





## EDİTÖRE MEKTUP / LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### **Integrating AYUSH in healthcare delivery system of India**

AYUSH'u Hindistan'ın sağlık dağıtım sistemine entegre etmek

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To the Editor,

India has a population in excess of more than 1.3 billion and the health care needs of the general population are quite diverse and heterogeneous<sup>1</sup>. Thus, there is no doubt that in order to meet the needs of the general population, the health care delivery system has to play a vital role<sup>1</sup>. In-fact, the health workforce in Indian settings is also quite varied and multifaceted, ranging from rigorously trained specialists / super-specialists on one end of the spectrum to the outreach workers on the other end<sup>1,2</sup>.

The general trend in India has been that almost all the specialists and super-specialists from almost all the branches of Allopathic medicine, predominantly prefer to work in the urban settings, which is an indirect indicator that the health care needs of the rural population or those living in vulnerable settings have been ignored big time<sup>2,3</sup>. Even though, it is reasonable at times due to lack of infrastructure support and limited opportunities for the professional growth, but that remains the major reason for no significant improvement in the health indices of the population<sup>1,2</sup>.

Acknowledging all these problems, it is high time that adequate strategies should be formulated to enhance the integration of the specialists from the Alternative system of Medicine (Ayurvedic, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH)) with the health care delivery system in India<sup>1,4</sup>. Even though, this concept has not been new and has already been envisaged under the

National Rural Health Mission, it is a high time to do an introspection of the developments<sup>5</sup>. The review of literature of the available studies clearly indicates that a lot needs to be done and we have failed to bring the AYUSH streams of doctors in the mainstream<sup>2,4</sup>. As a result, the people who are residing in difficult settings are paying the price of unavailability of the trained doctors in their nearby vicinity<sup>1,2</sup>.

To a great extent, it is a failure on the part of the health sector and the other stakeholders who have not adequately supported the AYUSH specialist to make their mark in the minds of the local population<sup>2,3,6</sup>. Further, the available evidence clearly suggests that it is also because of the minimal allocation of financial support, shortage of drugs, poor infrastructure, and limited advocacy – communication & social mobilization related activities pertaining to the field of AYUSH<sup>3,4,7</sup>. All these potential factors have made it extremely difficult for the alternative systems of doctors to practice or come into the mainstream<sup>1,3,7</sup>. The available studies have revealed that there is an immense need to integrate and mainstream the AYUSH branches in the health care delivery system, including the national programs<sup>4,6</sup>. In addition, there is a significant need to encourage and facilitate in setting up of specialty center, strengthen Quality Control Laboratories & the process of drug standardization and promotion of research<sup>6,7</sup>. Further, steps have to be taken to foster linkage between AYUSH activities and other concerned sectors or health workers like Accredited Social

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Health Activists<sup>1-3</sup>. Regardless of all these problems, definite evidence has been observed from some parts of the nation, wherein steps have been taken to ensure that AYUSH specialists are the part of the health care delivery system in India, not by chance, but by their choice<sup>2-4</sup>. These are encouraging signs and are an indication that even the uphill task of bringing AYUSH practitioners into the mainstream is quite possible<sup>3-5</sup>.

In conclusion, AYUSH practitioners constitute an important section of the health system in India and it is high time that they are involved in the health care delivery to the optimal extent to improve the health care standards of the vulnerable sections of the society.

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