

EDITORIAL

Ayurveda for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Rahul Bansal

Professor & Head, Department of Community Medicine, Subharti Medical College, SubhartiPuram, NH - 58, Delhi-Haridwar By-Pass Road, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Corresponding Author

Address for Correspondence: Dr. Rahul Bansal, Professor and Head, Department of Community Medicine, Subharti Medical College, SubhartiPuram, NH - 58, Delhi-Haridwar By-Pass Road, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India. Pin-250005
E Mail ID: drrahulzp@gmail.com

Citation

Bansal R. Ayurveda For Health Promotion And Disease Prevention. Ind J Comm Health. 2014;26 (2); 122-123.

Source of Funding : Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared

Holistic Nature of Ayurveda

Unlike Allopathic system of Medicine where human body is considered a machine and takes a reductionist approach, Ayurveda considered human body as a continuum of nature with consciousness at its core. The all-inclusiveness of Ayurveda and its willingness to put welfare of the patient above everything else in unique.

In order to substantiate this point let us look at the definition of health given Maharishi Sushruta

समदोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलिक्रयः ।

प्रसन्नात्मेन्द्रियमनः स्वस्थइत्यभिधीयते ॥ (सुश्रुत)

Definition of health given by Sushrut is translated as follows:

A person possessing-

1. Equilibrium of the dosha
2. Balanced condition of gastric fire.
3. Harmonious working of digestion, assimilation and elimination process.
4. The best mood of spirit, senses and mind is said to be in perfect health.

This definition which is based on harmony of various energies in the body is very holistic in nature and is more practical than the definition of health given by WHO, which states –

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental, social well-being and not merely absence of diseases or infirmity”

In this definition health is mentioned as a state while Ayurveda talks of harmony and equilibrium which is dynamic in nature. In WHO definition spiritual dimension is missing which is included in Ayurvedic concept of health.

Prevention of disease is the primary focus of Ayurveda “**SwasthasyaSwasthyaRakshanam**” (Ch Su 30/26). Is the prime aim of Ayurveda which means “preserving the health of healthy persons”

“Ayurveda is primarily the science of positive health and it is only secondly the science of curing diseases” (“Positive health through Ayurveda Page no. 2 L.P. Gupta/ L.V. Guru”)

Individualized Preventive Medicine In Ayurveda

No other health care systems (in our knowledge) has the scope of giving advice on health promotion and disease prevention based on the broad constitutional makeup of a person except Ayurveda.

The concept of **Prakarti** is unique to Ayurveda where every persons is classified into one of the 7 broad categories based on his body / mind attributes.

“Ayurveda teaches that each of us inherits a unique properties of the three doshas at the time of conception. In Sanskrit this personal balance point is known as **Prakarti** and it has important influence on your emotional and physical tendencies throughout your life. “When your **Prakarti** – the natural proportion of doshas in your system is well maintained you are mentally and physically in balance”.

(The Wisdom of Health- Dr. David Simon, Page no. 50)

Dr. Deepak Chopra explains prakruti in following words –

“The Ayurvedic Body type is like a blue print outlining the innate tendencies that have been built into your system---by knowing your body type, an Ayurvedic doctor can tell which diet, physical activities and medical therapies should help you and which might do no good or even cause harm ----- **body types makes prevention specific**, nobody is prone to every disease, yet most of us try to prevent as many as we canIf you try to prevent every disease without knowing your particular predisposition, you are stabbing in dark.”

{The Perfect Health, Deepak Chopra, Page 34}

This **individualized concept of preventive medicine** puts Ayurveda class apart from Allopathic medicine

where preventive medicine is of 'one-size-fits-all in nature'.

The Concept of Lifestyle Management 'ritucharya' and 'dincharya'-

Ayurveda is unique in prescribing specific life style changes according to changing seasons (ritucharya) as well as according to 24 hour day and night cycle (dincharya). Following are some of the daily regimens prescribed by Ayurvedic rishis to promote health & prevent diseases-

To get up early in the morning

- Charaksumhita (sutra & thanam) 8/7
- Sushrutasumhita 24/3
- AshtangaHridaya sutra – 3/3

Morning drinking ('Ushapan) of water

- AshtangaHridaya Sutra 2/1

Mouth Hygiene cleaning practices for face & Mouth cavity

- Charaksamhita (sutra Sthanam) – 5/73-74

Scraping of the tongue

- SushrataSamhita – 24/10, 11, 12

Gargling of month

- CharakaSamhita – 5 – 77, 80

Physical Exercise –

- "Physical Exercise should be taken after due consideration for age, physical capacity, place, time and food habits – otherwise it may invite disorders"-SushrutaSamhita 24/48

Bath regimens

- Maharishi Charak says "Bath purifies the body, promotes the virility and longevity, eliminates fatigue, sweat and dirt; induces body strength and is vitalizing to highest degree - CharakSamhita, Sutra Stharnam 5/44

Food Regimens (Ahara)

- In our knowledge nowhere food has been discussed in such a great detail and given so much importance as done by the great Ayurvedic Rishis.

Not only hundreds of food items have been detailed according to their 'gunas' (inherent properties) but also, based on that, recommendations have been given (including contraindications) for persons with different prakruti'. Compared to this, the concept of classifying foods based on calories, proteins, vitamins looks very basic. Another unique concept of Ayurveda is 'pathya' (desirable) 'apathya' (undesirable) and 'virudha' ahaar (incompatible) foods. Though modern doctors make fun of these concepts but no serious efforts have been done to either prove them or disprove then therefore they are 'NOT PROVED'.

It is interesting to note here that Hippocrates whom allopathy calls 'Father of Medicine' had given many ideas similar to ayurveda including the famous maxim "Let thy food by thy medicine".

Only recently the modern medicine is talking about 'food-based' dietary recommendation rather than 'nutrient-based' dietary recommendation.

Both Sushruta and Charaka have given great importance to the food choices in order to preserve health. (*Charaka, Sutra Sthanam, 27/349*) (*SushrataSamhita, 24/68*)

Maharishi Charak says "a daily diet should be of such a quality which not only helps to maintain present well-being but serves as a prophylactic against coming diseases. (*CharakSamhita 5/13*)

Validation of ayurvedic concepts:

A team of highly qualified scientists are doing a groundbreaking research at molecular and genetic level to study the validity of basic concepts of Ayurveda. The results have started to come out and are very supportive of ayurvedic concepts.[1,2] This work is being supervised by Dr. M.S. Valiathan who is a noted cardiologist and who also designed a new valve. He is the author of well-known legacy series of the three pillars of Ayurveda – Charaka, Sushruta and Vagbhatta.[3,4,5]

As a National Research Professor at Manipal University he has been involved in comparative study of systems of Medicine specially Ayurveda.

The author, has himself used the concepts of food according to Ayurveda in his family as well as several students. The results have always been very positive in preventing illness and helping recovery from illness.

The author is of the opinion that Ayurveda should be understood and accepted as a time tested system of health care (not just medical care) and the practitioners of preventive medicine and public health should learn from this great system of healthcare.

References

1. Swain U, Sindhu KK, Boda U, Pothani S, Giridharan NV, Raghunath M, Rao KS. Studies on the molecular correlates of genomic stability in rat brain cells following Amalakirasayana therapy. *Mech Ageing Dev.* 2012 Apr;133(4):112-7. doi: 10.1016/j.mad.2011.10.006. Epub 2011 Oct 19. PubMed PMID: 22027380. [[PubMed](#)]
2. Dwivedi V, Anandan EM, Mony RS, Muraleedharan TS, Valiathan MS, Mutsuddi M, Lakhota SC. In vivo effects of traditional Ayurvedic formulations in *Drosophila melanogaster* model relate with therapeutic applications. *PLoS One.* 2012;7(5):e37113. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0037113. Epub 2012 May 14. PubMed PMID: 22606337; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC3351451. [[PubMed](#)]
3. Valiathan M.S. Legacy of Charaka. Hyderabad, Orient Black Swan Private Limited. 2003.
4. Valiathan M.S. Legacy of Susruta. Hyderabad, Orient Black Swan Private Limited. 2007.
5. Valiathan M.S. Legacy of Vagbhatta. Hyderabad, University press 2009.