

Knowledge And Attitude Towards Ayahs Use Among Allopath Doctors: A Cross Sectional Study At A Tertiary Care Hospital

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Abstract:

Background: A vast amount of medical knowledge has evolved in India over thousands of years, through trial and error, exchange and assimilation between diverse cultures. Some of these evolved systems are Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Yoga and Naturopathy. Homeopathy, although of German origin, is also widely practiced in India.

Methods: The participants of the study were Allopathy doctors working in various clinical departments in a Medical College Hospital. A structured pre-designed questionnaire was used.

Results: Allopathy doctors have knowledge about AYUSH. Medical graduates would require exposure during under graduation to understand about AYUSH better.

Conclusions: Sensitization of medical graduates toward AYUSH can enable them to better understand the implications of the use of AYUSH by their patients.

Keywords: AYUSH, Allopathy doctors, Tertiary care hospital, Medical under graduates

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I. Introduction

AYUSH is Traditional system of medicine in India. Homeopathy, although of German origin, is also widely practiced in India. Traditional system of medicine is medicine practiced in the country of its origin, like Ayurveda when practiced in India. Ayurveda has existed in India since about 4000 BC. Traditional medicine includes diverse health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs. It often integrates indigenous plant, animal and mineral based medicines. It may involve spiritual healing practices, manual techniques and exercises. These are used to treat or prevent illness. In India, Traditional medicine has been used for thousands of years for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of a wide variety of illness. Many of these systems also take into consideration psychological, ethical, philosophical and spiritual well-being of a person. They encourage healthy living, which is living in harmony with nature. These concepts resonate with the World Health Organization's definition of health. It now provides an important health care service to patients, especially those with limited geographic or financial access to the "Modern System of Medicine" (allopathic medicine). The Indian medicine system is also embedded in the beliefs of a wide section of the public and continues to be an integral and important part of their lives and for some, it is also a way of life. Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) or Traditional Medicine like AYUSH when practiced in India is rapidly growing worldwide. In India also, there is resurgence of interest in Indian Systems of Medicine. People are becoming concerned about the adverse effects of chemical based drugs and the escalating costs of conventional health care. Longer life expectancy and life style related problems have brought with them an increased risk of developing chronic, debilitating diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and mental disorders. Although new treatments and technologies for dealing with them are plentiful, nonetheless more and more patients are now looking for simpler, gentler therapies for improving the quality of life and avoiding iatrogenic problems. India possesses an unmatched heritage represented by its ancient systems of medicine which are a treasure house of knowledge for both preventive and curative healthcare. The positive features of the Indian Systems of Medicine, namely, their diversity and flexibility; accessibility; affordability; a broad acceptance by a section of the general public; comparatively low cost; a low level of technological input and growing economic value have great potentials to make them providers of health care that the larger sections of our people need. Ayurveda was the prevalent system of medical care in India well into medieval times. It was only during periods of political instability, due to external invasions, that its use and development started to decline. By mid-19th century, British policy marginalized these indigenous systems of medicine. Later, as medicine was taught in the new medical colleges to students from the upper classes of Indian society, it was the Western system of medicine that was taught. Recognizing the disservice that had been done to the traditional systems of healing and to promote their use, the

Government of India created the Department of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM and H) in 1995 which was renamed as the Department of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) in 2003. In a systematic review of use of CAM in the world, a total of 47 publications were reviewed containing 51 reports from 49 surveys conducted in 15 (out of a possible 196) countries. The surveys indicated that CAM was frequently used and that prevalence estimates varied widely between the 15 countries; the prevalence of all types of CAM use ranged from 9.8% to 76%. There was consistent evidence that adults were more frequent users of CAM than children; and that national estimates of CAM use were highest in East Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea and Malaysia. In developing countries, the World Health Organization reports that approximately 80% of the world populations rely on traditional medicines mainly of herbal sources, in their primary healthcare. Surveys on the use of CAM among doctors have shown variation in physicians' beliefs and practices with respect to CAM. Many doctors view CAM therapies as not part of legitimate medical practice. Although many have a positive attitude towards CAM, they discourage CAM therapies among patients because of their lack of knowledge about the safety and efficacy of CAM treatments.

II. Methods

This study was done among 174 doctors working at a Tertiary Medical Care Institution and associated hospitals in Hyderabad, Telangana, India. After obtaining permission from Institutional Ethics Committee, the study was undertaken. The objective of the Study was to assess the Knowledge Attitude, and perception of Allopathy Doctors towards AYUSH i.e. Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Sidda and Homeopathy. The participants of the study were Allopathy doctors working in various clinical departments in our Medical College Hospital. A structured pre-designed questionnaire was used. The participants were informed in detail about the design and purpose of the Study. Anonymity of the participants was maintained throughout the study. The doctors answered the questionnaire without it having an effect on their daily activity. The doctors answered the questionnaire which was analyzed using suitable tabulation on excel sheets and percentages were analysed. The doctors who participated in the study were both resident doctors and senior consultants working in the hospital. The first part included questions regarding the demographic status. The second part had questions pertaining to the knowledge and attitude of doctors towards AYUSH and its advice utilization by the patients. Space was provided for participants to indicate any other information regarding the question that was not listed.

III. Statistical Analysis

Results of the questionnaire were analyzed using suitable tabulation using excel sheets and percentages were analysed. The group was compared for any difference in demographic variables affecting the study.

IV. Results

Table 1 :Demographics - The influence of demographic factors of doctors Doctors (n = 174)

Age	n	%
20 – 30 years	85	48.86
31 – 40 years	55	31.62
41 – 50 years	14	8.04
51 – 60 years	12	6.89
blank	8	4.59

Sex	n	%
Male	118	67.81
Female	49	28.16
blank	7	4.03

Designation	n	%
Resident Doctors	124	71.26
Consultants	49	28.16
blank	1	0.58

Knowledge and Attitude Patterns towards AYUSH –

Among the allopathic doctors working in various clinical Departments 88% (n=154) knew the meaning of AYUSH, 5% (n=9) answered that it is a treatment followed in Rural India; and 1 gave it as cosmetic treatment followed in Kerala. The commonly recommended traditional medicine by allopathy doctors was Yoga 51% (n=113); then Ayurveda 32% (n=71), Homeopathy 8% (n=18). 95% (n=166) of Allopathy doctors were of the opinion that AYUSH doctors should not practice allopathy but 4% (n=7) felt that they can practice allopathy.

Figure 1 :What is the meaning of AYUSH?

- a. Different streams of Chinese System of Medicine
- b. Indian system of Medicine and Homeopathy
- c. Cosmetic treatment followed in Kerala
- d. Treatment followed in RuralIndia

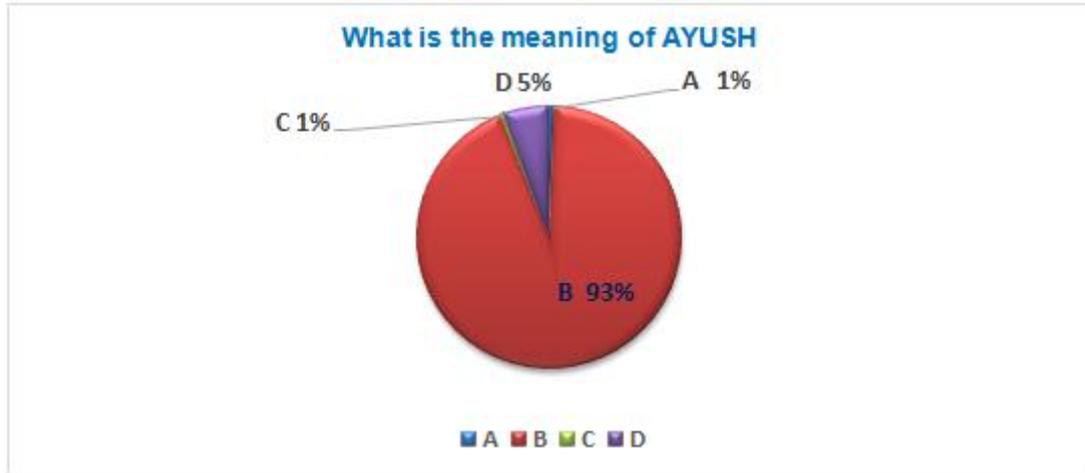
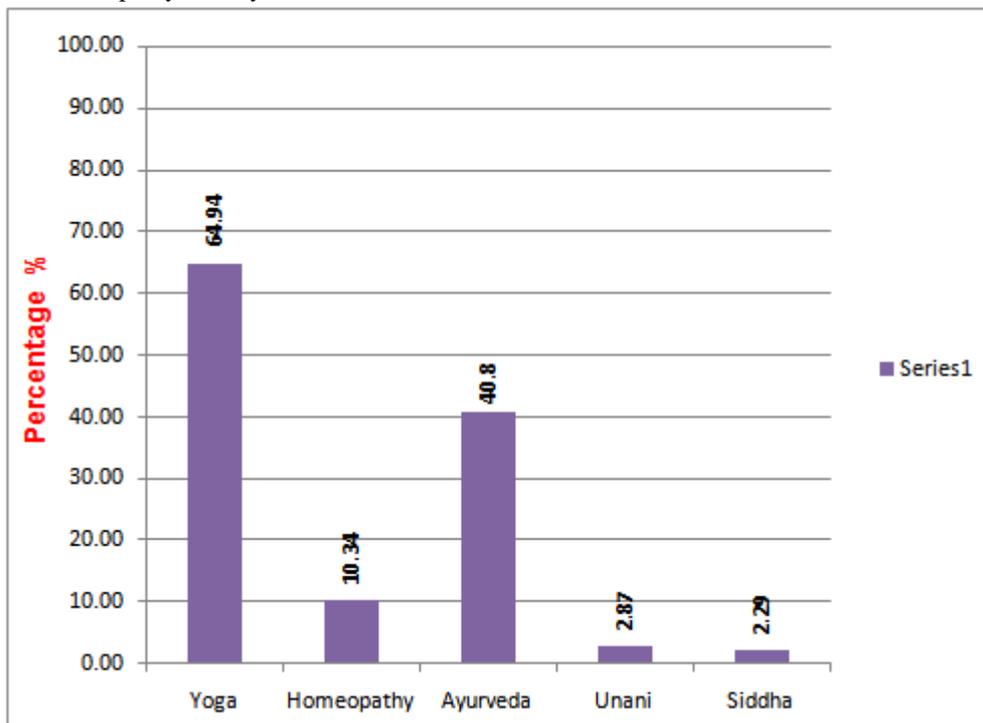


Figure 2 : Commonly recommended Traditional Medicine by allopathic doctors (More than one Option can also be chosen)

- a- Yoga b. Homeopathy c Ayurveda d. Unani e. Siddha



Only 34% (n=60) of Allopathy doctors would refer a patient to Ayurveda/Homeopathy practitioners if available at a Tertiary Care Hospital and 63% (n=110) would not prefer to refer. 23% (n=40) of the doctors were of the opinion that Allopathydoctors knowledge of AYUSH Practices would help in better patient outcome; 30% (n=52) were not of the opinion and 45% (n=78) did not make a decision.

Figure 3: Knowledge towards AYUSH among Allopathy doctors

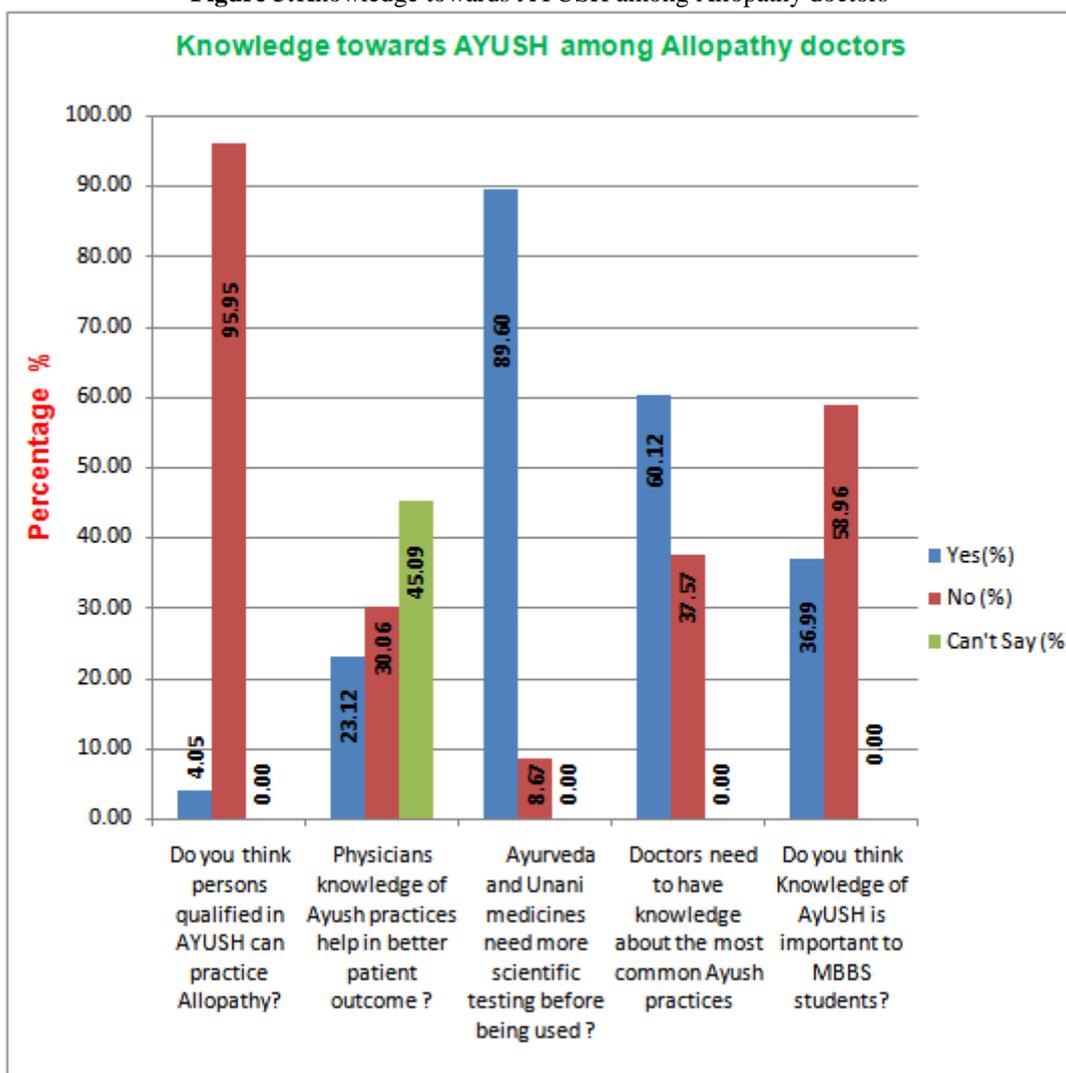


Figure 4: Attitude towards AYUSH among Allopathy Doctors

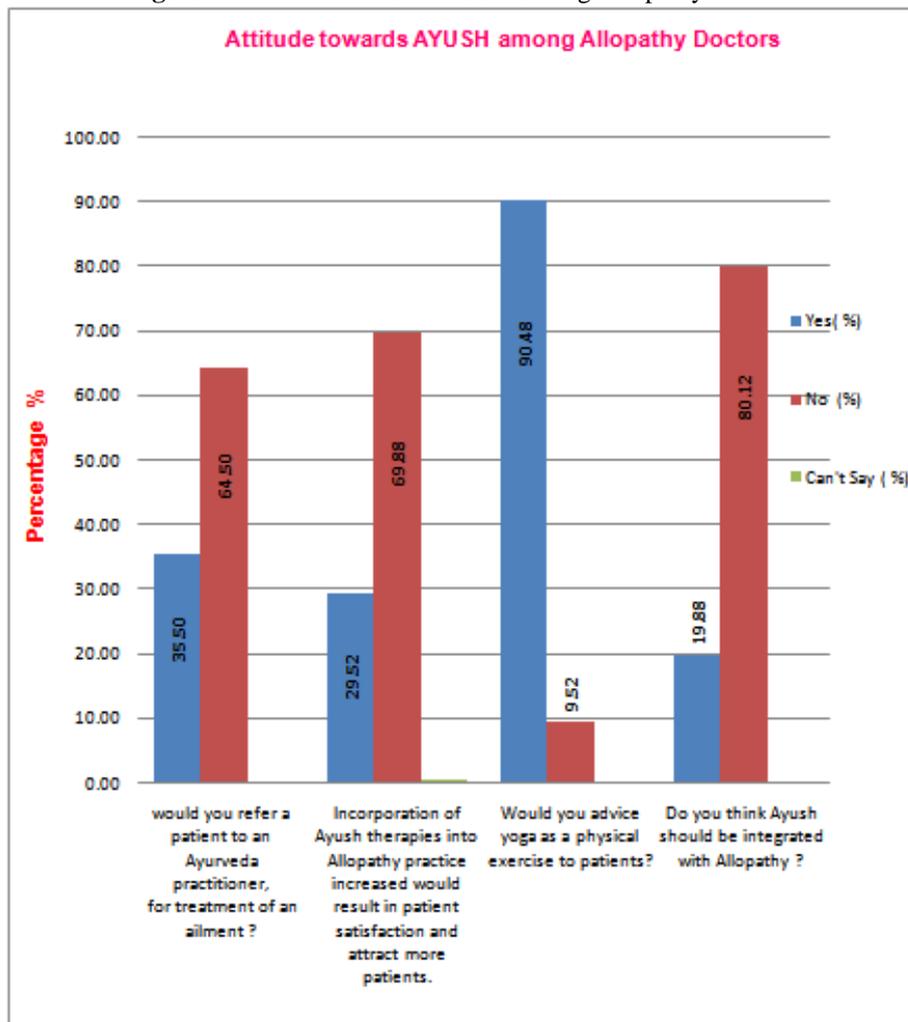
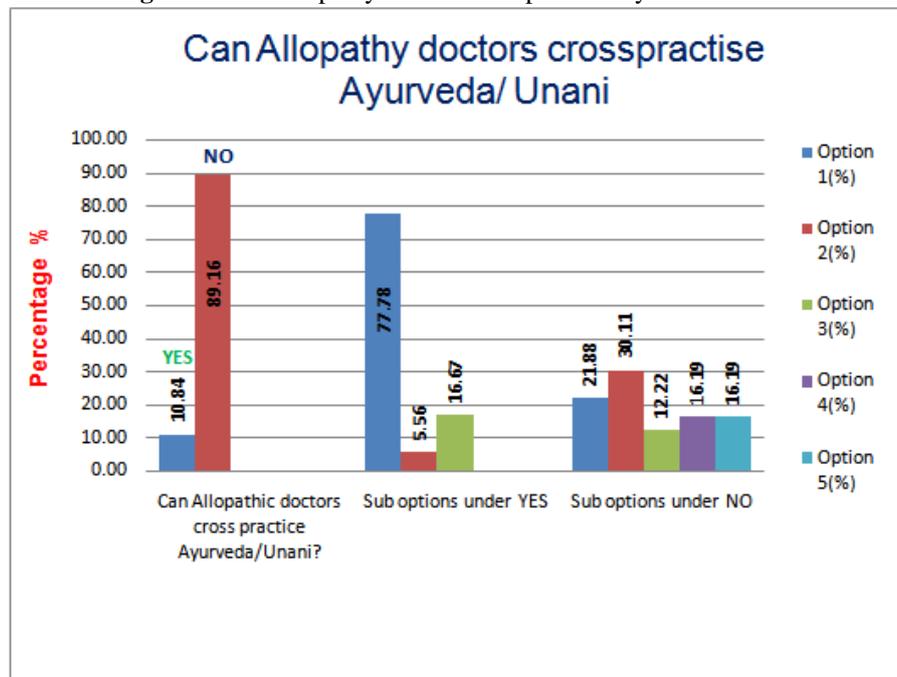


Figure 5: Can Allopathy doctors crosspractise Ayurveda/ Unani



For 'Yes' sub options are :-

- 1) For patient satisfaction and compliance
- 2) In Rural areas where there is scarcity of doctors
- 3) AYUSH is ancient medicine practiced for many years

For 'No' sub options are :-

- 1) Ayurveda drugs do not undergo scientific testing
- 2) Lack of knowledge about drug interactions, side effects and proper training of AYUSH practices
- 3) There are better options than AYUSH
- 4) AYUSH cannot be used in emergency
- 5) It can lead to malpractice

89% (n=155) of the doctors said that Ayurveda and Unani Medicines need more scientific testing before being used and only 3% (n=5) said it was not needed as they are being used since ancient times. 28% (n=49) of the doctors suggested that incorporation of AYUSH Therapies into allopathy practice would increase patient satisfaction and attract more patients but 67% (n=116) did not make the same suggestion. 60% (n=104) felt allopathy doctors needed to have knowledge about the most common AYUSH practices. 37% (n=65) did not feel the need. 87% (n=152) would advise yoga as a physical exercise to patients, only 9% (n=16) would not advise. 85% (n=148) of the doctors were of the opinion that allopathy doctors can do cross practice i.e. practice Ayurveda/Unani. 10% (n=17) did not agree. The reason given is 4% (n=14) for patient compliance and satisfaction. 1% (n=1) because in rural area there is scarcity of doctors. 10% (n=17) did not agree for cross practice i.e. Allopathy doctors to practice AYUSH. 85% (n=106) felt that Ayurveda drugs do not undergo scientific testing. 10% (n=57) felt that Ayurveda had lack of knowledge about drug interaction, side effects and proper training of AYUSH Practices. 3% (n=43) opined AYUSH cannot be used in emergency. 37% (n=64) were of the opinion that it is important for MBBS Students to have knowledge of AYUSH and 59% (n=102) were not of the opinion. 19% (n=33) though AYUSH should be integrated with allopathy and 76% (n=133) said it shouldn't. The commonly used Ayurveda preparations were Syp LIV 52 and Tablet Cystone. Space was provided for participants to indicate use of products commonly available.

V. Discussion

The Government of India has recognized Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Naturopathy, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) as Indian system of Medicine. This study documents findings amongst the practitioners of Allopathic regarding their knowledge, attitude and usage of AYUSH. The Government of India is planning to start a bridge course for doctors of AYUSH to enable them to practice Allopathic. Thereby the study is very significant to understand the knowledge, attitude and usage of AYUSH by allopathic doctors. Many studies have been done to know the knowledge, attitude and usage of AYUSH among allopathic doctors. KAP Studies regarding AYUSH were also done in the general population, nurses, paramedical personnel and allopathic doctors. But no study was done among faculty members of a Tertiary Care Institute/Medical College. In India a vast amount of medical knowledge has endured over thousands of years through exchange and assimilation between diverse cultures. Ayurveda has existed in India since about 4000 BC. The other systems date back to hundreds of years. Ayurveda and its pharmacoepidemiological research can correlate the relationship of people's awareness and practices of ayurveda focused towards public health. This study was done to know the knowledge and attitude of allopathic doctors towards AYUSH. All the allopathic doctors are working in various clinical departments of the Medical College/Hospital. This enabled the study to limit itself to doctors who are dealing with patients coming to the Tertiary care hospital from the surrounding rural areas and referred from the primary and secondary care hospitals. Patients in Rural and semi urban area use CAM Commonly and Unani medicines are also widely used. In this study knowledge, attitude and prescription patterns of AYUSH therapy to patients was studied. The usage of AYUSH among allopathic doctors for their personal use did not form a part of the study. In the study 88% of doctors knew the meaning of AYUSH, but surprisingly 6% did not know the meaning of AYUSH. The commonly recommended traditional medicine was Yoga (51%), than Ayurveda (32%) and Homeopathy (8%). Unani was not advised though it is widely practiced in this city. Yoga was recommended for conditions like low backache, obesity, stress, epilepsy, body pains, hypertension, Diabetes mellitus, thyroid disorder. Chronic arthritis, Cervical spondylosis, Rehabilitation after limb amputation, fatigue and Physical fitness. Psoriasis, Bronchial asthma, Sinusitis, Gastrointestinal diseases like Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Yoga was advised for non communicable diseases. Probably it was recommended for epilepsy as an article has proved the role of Yoga in decreasing the frequency of seizures in patients with Epilepsy. The commonly advised Ayurveda preparations were Liv52 and Cystone tablets. 34% of doctors would refer the patients to Ayurveda/Homeopathy Practitioners even if they are available in the same tertiary care hospital. 89% of allopathic doctors were of the opinion that Ayurveda and Unani Medicines need more scientific testing before their usage. Only 3% were of the opinion that it was not needed as they are being used since ancient

times. 23% of the doctors had the opinion that allopathic doctors having knowledge of AYUSH practices would help in better patient outcome. 28% suggested that incorporation of AYUSH therapies into Allopathic practice would increase patient satisfaction. 60% felt allopathic doctors needed to have knowledge about the most common AYUSH practices. As treatment for some conditions like Anal fistula had good outcome in Ayurveda surgery. 85% of the doctors were of the opinion that allopathic doctors can do cross practice Ayurveda/Unani, the reason given is 4% for patient compliance and satisfaction. 1% said because in rural areas there is scarcity of doctors. 10% did not agree for cross practice as 85% of them felt that Ayurveda drugs do not undergo scientific testing. 37% were of the opinion that it is necessary for MBBS students to have knowledge of AYUSH Practices. Most of the doctors advised allopathy medicines with AYUSH if patients were already using some form of AYUSH therapy as they were not sure of the outcome with AYUSH. But could not stop the patients from using AYUSH due to the deep belief of patients in AYUSH. Consultants advised AYUSH more than Resident doctors. This could be due to change in attitude and perception with age and life's experiences. Also dissatisfaction with conventional medicine may start with advancing age due to concerns of side effects, lack of satisfaction and not having a holistic approach. In an earlier study in the Indian Population, 51% of the study population started AYUSH therapy following dissatisfaction with allopathic medicines especially for chronic diseases. Most of the patients who visit the hospital are from the muslim population. Though unani is widely practiced in the area surrounding the hospital. The preferred treatment was homeopathy followed by Yoga and Ayurveda. Probably allopathic doctors have greater awareness of Homeopathy as a science and hence acceptability by doctors and advised to patients. Ayurveda and Yoga is easily available and less costly and thus is acceptable and preferred by patients. Majority of the doctors did not enquire with the patients whether they were using alternative therapies during the course of history taking. This could be because of lack of awareness on the doctors part about AYUSH. Another reason could be due to acute shortage of time for adequate history taking. The voluntary reporting about AYUSH use from patient's side to the doctor was also considerably low in this study (19%). Possible explanation could be that the doctors themselves do not address this topic and the patient may think it is not necessary or be fearful of the doctors reactions. AYUSH is also perceived as a safe therapy by most people. The self use of AYUSH and limited disclosure by the patients of alternative therapies could result in delays in starting conventional treatment, wrong diagnosis and interference with the mechanism of action of a prescribed allopathic medicine. If patients are not enquired whether they are using any other therapy may also result in drug interactions and unforeseen side effects. Meta analysis of literature and individual national surveys indicate that there is a significant interest in AYUSH among doctors from varying specialties. Although majority of doctors used AYUSH therapy only 34% referred patients for AYUSH. A Survey at the Mayo clinic in Rochester revealed that although most of the doctors agreed that AYUSH therapies held promise for the treatment of disease, most were not comfortable in counseling patients about AYUSH treatment. Lack of knowledge of sources of information about AYUSH specially Ayurveda was observed. A possible reason for this could be that the doctors feel they do not have sufficient knowledge to suggest use of AYUSH to their patients (23%) lack of knowledge among doctors has been a well cited reason in many studies for not to use or recommend AYUSH to patients. 37% of the doctors recommended that AYUSH should be incorporated into the medical undergraduate curriculum. This is similar to other studies where doctors felt that evidence based AYUSH should be part of medical curriculum. It is important that AYUSH be taught in medical colleges to sensitize and increase awareness about AYUSH both efficacy and safety. It can be taught in the II MBBS along with Pharmacology. Many allopathy doctors are interested in AYUSH, their services can be utilized for this purpose. This is especially important for India as the Government of India has made a proposal to conduct bridge course for AYUSH doctors to enable them to practice allopathy for the benefit of patients in rural area. The Government is opening more health centres for Indian system of medicine, sometimes in the same health facility as the Allopathy centres to promote holistic health care approach. Hence the need for sensitization of medical students to other system of medicine is extremely urgent. Introducing integrative medicine is extremely urgent. Introducing integrative medicine in the MBBS curriculum may be away to bring about the changes. Sensitization of medical graduates to AYUSH would enable them to understand the principles and basis of alternative medical therapies, their advantages and disadvantages. This will permit them to give the patients other therapeutic options available outside their own science. This may benefit the patient in the long run. Sensitization of medical graduates to AYUSH will not enable to prescribe AYUSH therapies, they would only be in a better position to understand the AYUSH therapies the patients are using, refer the patients to AYUSH and look for possible drug interactions. Since AYUSH is widely practiced and used, other issues like regulations in quality control and cross practice between AYUSH and allopathic need to be established. This is to give highest priority to patient safety, as all system of medicines whether allopathic or AYUSH, have their own advantages and disadvantages.

VI. Limitations of study

This study was done in allopathy doctors working in a tertiary care medical institution. It needed to also include doctors working in primary health centres and district hospitals, as AYUSH is widely practiced in Rural and semi urban areas in India due to financial and infrastructure constraints.

VII. Conclusion

AYUSH is widely used by patients in India, both in rural, semi-urban and urban areas often, concomitantly with allopathic medicines. Sensitization of medical graduates towards AYUSH to enable them to better understand the implication of the use of AYUSH by their patients. This will help in achieving the goal of holistic healthcare in the country.

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