

Integrative Medicine



The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." For this purpose, a unique health system is required. The mainstream health system also called as Modern system of medicine has failed to achieve this ultimate state of health which Ayurveda or many other health systems talk. But the problem with traditional or Complimentary medicine systems is that these could not come out of their regional and geographical limits or silos. According to the Cambridge dictionary, 'Integration' means to mix and join. The Longman dictionary of contemporary English explains integration as "the combining of two or more objects so that they work together effectively". So in a general sense, integration is bringing together the objects or things and utilizing them for the more extensive interests. When we talk about the integrative medicine, it means as practising 'medicine in a way that selectively incorporates elements of traditional, complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) into comprehensive treatment plans alongside solidly orthodox methods of diagnosis and treatment' (<https://www.bmj.com/content/322/7279/119>). Another definition characterizes Integrative Medicine as healing-oriented medicine that takes account of the whole person, including all aspects of lifestyle. It is a system of medicine which is patient-centric and sees the patient as a whole and cares about his physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being. In the western world, integrated medicine is developing to absorb Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the framework of Bio-medicine. There are regulatory environment and system for integrated medicine in a few western countries.

In India also a concept of integration is developing and Government is planning to come out with an idea 'One Nation One Health system'. The reality is that in India, pleural health systems are there with regulatory provision for each of these systems. Bio-medicine or western medicine is the mainstream health system, but other systems also have their standing at national or regional levels. To integrate these systems with themselves and with mainstream medicine is a difficult task. However, the Indian Government has constituted working groups to integrate education, research, practice, public health and administration under the chairmanship of eminent experts of the country. These groups are extensively working hard to come out with some sustainable but dynamic models of integration.

Integration is the need of the nation and the professionals of each system of medicine should have first-hand knowledge of every system and should have mutual respect for every system and their experts. Physicians must know the strengths of each system, and those strengths must be utilized for the well-being of society at large. At the same time, the experts of each system should be able to understand the weaknesses and limitations of their systems. They should have good communication with other systems for broader interests. Experts and scientists seem to be agreeing on the point that the integration should initially be at graduation level. But one has to be very cautious that while integrating the systems, the identity, originality and purity of respective systems should be maintained and one system should not get lost or carried away by other system/s.

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