring healthy living for people of all ages. At every stage of life, one's health and well-being are essential to leading a fulfilling existence (1). This objective encompasses all vital areas of public health concern, like access to quality, cheap medications and vaccinations for everyone, reproductive, maternity, neonatal, child, and adolescent health, infectious and non-communicable diseases, universal health coverage, etc.

In the previous few decades, the landscape of healthcare has seen a quantum leap, and it is now progressively transitioning towards a more holistic and individualized approach to healing, employing a variety of methodologies. This advancement is largely attributable to the fusion of conventional Western medicine with complementary and alternative medicine, a branch more popularly called integrative medicine.

Patient safety is a fundamental healthcare principle. Every step of the healthcare delivery process has the potential to create issues with practices, goods, processes, or systems of healthcare delivery that could result in negative outcomes for patients, including negative drug reactions (2,3). The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes this reaction as "a response to a drug that is toxic and unexpected and occurs at doses normally used in man for the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of disease, or for modification of physiological function (4). These adverse drug reactions have become a

serious problem in contemporary medicine. The occurrence of such adverse events in the treatment regimens of mainstream medicine has led caregivers to seek solutions in complementary and alternative medicine.

Recent years have seen some giant strides being made to address the issues of the absence of rigorous empirical evidence in favor of practices related to traditional or alternative medicine. The importance of generating enough evidence in favor of such healthcare approaches, other than the word of mouth that goes around in certain families, sects, or communities, is increasingly being recognized. To that end, many research groups globally have begun testing alternative medicine approaches on a rigorous scientific footing for the generation of a significant body of evidence to accept or reject such healthcare management modalities. The resulting synergy between the established and newer practices can lead to improved patient outcomes, including reduced pain, better management of chronic conditions, and enhanced overall well-being.

Lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic have forced a rethink, rejig, and reconsideration of the prevailing medicinal practices, and compelled researchers to draft newer modalities for treating and managing diseases. After all, ensuring a life free from physical and mental ailments for each citizen of every country is an inseparable part of a nation's public expenditure.

Of special mention in this context is the issue of palliative care. By addressing the symptoms and side effects of patients' serious illnesses, palliative care aims to improve their quality of life. For patients with a life expectancy of six months or less, hospice care also pursues this goal. Patients, families, and carers may prefer complementary or alternative

therapies in their care when conventional therapies do not adequately control symptoms or cause negative side effects. These treatments are intended to reduce symptoms of sickness and enhance the patient's quality of life. Holistic complementary therapists take into account all of their patient's needs, including physical, psychological, emotional, social, and cultural demands (5).

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is another severe public health problem that results in longer hospital stays, higher mortality rates, and additional financial costs. Surgery and many other aspects of healthcare require the use of potent antibacterial medications. A number of these antimicrobial medications are also used in animal farming and for a variety of non-life-threatening diseases, which increases the exposure of bacteria to antibiotics and the likelihood that antimicrobial resistance may eventually evolve in those germs. Antibiotic use for viral infections or other diseases that would ordinarily go away on their own is common in human healthcare, which promotes the growth of AMR (6). Integrative medicine holds a lot of promise for the development of AMR defence mechanisms. The effectiveness, safety, cost-effectiveness, and patient experience of these initiatives need to be assessed as they are progressively implemented in conventional healthcare systems.

In this issue, our readers will find information about varied alternative therapies like mesenchymal stem cells,

yoga, mind sound resonance technique (MSRT), and homeopathy combined with a solid backing of modern approaches, adopted to address issues related to psychological well-being, neurological diseases, stress-induced insomnia, psoriasis and pregnancy. These original research articles are complimented by an immersive review of traditional medicine as part of the Indian healthcare system, and a commentary on the uses of mesenchymal stem cells.

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