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Role of Ayurveda in Primary Health Care: A Review

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ABSTRACT

The traditional Indian medicine called Ayurveda which originated thousands of years ago is still been widely practiced and famous as a first line of health care system. Ayurveda is opted as a first choice of initial health care method among people of India. The base of Ayurveda is it's certain unique principle's which makes it popular. The present paper elaborates the role of principles of Dinacharya, Rutucharya, role of Ayurvedic dietary principles, role of simply available medicinal plants, some kitchen spices and specially prepared mixtures called Rasayanas in prevention or primary health care. It also helps an individual to be in an equilibrium state of body, mind and spiritual elements. Also the role of Ayurveda in paediatrics, women's health and in geriatrics is described. There is need of integration of Ayurveda and Allopath at Primary Health Care level is also strongly advocated.

KEYWORDS

Primary health, Ayurveda Upakram, dinacharya, Rutucharya



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INTRODUCTION

Health is prime right to every human. Ayurveda an ancient health science is treasure and precious to human being. In today's swift lifestyle we did not have enough time to visit hospitals for primary ill conditions. Ayurveda has enough potential to cure through its primary health care approach. This is in fact a way of healthy life. The ultimate aim of Ayurveda "swasthasyasthyarakshanama" can be achieved if one can follow the principles of Swasthavritta. To maintain or to establish *dhatusamyā*, the laws of *dinacharya*, *ritucharya*, Ayurvedic dietetics, *vyadhikshmatva* are very helpful. "Health for all by 2000 AD"-India is a part of Alma Ata declaration made at USSR in 1978 by WHO. This aim can be gained only if use above mentioned resources available in Ayurveda. As also mentioned in Ayurveda that by neglecting all other things one should take care of his body because if body is unhealthy then nothing is existing¹.

What is primary health care?

Primary health care is a whole-of-society approach to health and well-being centred on the needs and preferences of individuals, families and communities. It addresses the major determinants of health and focuses on the complete and interrelated views of

physical, mental and social health and wellbeing².

Why is primary health care important?

Well-built primary health care is important to gain the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and universal health coverage. It will contribute to the attainment of other goals beyond the health goal (SDG3), including those on hunger, poverty, literacy, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, work and economic growth, reducing inequality and climate action.

A) Primary Health through Dinacharya (Daily Regimen).

i) Brahma Muhurt Utthan (Early waking up in morning)

In *Brahma muhurta* there will be availability of nascent oxygen in the aura which easily mixes with haemoglobin forming oxy haemoglobin reaching to distant tissues and also uplifts the immune system as oxygen deficient bodies are more susceptible to diseases³.

ii) Dantadhawan (Cleaning of teeth)

For cleaning the teeth the twigs of plants which are very easily available to nearby areas which should be mainly of *kashaya* (Astringent), *katu* (Pungent) and *tikta* (bitter) *rasa* dominant trees like *Arka* (*Calotropis procera*), *Nyagrodha* (*Ficus begalensis*), *Khadira* (*Acacia catechu*), *Karanja* (*Pongamia pinnata*) etc. should be



used. It helps to prevent the primary oral disorders like halitosis, dental plaque etc.

iii) **Abhyanga**(oil massage)

Common ailments like twakrukshata (dryness of skin), headache, insomnia can be easily prevented by the use of simple TilaTaila (Sesame oil) which is easily available in houses. Also, Abhyanga is one procedure mentioned in *dinacharyas* (daily regimen) and is an ancient Indian Ayurvedic approach adopted in treating various diseases. Sesame oil is commonly used for abhyanga because it comes under poly unsaturated fats and contains unusually large amounts of linoleic acid⁴.

B) **Primary Health through Rutucharya (Seasonal Regimen).**

By explaining the traditional knowledge of Ritucharya to common village people. In school going students we can prevent them from seasonal primary health disorders like common cold, weakness etc. Jangid *et al.* on the concept of *Ritus* and their effect on *Bala* described that the overall effect of *Hemanta Ritu* on *Bala* of healthy volunteers was maximum, effect of *Vasanta Ritu* was moderate and the effect of *Varsha Ritu* was minimum, and concluded

that *Hemanta* is *Ritu* of *PravaraBala*, *Vasanta* is *Ritu* of *MadhyamaBala* and *Varsha* is

Ritu of *AvaraBala*. Outcomes of the study proves the *Ayurveda* principles⁵.

C) **Primary Health through Ayurvedic dietary principles.**

i) **Ashtauharvidhivisheshaaayatana**

By creating awareness or by explaining the Ayurvedic dietary principles like *Ashtauharvidhivisheshaaayatana*⁶. *Prakriti* (Qualitative characteristic of food), *Karana* (Processing of food), *Samyoga* (Combination/mixing), *Rashi* (The Quantity), *Desha* (Habitat), *Kaala* (Time & Seasonal variation), *UpayogaSamstha* (Classical Ayurvedic Rules of eating) and *Upayokta*(The one who consumes the food/User).

ii) **Other Dietary principles of Ayurveda like Dwadashashanvichar etc.**

There is protocol for taking diet of any dietetic science having physiological and functional consideration eg. *Natidrutam*⁷ i.e. by taking food slowly, digestive enzymes will come late in contact with food and in an irregular manner and this will result in irregular digestion and *Nativilambitam*⁸ i.e. eating fast will lead to improper mixing of *BodhakaKapha* which hampers *Sanghata* leading to indigestion. So in this way application of these principles may help in practice for primary health. Incorporating *Sadvritta* regarding *bhojan* (Code and conduct related to diet) among people of small



villages, schools, colleges, offices can prevent primary health disorders like indigestion, obesity, weight loss, acidity, diabetes etc.

D) Role of simply available medicinal plants in primary health.

By explaining identification and primary uses of simple nearby available plant species to people one can achieve primary health.

a) Amalaki (*Embelica officinalis*)

Extracts of Amalaki fruits shows potent anti-pyretic and analgesic activities. A single oral dose of both ethanolic and aqueous extract (500 mg/kg, i.p.) showed significant reduction in hyperthermia in rats induced by brewer's yeast. Both extracts found pronounced inhibitory effect on acetic acid-induced writhing response in mice in the analgesic test⁹. So we can say that there is role of Amalaki as Antipyretic and Analgesic in primary health disorders.

b) Kanya (*Aloe vera*)

In comparison with silver sulfadiazine it was found that wounds healed faster using Aloe vera gel¹⁰ dressing. So in primary wound healing we can use as natural gel of Aloe vera.

c) Tulsi (*Occimum sanctum*)

Tulsi which is very easily available can be used to relieve stress. Tulsi helps to cover

lack of blood oxygen and it raises the survival time during anoxic stress. A study done on rabbits showed that Tulsi has tremendous ability to reduce the oxidative stress produced in the body¹¹.

d) Neem (*Azadirachtaindica*)

Leaf extract of Neem can help to lessen bacteria and plaque levels that results in progression of periodontitis. In 2004, the International Journal of Dentistry published a study showing that subjects using *Neem* gel experienced periodontal improvement when compared to a control group. A study published the same year in the Journal of Ethnopharmacology revealed similar findings. To take advantage of this herb's anti bacterial attributes, use a mouthwash made with several drops of water mixed *neem* leaf extract twice daily¹².

e) Shigru (*Moringa oleifera*)

The bark is boiled with potash to treat toothache and the seeds are grinded and taken orally for (H.I.V). The seeds are used for their antibiotic and anti-inflammatory properties to treat arthritis, rheumatism, gout, cramp and boils. The seed are roasted, pounded, mixed with coconut oil and applied to the affected area. Oil extracted from its seeds can be used for the same ailments¹³.

E) Role of Rasayana (Rejuvenating therapy) in primary Health.



The rising data suggest that the plausible mechanisms of rasayana may be by immunostimulation, enhancing cellular detoxification mechanisms, quenching free radicals, repair damaged non-proliferating cells, inducing cell proliferation and self-renewal of damaged proliferating tissues and replenishing them by replacing lost or mutated cells with fresh cells¹⁴.

F) Role of Ayurveda in primary health in pediatrics

In Ayurveda, pediatric health care can be brought under the umbrella of *Kaumarabhritya*. *Bhasmakanji* an unique *Annakalpana* is used in relieving swelling. *Jiraka* (*Cuminumcyminum* Linn.) can be used to apply over nipples of feeding mothers, if child vomits breast milk this is mentioned in *Balarogachikitsamanjari*¹⁵.

G) Role of Ayurveda for primary health in Women's.

The holistic regimen advised during various stages of pregnancy and childbirth comprising of thoughts, action, dietary modifications and herbs aims to ensure a healthy and smooth childbirth at the same time sustain the overall health, nutrition and well being of both the Woman and the baby. The measures are simple, easy to follow by women and families at the household level since the emphasis is on the use of locally available resources. The holistic regimen advised during various

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H) Role of Ayurveda in primary health in Geriatric healthcare



By creating awareness about importance of spirituality in old age we can achieve psychological stability. Religious and spiritual persons tend to recover from diseases more quickly¹⁷. Vayasthapana are specialized rasayana drugs that reverse degenerative changes, increase life span with quality health¹⁸.

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DISCUSSION

Ayurveda is a unique system of health science due to its philosophical approach and spiritual touch. Ayurveda may play an important role in the promotion of first aid treatment. The presentation of Ayurveda health education is in such a manner which makes the people aware of the health and its importance. Objectives of health education are to get rid a man from ignorance and to make him reliant. *Dinacharya, Rutucharya*, proper food etc. helps an individual to be in a balanced state of body, mind and spiritual elements. By using these basic Ayurvedic health principles one can achieve the somo-psycho-spiritual well-being of the community.

CONCLUSION

Primary health through Ayurveda in rural as well as in urban areas are gaining

popularity day by day. Only there is need of proper awareness and health education of primary health care. The Fundamental principles of Ayurveda and practices on Health, Food and Nutrition are quite different from those of biomedicine and western concepts. In the National Rural Health Mission, the role of AYUSH in Maternal and Child Health needs to be specified and included specifically in the primary health care services.



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