

EDITORIAL

**A PROPOSAL FOR THE REVIVAL AND ADVANCEMENT
OF AYURVEDA EDUCATION**

It was on December 9th, 2012 that an Ayurveda Education Summit was held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, as a part of the 5th World Ayurveda Congress. Ten panelists possessing expertise in administration and research in the field of Ayurveda education were present during the summit. The authors of the present piece of 'editorial' too were the participants in the event as panelists.

Given the present status of Ayurveda education in India, we think it is worth recapitulating the major recommendations of the said summit. These proposals are especially pertinent on the eve of the 6th World Ayurveda Congress scheduled to be held in November 2014. In this editorial, we present a re-drafted summary of the major recommendations that emerged during the summit.

We hope that the relevant points are taken up by the Department of AYUSH and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for future course of action.

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RAISE THE STANDARDS OF GRADUATE LEVEL AYURVEDA EDUCATION

It has been noted that the extent of practical exposure to various clinical skills is the most important lacuna in the current system of graduate-level education in Ayurveda sector. Teaching is generally perceived as memory oriented instead of being analysis, skill and understanding oriented.

ROPE IN SUCCESSFUL CLINICIANS INTO EDUCATION

Every effort has to be made, to improve the exposure to basic clinical skills among the graduate students of Ayurveda. Every initiative to attract good practitioners into the education system must be encouraged. Shri Madhavacharya Gurukula system being run by a small group of individuals in Pune is one of the such efforts, where successful practitioners train the graduate students. The week-long workshops being conducted by AVP Research Foundation, Coimbatore (India) is another such effort that explores alternative methods of teaching and learning in Ayurveda. There is a need to encourage all such innovative initiatives.

PREPARE STANDARD TEXTBOOKS

The department of AYUSH needs to frame various committees of subject experts to come up with peer-reviewed standard textbooks for BAMS program. This would help in reducing the redundant materials from the existing curricula.

RE-WORK THE MINIMUM STANDARD REGULATIONS

Further, the department of AYUSH needs to re-consider the Minimum Standard Regulations that have been notified in 2012. They have led to a dilution in the rigor of the various educational programs. It is worth noting that there has also been uproar against these regulations in the recent past by the teachers and the students which has led to some modifications in these regulations. However, it is to be noted that such policy decisions must consider the welfare of the students and the teachers with an aim of improvising the overall standards of education. Therefore, there is a need for incorporating a few external members possessing expertise in educational policy in the Education Committee of the Central Council of Indian Medicine.

Establish local PPTAs (Parent-Patient (Public)-Teacher Associations) at each college level

It has been observed that the practice of appointing teachers only 'on documents' and not actually recruiting them physically in many colleges, is diluting the standards of education. Similarly, some institutions though register (admit on paper) students, don't actually teach and train them. These students rarely attend their duties in these colleges and turn up only during the examinations and inspections. As a result, the data in the dissertations submitted by these students are not reliable. This practice of 'on-paper teachers' and 'on-paper students' must be stopped. To address this, establishment of PPTA's needs to be made mandatory. These associations must be entrusted upon with the responsibility of reporting all academic misconduct by students, administration and teachers to the concerned University, State Government and the department of AYUSH. The representative of PPTA's must be allowed to meet and interact with the University, State Government and CCIM inspection committees.

FOCUS ON FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

At present, the faculty development program has taken a backseat in the education policy related to AYUSH. Specially, during the post-graduate education, the training of the educational techniques are not emphasized.

Recognize the centers of excellence and train the young teachers

To tackle this situation, the department of AYUSH must recognize a few centres as 'Centers of Excellence' with reference to a specific field / subject on the basis of their academic and research performances in the relevant field. These centers must be encouraged to conduct training programs in the form of CMEs / Workshops to the teachers so that standard of teachers' training may be elevated. A few recent initiatives taken up by certain institutions such as KLE University-Belgaum, IHST-Bangalore, IPGTR&A-Jamnagar, NIA-Jaipur and the Department of Kriyasharir-BHU, are worth noting.

The centers such as those listed above must be recognized as Centers of Excellence in Ayurveda education and they must be entrusted with the responsibility of training the teachers from all parts of the country in effective methods of imparting and conducting research in Ayurveda education. It is ideal to train every teacher during his/her first year of joining the service as teacher, by making him/her undergo training at such centers. Further, the postgraduate curriculum in every subject must include a rigorous training in various teaching methods and other skills related to

educational activities such as: podium presentation, judicious use of audio visual aids, examination and evaluation skill development etc.

There also a need for supporting educational research in Ayurveda as this has never been considered, a potential field of research in AYUSH sector.

INCLUDE EDUCATIONALISTS IN “CCIM” EDUCATION COMMITTEE

There needs to be a provision for incorporating the curriculum - designing experts, educationists, education-researchers and thinkers from the relevant fields as invited members in the Education Committee of CCIM.

ENCOURAGE TRANS-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Making BAMS graduates eligible for Masters’ programs MSc in mainstream sciences such as botany /zoology / anatomy/ physiology / molecular biology

Universities need to recognize Ayurveda graduates to be eligible for enrolling themselves in the Masters’ level mainstream science programs such as MSc in Botany/Zoology/Biochemistry/Pharmacology etc. AYUSH.GoI and UGC also needs to take initiative in this front. Further, those possessing the qualification of Ayurveda post graduation, must be made eligible for registering under PhD programs of relevant streams of mainstream science after passing in the concerned entrance tests.

Introduce AYUSH Module in MBBS curriculum

The Medical Council of India needs to be urged to incorporate a module on AYUSH systems in MBBS curriculum. This is not to enable MBBS graduates to become AYUSH practitioners, but to create awareness about the strengths of AYUSH systems among MBBS graduates.

ENABLE EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD AYURVEDA GRADUATES TO BE THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Include Ayurveda as an optional subject for Civil Services Examinations

Ayurveda is currently not included as an optional subject in the civil services examinations. The Government of India must consider this issue and must take necessary steps to include it so that able leadership would emerge out of this stream to enable appropriate changes in the national policies.

REGULATE PHARMACEUTICAL, PARAMEDICAL AND NURSING EDUCATION

Pharmacy education in AYUSH sector is currently unregulated and the panel recommended the establishment of Ayurveda Pharmacy Council. The possibility of incorporating Ayurveda Pharmacy education into conventional pharmacy educational programs might be worth exploring.

Paramedical Education and Nursing Education are currently not regulated in AYUSH sector. Establishment of some regulatory mechanism to ensure quality education in this sector is therefore needed.

PROMOTE HEALTHY COMPETITION AMONG TEACHING INSTITUTIONS

Currently there is no recognition for those institutions that perform exceptionally well. Hence, there is a need to introduce a healthy competition among them so that the goal of quality education is attained.

Introduce NAAC - like mechanism to rate the institutions

The department of AYUSH needs to establish a mechanism to grade the institutions with grading such as A, B and C depending on various performance parameters such as quality of teaching, quality of research, availability of infrastructure etc. QCI and NAAC may be requested to assist in this venture.

Introduce All India Common Entrance Tests at UG and PG level

Unnecessarily exhaustive and repetitive entrance examinations drain out the resources and energy of young aspirants. This can be avoided by having a limited number of common entrance tests at UG and PG level. This will also promote a healthy competition among the institutions so that they will be trying to attract the best candidates among the applicants.

RE-WORK THE POLICIES***Publish long-term Ayurveda educational policy***

Government of India needs to come up with a vision document with a clear long-term policy on medical education. The MOH&FW in consultation with MCI, AYUSH, CCIM, CCRAS and other stakeholders, needs to frame a committee to come up with such a document with clear phase-wise implementation plans for about next 25 years. This is required considering the frequent experimentation and changes that are being introduced in all facets of education without a clearly stated vision.

Uniform legislation regarding practice

Currently the legislature differs a lot from state to state in matters related to the use of essential allopathic drugs by Ayurveda practitioners. A uniform legislature applicable through out India is needed to address this issue. A list of essential and emergency drugs needs to be prepared and approved for the use by Ayurveda practitioners.

Re-think on introducing 3.5 year degree for Rural Medical Practitioners

MOH&FW needs to reconsider its proposal to introduce 3.5 year degree for Rural Medical Practitioners. The AYUSH practitioners already serving in rural areas can be considered and be given the requisite training to serve in various community health programs of national importance.

ENSURE TEACHER'S WELFARE

Attracting and retaining the talented teachers in the education system has been a challenge. The Government of India needs to introduce some regulations on 'minimum wages' for teachers in higher education domain. The present CCIM norms for recruitment/ promotions of teachers are too stringent when compared with the norms recommended by UGC or MCI. The CCIM therefore, needs to come up with a career advancement policy for teachers which must be comparable with other higher education sectors.

The above recommendations cover most of the vital areas in the education system that need repair. Through this editorial, we urge the department of AYUSH and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to have a serious look into these and come up with appropriate policy changes that are practical and relevant.

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