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Ayurveda for the Management of Non Communicable Diseases

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Modern world is changing rapidly and our life style has changed drastically over the years. Everything we do in our day-to-day lives is choreographed in such a way that demands speed; a race we all are compelled to take part in forcing us to live in materialistic world far away from peace and happiness. In comparison, our ancestors led a healthy and happy life because, they had used holistic remedies that complemented well with the nature.

All age groups of current scenario are prone to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Evidence shows that 16 million of all deaths attributed to NCDs occur before the age of 70. Children, adults and the elderly all are vulnerable to the risk factors that contribute to NCDs, whether from unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, exposure to tobacco smoke or the effects of the harmful use of alcohol.^[1] Few Key facts about NCD's are given below.^[1]

- ✓ NCDs kill 38 million people each year.
- ✓ Almost three quarters of NCD deaths (28 million) occur in low and middle income countries.
- ✓ Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCD deaths, or 17.5 million people annually, followed by cancers (8.2 million), respiratory diseases (4 million), and diabetes (1.5 million). These 4 groups of diseases account for 82% of all NCD deaths.

These diseases are driven by forces that include ageing, rapid unplanned urbanization, and the globalization of unhealthy lifestyles that lead to conditions like raised blood pressure, increased blood glucose, elevated blood lipids, and obesity etc.

Considering these increasing incidences of NCDs and their burden on global healthcare; *global mechanisms to reduce the avoidable NCD burden* including a *Global action plan for the prevention and control of NCDs 2013-2020* has been planned by WHO.^[2]

Since inception, modern medical science depended upon synthetic extracts or isolated principles, which are beneficial in breaking the pathology, but are also known for certain shortcomings like developing adverse effects, drug dependency etc. In addition; the modern system of medicine failed to provide effective treatment for many chronic NCDs. To overcome such shortcomings; interest on traditional systems of medicines started growing worldwide. WHO too recognized the significance of traditional remedies in Global health care system; and encourages, promotes traditional remedies in national healthcare programs, because they are comparatively safe and people have faith in such remedies etc.^[3]

Most of the NCDs are multi-factorial in origin. Hence, combinations of drugs acting on a single target is not likely to be satisfactory. Traditional medical systems like Ayurveda, which usually follow a wide range of protocols while treating a disease and prefer using

multi-components in their formulations might be helpful in counteracting such conditions.^[4]

Ayurveda is not merely a system dealing with healing techniques or curing diseases, but is indeed a codified science which provides definite norms for healthy, peaceful and happy living. It provides guidelines for the maintenance and protection of physical and psychological health, with the objective of achieving longevity. The system has been primarily developed with two basic aims: (i) protection and promotion of health and prevention of illness, and (ii) eradication of disease.^[5] The first objective is sought to be achieved by observance of guidelines related to healthy living and a wholesome diet, enabling the individual to have a long, healthy and happy life. The second objective, which deals with disease and the curative aspect, provides guidelines for physicians regarding the management of different diseases. It can be seen that Ayurveda is not just a curative medical science but also a way of healthy living.

Ayurveda always emphasizes on preventing disease occurrence rather than start treating them after manifestation. Prevention is better than cure. According to Ayurveda, the root cause of all diseases is violation of rules of behavioural and moral conduct. It will not be out of place to reproduce a quote of Vagbhata from *Ashtanga Hridaya* which reads as under:^[6]

“One who carefully observes the rules regarding diet and behavioural practices, consumes healthy and wholesome food, observes beneficial practices, carries himself thoughtfully in daily activities, does not succumb to passion and greed, who cherishes a selfless noble generous nature, has equal respect for every living being in all conditions, speaks and relies on the truth, maintains a forgiving attitude and reposes faith in knowledgeable, experienced and elderly persons is successful in maintaining healthy living and a healthy body and in leading a disease-free, peaceful, healthy and happy life”.

Ayurveda is developed by the experiences and wisdom of Indian ancestors. Recent works have helped in generating evidences about the impact of traditional practices in the management of certain NCDs.^[7-13] These combinations of different formulations and treatment approaches synergistically act together exerting multi-variant effects which are effective in curing or preventing disease conditions. Combinations of different Ayurveda formulations and treatment approaches may synergistically act together exerting multi-variant effects, which can be proven to be effective in managing or preventing disease conditions. The efficiencies of such practices in providing long lasting effect on such NCDs need to be compared, documented and published in standard journals, rather than obscure journals that will facilitate in involving traditional practices in the management of NCDs.

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