Letter to the Editor

Kalabhojanam for health

Sir,

I read with deep interest the paper on the importance of meal timings in *Annals of Ayurvedic Medicine*. This paper is as valuable as it is interesting for both scientific purposes and public information. Though not a scientist by training, for this review I draw upon a career of daily work with scientists as well as my own experience in nutrition, natural foods and lifestyle, and traditional knowledge. Science of food and nutrition and their translational endeavor for improvement of human health are now hot topics in healthcare.\(^2\)\(^4\)

The paper adds significant value to the professional literature because, inter alia, it investigates an important aspect of human healthcare, i.e., improving metabolic processes, through a non-pharmaceutical solution—*kalabhojanam*—that is primarily driven by human behavior. Such solutions that empower people in their personal health care should be the true goal of any healing process or guidance by any healthcare practitioner, but sadly are seldom provided by or emphasized in modern medicine. The paper’s value is enhanced by the fact that its style of presentation is technical but not dense, rendering it easy for one to read, follow, and therefore assess its methods and findings. Such is not always the case in scientific papers.

The paper’s interest to me derives from how I see that it demonstrates respect, which is surely one of the most critical aspects of life practice if we earnestly wish to improve ourselves, our society, and our natural world. One very important evidence of respect is the paper’s honest, transparent style of holistic enquiry. I say honest because it seeks to clarify rather than defend its subject, and does so by using an investigative approach that calls upon a “fresh interpretation” and integration of three elements: modern science, knowledge as presented in the traditional literature (*Samhitas*), and experiential knowledge of practitioners. Such a synthesis is always more ultimately productive than other, less-holistic models of research, and is respectful because it tacitly demonstrates that there is value is each of these three, often-contrasting bodies of knowledge. Its honesty of enquiry is further confirmed through its transparent discussion, albeit necessarily brief, of contrary views.

Other evidence of respect is the contributing authors’ wise use of a diverse, international group of authors, and utilization of Open Peer Review (OPR). It would have been very easy for a paper on this subject to fall into the trap of leaning too heavily on Indian perspectives and experience in order to bolster the value(s) of what is essentially an ancient Indian concept. It doesn’t do that. To the contrary, it adds significant value to its subject and its findings by assembling a broad range of perspectives, and then subjecting it to even further examination and critique through a modern, “open source” style of review. This demonstrates respect for discourse among diverse peoples, which is the very foundation of good science and a strong human society.

Finally, by examining the importance of a non-pharmaceutical healthcare solution, the contributing authors demonstrate the essential value of respect for the human body and the world of nature that has fostered the development of the complex instrument we call ‘the body’. This respect, combined with respect for other peoples, is likely our greatest contribution to creating a better world.

In closing, one must comment on the timeliness of this paper. The issue of public health is a top-shelf concern now in India and around the world. The Covid19 pandemic and the response to it has laid bare for all to witness the pitifully inadequate investment many governments have made into their public healthcare systems. Let us hope and pray that the current pandemic will catalyze a change in this regard. Such a change is way overdue. Indeed, our
future may well depend on it when we face the inevitable – the next pandemic or other catastrophe related to the root cause of zoonotic spillover\(^5\), climate breakdown, habitat destruction and fragmentation\(^6\), and other accelerating, existential challenges — our broken relationship with the nature that supports we humans and all life.\(^7\) By clarifying and presenting the merits of kalabhojanam, these contributing authors both empower people to command part of their own personal healthcare, as well as demonstrate the efficacy of a low/no- cost, common sense, ages-old approach to good health.

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**References**


