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## ANCIENT AYURVEDIC GUIDELINES FOR COMMENCEMENT OF CLINICAL PRACTICE

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### ABSTRACT

*Ayurveda* – the science of life; lays down ethics for lifestyle, treatment of diseases and conduct of the medical practitioners and healthcare staff, besides a disciplined patient and a potent medicine for proper management of health care challenges. Extensive literary research was carried out to highlight the intensive detail regarding induction into an ethically apt and essentially remarkable practice of medicine on part of the doctor. *Ayurvedic* texts have laid down strict rules regarding the educational qualification, while laying stress on the importance of practical knowledge and presence of mind of the doctor. Also, the *Acharyas* of *Ayurveda* have differentiated practitioners from the quacks on the basis of various qualities exhibited by them; and have also emphasized the qualities of an ideal physician and ideal surgeon. Besides this, *Ayurveda* also gives importance to certain qualities on part of the patient that make treatment more effective and promote better prognosis. Thereafter stress has been laid on the various techniques for sterilization of the wound and patient; while also giving due importance to the disinfection of the environment to minimize the occurrences of fomite based infections. The ancient masters of *Ayurveda* have also laid down the provision for consent of the patient or his kin prior to any invasive / surgical intervention besides for patients suffering from critical conditions as well.

The article is a literary research study to highlight the stringent rules and regulations laid down by the *Acharyas* of *Ayurveda* regarding commencement of clinical practice and authorization for entry into the medical field. The aim of the article is to compile and highlight these ancient rules and regulations to emphasize the holistic and far sighted approach of the science. The rules laid down centuries ago hold no essential gaps in regard to today's challenging scenarios as well.

**Keywords:** Medical ethics, practice of medicine, practice of surgery, patient consent, sterilization techniques, commencement of clinical practice.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda – the science of life; lays down ethics for lifestyle, treatment of diseases and conduct of the medical practitioners and healthcare staff, besides a disciplined patient and a potent medicine<sup>[1]</sup> for proper management of healthcare challenges. Ayurveda presents as a simple science for the masses while at the same time unravels great mysteries for the practitioners of this discipline. Ayurveda vividly lays down principles and protocols for an Ayurvedic practitioner along with an additional set of instructions for those who venture into surgical field as told by the *Acharyas*.

The ancient texts have laid a lot of emphasis on the importance of proper theoretical and practical knowledge before venturing into clinical practice. Guidelines were laid down centuries ago regarding permission from the king (government authorities) before commencement of an ethical and professional clinical practice. The authorities in the ancient times would also keep a check on the ethical considerations being practiced by the *Vaidyas* and they were accordingly given the titles of *Raja Vaidya*, *Pranabhisara Vaidya*, *Rogabhisara Vaidya*, etc. Also, the *Acharyas* had mentioned the importance of Consent, Sterilization and Ethical practice for a successful clinical practice of the science. The article is an honest attempt to emphasize, compile and highlight the thorough knowledge of curricular and administrative aspect of *Ayurveda* as laid down by the *Acharyas* for the commencement of clinical practice.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The information mentioned in the primary text in medicine i.e. Charaka Samhita and the primary text in Surgery i.e. Sushruta Samhita have been deeply studied. The information in regard to commencement of clinical practice has been extracted, compiled and elaborated upon. All the matter hence collected has been reorganized and critically analyzed for discussion and an honest attempt has been made to draw fruitful conclusions and highlight the protocol mentioned in Ayurveda to be followed before commencement of a Clinical Practice of Ayurveda and also for carrying out ethically standardized and successful career.

## LITERARY REVIEW

### An overview of the protocol laid down by the Acharya in Ayurveda

#### 1. Rules regarding the doctor

(a) Educational Aspect

In this regard Acharya Sushruta has elaborated that a student of *Ayurveda* must read the extensive texts regarding *Ayurveda* with full concentration and dedication and thereafter must follow the technique of *Yogya* (practice of surgical techniques on materials which resemble human tissues done before conducting/assisting in surgical techniques on live human tissues). Only a student who has followed these steps religiously can go ahead with practicing *Ayurveda* that too only after the consent of the authorities [2]. Also, further he mentions that a disciple of *Ayurveda* must ask for the permission of the King (government authorities) before joining clinical practice in *Ayurveda* [3].

Nowadays, this procedure is carried out in the form of Ayurvedic studies followed by an internship and registration by the state and central Authorities before being granted a license to treat.

Furthermore, Acharya Sushruta has stated that after studying the theoretical details of treatment in *Ayurveda*, the concerned student must also undergo extensive practical training under the guidance of an expert physician or surgeon. This provides required exposure and experience to the student before they can practice the science on their own [4]. Only a person who has extensively worked on the theoretical and practical aspect of *Ayurveda* can be successful in treating the patients fearlessly and to the best extent [5].

(b) Wit of the practitioner

Furthermore the ancient Ayurvedic texts also mention that a practitioner must also be alert and possess enough presence of mind to be able to apply the rules of treatment for the optimum benefit of the patient [6].

(c) Regarding Ethical Categorization of Practitioners

*Acharya Agnivesha* has classified the doctors on the basis of various ethical and practical considerations into the following categories as mentioned in the *Charaka Samhita*

- Qualities of Raja Vaidya (Royal physician) [7]

A physician is fit to be appointed as the royal physician if he/she possesses four-fold knowledge regarding the cause of diseases, diagnosis,

methods of alleviating them (cure) and preventing the recurrence of diseases. The physician, who possesses keen knowledge of the science, critical approach, sharp memory, promptness and perseverance, can be appointed as the royal physician.

- Qualities of *PranabhisaraVaidya* (savior of life)<sup>[7,8]</sup>

A *Vaidya* who is born in noble (respectable) family, is well read, has sufficient practical experience, who is skilful, possesses purity of mind and deeds, has all equipment at hand and is endowed with healthy and sharp sense organs, has presence of mind, is acquainted with the anatomy and physiology of the entire body is known as the *PranabhisaraVaidya*.

- Qualities of *RogabhisaraVaidya* (pursuers of diseases)<sup>[9]</sup>

Such people move from one place to another place in search of livelihood in the grab of physicians. Once they hear about somebody's sickness, they get drawn towards him and start enumerating their own qualities (merits) very loudly (openly) so that the patient and patient's relatives could listen to them. If a physician is already attending the patient *RogabhisaraVaidya* repeatedly try to find fault in his treatment. They win over the friends of the patient by pleasing manners, giving him presents, by serving him etc. They also proclaim that they are interested in a nominal remuneration only. After they succeed in winning the patient heart, they examine the patient again and again skillfully try to cover their poor knowledge of medical science. If they are not able to cure the disease, they blame to the patient and his attendants. As soon as the patient is nearing the stage of death, they flee away to some other place adorning the same grab.

- Qualities of *Bhishakchadhamchar* (pseudophysician)<sup>[10]</sup>

Those are people who come to be known as physicians simply by virtue of the exhibition of the pots (vessels, bottles, containers etc) medicines (drug, herbs, powder etc) and books of medical science. These *Vaidyas* are ignorant of the science of medicine. They are simply counterfeits (quacks)

- Qualities of *SiddhisadhitVaidya* (feigned physician)<sup>[11]</sup>

These *Vaidyas* attribute their association to another person accomplished in wealth, fame and knowledge and also come to be known as physicians, even though they are not so.

- Qualities of *VaidyagunayuktaVaidya* (genuine physician)<sup>[12]</sup>

A *Vaidya* who knows the methods of administration of therapies and has obtained infallible success, who bestows happiness to the patient and who protects the life of patient till nature permits, comes under the category of genuine or real physicians.

(d) Qualities of an ideal practitioner

In the *SushrutaSamhita*, *AcharyaSushruta* mentions that a physician, who has studied the science of Ayurveda in detail (*AdhigataShastraartha*), who has attended demonstrations of the practical and surgical aspects of *Ayurvedic* treatment (*Drushtrakarma*), followed by doing the procedures himself under the guidance of a learned teacher (*Swayamkruti*), has a firm yet light / easily manoeuvrable hand (*Laghu Hasta*), maintains good hygiene (*Shuchi*), is courageous (*Shoora*), is equipped with medicine, surgical instruments, has an alert mind to make quick decisions when the need arises (*Pratyutpanna-Mati*), is intelligent (*Dhimaana*), has regard for his profession (*Vyavasaiye*), has mastered the art of treatment (*Visharada*), is truthful and a man of high morals. Such a person is fit to be a *Vaidya* <sup>[1]</sup>.

He also underlines that when such a *Vaidya* when associated with an able nursing assistant [who has love for the patient (*Snigdha*), doesn't shirk away from serving the patient (*Ajgupsu*), is strong/ able bodied (*Balavaana*), dedicated towards serving the patient (*VyadhitaRakshano*), follows the doctor's word (*Vaidyavakya Krita*), has enough stamina (*ShrantaPaada*)<sup>[1]</sup> and a collection of effective medications [which have been grown in a suitable environment (*PrashastdeshaSambhootam*), have been plucked in appropriate *Nakshatra* (*Prashastahani cha Uddhritam*), have been administered in the correct dosage (*YuktaMatram*), are fresh, un-infected and pleasurable to look at (*Manaskaantam*), have appropriate smell, colour and taste (*Gandha-Varna-Rasaanvitam*) to maintain the *doshika* homoeostasis, do not cause aversion (*Aglaanikaranam*), works effectively against the disease (*VikaraViparyaya*), have been administered after proper case taking/ examination and are as per

the *Aushadha Kala (SamikshadattamKaale)*<sup>[1]</sup> has the potential to win over various diseases.

*Acharya Sushruta* who has been considered as the Father of Surgery mentions the qualities of a surgeon stating that he/she should be bold to be able to approach any situation with enough confidence, should be light handed i.e. must be swift in his actions, must have a set of well-maintained instruments at hand, should not tremble or sweat terribly on being faced with an emergency and also such a person should not get carried away while treating the patient<sup>[13]</sup>.

He also mentions that before joining practice a person must be well versed in practical and descriptive human anatomy. This helps a disciple of the science of medicine to clear off any doubts in relation to the structure of human body before actually treating one<sup>[14]</sup>. Also, *Acharya Sushruta* mentions that to gain appropriate knowledge of the science of *Ayurveda*, a student must go through a wide range of texts as elaborated by various *Acharyas* to gain a holistic and well-informed point of view in regard to the diseases encountered<sup>[15]</sup>.

While highlighting the regard for Vaidya in the eyes of his patients *Acharya Sushruta* mentions that a patient in times of great illness may doubt his relatives, children and in certain cases even his parents; but has full faith in the treating doctor. He gives himself up in the hands of the doctor without a second thought. Therefore, it is the moral duty of the doctor to treat his patients with as much love and compassion as he would have for his own children<sup>[16]</sup>.

## 2. QUALITIES OF AN IDEAL PATIENT

Certain qualities of the patient that make treatment more effective and promote better prognosis have been highlighted by *Acharya Sushruta* mentioning that an ideal *Rogi* who has the desire to be relieved of his disease must be rid of *Arishtalakshanas (Aayushmana)*, should possess a strong willPower (*Satvawaana*), should be suffering from a curable disease (*Saadhyo*), should have enough resources and wealth to be able to afford the treatment (*Dravyawana*), should have self-control (*Atmawana*), should have faith (*Aastiko*) and who has

faith in the instructions of the *Vaidya* and follows the advice strictly (*Vaidyavakyastho*)<sup>[1]</sup>.

On the other hand, *Acharya Charaka* adds that the doctor must abstain from claiming great chances of success in the treatment of incurable diseases. A practitioner who approaches an incurable patient and makes tall claims in regard to his/her treatment; such a practitioner is bound to suffer a loss in terms of refinement of his professional skill, tarnishing of his professional glory, suffers financial losses and also earns himself a bad name <sup>[17]</sup>.

### 3. A GLIMPSE INTO THE STERILIZATION TECHNIQUES

(a) Sterilization of the environment:

Many drugs (*Aushadha*) have been mentioned to have bactericidal and fungicidal actions. These drugs have been classified into Drug classes (*Aushadha Vargas*) that may be used appropriately for the purpose of environmental sterilization through various methods.

(b) Sterilization techniques to be followed by the doctor and assistants:

*Acharya Sushruta* the '*Vishikhanupraveshya Adhyaya*' of the *Sushruta Samhita* mentioned that the doctor and his assistants must take *Snana* / body wash and hand wash before the procedure and adorn *Shukla* / unstained white, *Shuchi* / clean sterilized gown <sup>[2]</sup>.

(c) Sterilization of the wound:

*Acharya Sushruta* mentions that the wounded/ post-operative patient must be exposed to *Dhoopana* by a mixture of *Guggulu* (*Commiphora wightii*), *Aguru* (*Aquilaria agallocha*), *Sarjarasa* (*Vateria indica*), *Gaura Sarshapa* (*Brassica alba*), *Lavana* (Salt) and *Nimba Patra* (*Azadirachta indica*). This mixture may also be anointed over the wound or the *Marmasthanas* (vital points in the body which have been mentioned to be the seat of *Prana* or life energy) of the patient to save him from the harmful effects of various pathogens <sup>[18]</sup>.

### 4. IMPORTANCE OF WRITTEN CONSENT

*Acharya Sushruta* in '*Ashmari chikitsa Adhyaya*' of the *Sushruta Samhita* mentions that for a patient whose life may be saved by a surgical intervention must be informed about his condition and the probable outcome of the

surgery and then the consent of the patient or his kin must be taken before preparation of the patient for surgery.<sup>[19]</sup>

This is nowadays done in the form of a written consent signed by the patient and/or his kin prior to any invasive/ surgical technique.

## DISCUSSION

Ayurveda recognises a highly organised and scientific way of life that has stood the test of time. Apart from being an exceptional lifestyle science; it also highlights the utilization of medicinal properties of all the elements of the universe for alleviation of diseases. Ayurveda has elaborately emphasised on the importance of purity of thought and deed in practicing this divine science. It has laid down specific set of rules and regulations for the practitioners to qualify for clinical practice, besides highlighting ethical medical practices for doctors.

The ancient principles for establishment of an ethical and successful medical and surgical practice are holistic in all ways. The Acharyas have mentioned four pillars for holistic treatment to bear fruit i.e. *Bhishaga* (doctor), *Dravya* (medicines, surgical instruments, etc), *Upasthata* (nursing attendants), *Rogi* (patient). Also the ideal qualities of each of these have been detailed and the importance of each has been highlighted in order to achieve the desired result i.e. *Aarogyam*. As *Aarogyam* has been considered as the fundamental basis for achieving the four *purusharthas* (i.e. *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*) which lead to a fulfilled life.<sup>[20]</sup>

Ayurveda which has been considered as an *Upveda* of *Atharvaveda* has elaborated that before joining clinical practice, a disciple of *Ayurveda* must undergo extensive theoretical and practical training including in-depth knowledge of a wide variety of texts, dissection of cadaver, practice of *yogya*, observation of clinical practices and guided training under a learned expert. Though even after this, such a person can go ahead with independent practice of medical science only after receiving permission from the *guru* as well as the authorities. Besides this, since those times the importance of sterilization and patient consent has been considered of utmost importance in treatment protocol. Based on all of these principles, the practitioners were classified into ethical categories by the *Acharyas* i.e. *Raja Vaidya*, *PranabhisaraVaidya*, *RogabhisaraVaidya*, *Bhishakchadhamchar*, *SiddhisadhitaVaidya*, *Vaidyaguna-*



*yuktaVaidya*. All these principles hold good in today's competitive scenario by covering the medico-legal aspect of clinical practice. The importance of registration of practitioner holds up as a prerequisite to beginning medical/ surgical practice till date. Importance of ethical practice holds a special place in today's world where monetary gains must be overlooked for an ethically correct practice of medicine. Keeping in mind the medico-legal aspects of medical practice it is one of the most important protocols to obtain written consent of the patient or his kin before treatment.

It has hence been established that the principles of treatment as laid down by the *Acharyas* should be taken as guidelines. The practitioner must use his knowledge, experience and wit to chart the final line of treatment after properly assessing the condition and prognosis of the situation at hand. Looking at all the above mentioned facts it is permissible to establish that the Ancient *Vedic* principles have stood the test of time and are holistic in all manners. Even till date the guidelines for clinical practice emphasised then are the whole in all senses and nothing had been ignored or left out even in the *Vedic* times.

## CONCLUSION

The article gives an insight into the depth with which Ayurveda has dealt the importance of ethical and statutory induction of a practitioner into clinical or surgical practice. It highlights the elaborate and holistic principles that were laid down for entry into clinical practice for physicians. The matter when contrasted with the present day scenario clearly shows that medical education, medical ethics, importance of consent and other aspects were covered completely in the *Ayurvedic Texts*. It can be clearly concluded that the centuries old principles laid down by the *Acharyas* of *Ayurveda* are infallible and cover the various aspects of commencement of clinical practice for a *Vaidya* in all regards.

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