

## Guest Editorial

## Yoga for Today's Health care

Medicine ('biomedicine', 'allopathic medicine', 'conventional medicine') is a health care approach, applies scientific principles, utilizes medical research to treat specific diseases and prevent illness. Commonly used strategies involved are use of pharmaceuticals and surgical procedures with technologically advanced interventions. A strong belief in allopathic medicine is that most diseases can ultimately be determined to have a physical, biochemical, infectious or genetic cause. The Influence of mind on health and disease is not much emphasized in medical education except in the discipline of psychiatry.

With increased occurrence of and other lifestyle diseases today's healthcare demands new strategies. There is a growing demand by consumers on health care that offers quality, affordability, and personalized care. Current health care system is untenable given the cost of health care with limited outcomes. It needs enrichment by integrating complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) into the conventional medicine. CAM is a term that is used to describe a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not considered to be part of conventional medicine. CAM includes a wide variety of disciplines and practices, ranging from licensed chiropractors, naturopathic physicians, and traditional Chinese medicine practitioners to yoga or meditation teachers.

Basic knowledge on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) needs to be incorporated into conventional medical education. National center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) was established in 1998 at the NIH in response to public interest in CAM. As of 2003, 98 of 126 U.S. medical schools have incorporated at least some teaching on CAM into their curricula.<sup>[1]</sup> The concept of integrative medicine (bringing conventional and complementary approaches together in a coordinated way) has emerged in the recent past that resulted in updating the NCCAM to National Centre for Complementary and Integrative Medicine (NCCIM).<sup>[2]</sup> Interest in integrative health care and the use of CAM therapies has continued to grow since three decades. The concern also has increased that health professionals be sufficiently informed about integrative health that they can effectively provide. A holistic philosophy underlies

many CAM (Holism). A whole medical system consists of a philosophy and theory about health and illness along with specific types of treatment. The recommendations are, to advance integrative health care and enable the present current health care system that is sporadic, reactive, disease oriented and physician-centric, to move to one that emphasizes on health, wellness, early intervention, patient empowerment, and focus on the full range of physical, mental, and social support to improve health and minimize the burden of disease.

Yoga is one of the oldest sciences that took its roots in India. The word "Yuj"(sanskrit) implies, bending, joining, yoking, and focusing the mind. In Bhagwad Gita the word Yoga means "Equanimity of Mind". Yoga Vasista says, Yoga is a means for quietening the mind ('Manah prashamanopayah yoga ityabhidhiyate' in Sanskrit). Maharshi Patanjali, a great Indian sage first codified yoga in the treatise 'Yoga darshana' (Yoga Sutra). In its second verse yoga is stated as "the cessation of movement in the consciousness" ("Yogah Citta Vrtti nirodah" in Sanskrit), achieved through practice and dispassion. The first stage of healing involves the movement of vital forces in the system. It is believed that every illness involves a certain level of energy blockage. Yoga promotes the flow of prana, or vital force, combats those blockages, restores health. Yoga therapy includes physical practices, breathing exercises, relaxation and meditation practices. There is a blend of technical competence and service orientation, steered by ethical commitment and social accountability; these form the essence of professional work. The startling doubling of life expectancy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is attributable to improvements in living standards and to advances in knowledge.<sup>[3]</sup> Abundant evidence suggests that good health is at least partly knowledge based and socially driven.<sup>[4,5]</sup>

Health professionals are the service providers who link people to technology, information, and knowledge. They are also caregivers, communicators and educators, team members, managers, leaders, and policy makers.<sup>[6]</sup> Integrative medicine educates and empowers people to be active participants in their own care. It Integrates Western scientific medicine with a broader understanding of the nature of illness, healing, wellness and creates a

culture of wellness.<sup>[7]</sup> In Indian health system the attitudes of health professionals toward integrative health care and CAM needs to undergo a significant shift. A dialogue should begin to identify innovative strategies that could impact each health profession's education. The development of specific integrative health care competencies and interdisciplinary education should initiate at the undergraduate and graduate level. The health of the public may be served by incorporating an integrative health perspective into health professions education and workforce planning, deployment, and utilization. India can lead the Integrative Medicine research as it has already well established conventional medicine and AYUSH systems.<sup>[8]</sup> Yoga is well received as a therapeutic intervention and the number of people practicing yoga in the US increased significantly between 1997 and 2002.<sup>[9]</sup> 75% of US adults have used some form of complementary or alternative medicine (CAM).<sup>[10]</sup>

While it decries the historical lack of comprehensive workforce planning, it focuses exclusively on conventional health professionals including physicians, nurses, optometrists, pharmacists, dentists, psychologists, public health professionals, podiatrists, and other allied health professions (defined here as dental hygienists; occupational, physical, and respiratory therapists; and physician assistants). Education of health professionals occurs in a wide variety of public and private settings. Within some academic programs preparing physicians and nurses, information on integrative health and medicine is taught in required or elective curricula. Topics commonly addressed include relationship-based care, whole person care (i.e., mind, body, and spirit), CAM, and self-care. At present, six fields of complementary health practice—osteopathic manipulation, chiropractic, acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine, therapeutic massage, naturopathy and homeopathy—are subject to some form of educational accreditation and state licensure.

Regulatory bodies governing education in the various health disciplines should mandate the inclusion of integrative health in basic, advanced, and postgraduate training. Lifestyle choices, behaviors, and outcomes included but should not be limited to diet, exercise, and stress reduction. The integrative health care by virtue of its overarching humanistic philosophy and broad bio-psychosocial perspective aligned with evidence-informed clinical decision-making could have the power to transform the training of all health care professionals to be able to deliver a safer, more effective, and more coordinated health care.

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## Dr. P N Venkata Rathnamma

Professor, Department of Medicine  
Sri Devaraj Urs Medical College,  
Sri Devaraj Urs Academy of Higher Education and  
Research, Tamaka, Kolar, Karnataka, India.  
E-mail: drpnvr@gmail.com