

Editor Speak

Dear Readers,

Holism in Medicine

There is frequent debate in different forums as to which of the medical system is superior in healthcare. The proponents of biomedical approach claim that it is the only scientific medicine. On another spectrum, there are several traditional health care approaches practiced over centuries of which few of them are popular even today. Out of such traditional practices some have evolved, organised and developed into system of medicines such as Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy, Chinese medicine etc, and few others emerged as drug less therapies such as Yoga, Naturopathy, Chiropractice, Osteopathy, Acupuncture etc. Though the World Health Organisation recognises these traditional approaches as well the modern biomedicine, there are efforts to discredit the merit of the one system that the other do not know or understand.

The biomedicine is based on the concept that the diseases are due to organic causes, could be biological agents, biochemical abnormalities, deficiencies etc, and uses pharmacologically active substance to correct the resultant diseases. The practitioners of that concept claim to be experts of modern scientific medicine. They succeed in demonstrating specific causative factors for particular disease and uses pharmacologically potent agent to correct the pathology. They could also successfully demonstrate experimentally the same in vitro models. The proponents of *vitalistic* system fail to imitate the same experimental models, thereby provide an opportunity to proponents of scientific medicine to propagate that all the traditional medical practices as sham and even show audacity to call a ban on them.

The advocates of traditional practices claim of understanding the patient at the level of their mind - body relation and hypothesis that the diseases are due to variations in *humors* or imbalances in *vital force* and adopt subtle treatment methods based on the medical philosophy of the system. They call their practice as *Holistic* and claim to be superior. The public acceptance, safety of the therapeutic modalities and evidences of centuries in treating illnesses are asserted to be their strength. To counter the criticism of proponents of biomedicine, the practitioners of holistic principle rebuke the potent toxicity of the modern therapeutic agents, the iatrogenic effect of drugs and even the inability to cure any long term diseases as brutal on natural pathologies.

Homeopathy is caught in between these two classes of distinct treatment approaches. The main reasons are (i) it uses highly dynamised (not mere dilution as is being propagated) medicine (ii) The route of action of medicine is not explainable; and (iii) pharmacokinetic changes the medicine produces in the biological system could not be demonstrable in vitro.

Tragically, though there is scientific deficit as in all other traditional medical systems, increasing public acceptance of the Homeopathy gives sore eye to their counterparts in the holistic group, bestowing discrete efforts to side with the proponents of sham theory to call homeopathy unscientific.

To qualify a medical system to be safe, it needs to follow a definite medical philosophy, art and science. When there is a homogenous blending of these three, that system become harmonised, holistic and aim for the patient's welfare. In Homoeopathy, there is very strong medical philosophy and well knitted artistic approaches. When Hahnemann propounded the principles of Homeopathy, it was rational and based on scientific knowledge of that time. This was the reason that Homoeopathy become so popular within a

short time of introduction and spread across the globe in no time. The science at that time well accepted the principles of Homoeopathy as the most modern therapeutic approach in curative, preventive and promotive health.

To debate whether a medical system is scientific or holistic might be only of academic interest. Every medical system has something to offer in health care. The public want a safe, effective and rational treatment. For this every medical systems has lot to evolve for a humanistic and caring medicine. The future medicine should not only be capable to cure the illness but assure that treatment modality resorted would not land the patient with another more potent disease for no fault of him.

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