



# Can Ayurveda medicine supplement modern medical treatments in chronic disease management?

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## Abstract

The editorial highlights the fact that there is limited communication between healthcare providers and patients about complementary and integrative medicine (TCI) like Ayurveda. To address this, healthcare professionals need better education on Ayurveda. Additionally, international collaborations can enhance research and credible information, ensuring safe and effective patient care.

## Keywords

chronic diseases, Ayurveda, traditional, complementary and integrative medicine (TCI), medical pluralism, patient-centred care

## Dear Editor,

Chronic diseases account for 74% of global deaths and have a profound impact on morbidity, and overall quality of life.<sup>1</sup> In the United Kingdom, the National Health Service (NHS) allocates £18.4 billion annually to the management of these conditions.<sup>2</sup> Amid fiscal strain and rising healthcare pressures, concerns about conventional treatments are growing, particularly for multi-morbidities.<sup>1,3,4</sup> This is due to sub-optimal responses and potential long-term side effects of conventional pharmaceuticals, which often lead to non-adherence among patients. These constraints underscore the need for dialogue on diversifying treatment options and embracing medical pluralism.<sup>4</sup>

Ayurveda, an ancient Indian medical system, has recently gained significant global attention. Its extensive historical use, efforts by organisations like the World Health Organization (WHO) to promote its safe use and standardisation have all contributed to its worldwide growing acceptance.<sup>5,6</sup> The recent establishment of The WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar, India, is another effort in this direction.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, factors such as increased health-seeking behaviour, interest in holistic philosophies, the availability of information on the internet, and public exposure to Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine (TCI) in diverse cultural settings have played pivotal roles in influencing patient's healthcare choices towards Ayurveda.<sup>4</sup>

However, previous research on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of healthcare providers (HCPs) indicates a paucity of communication with patients regarding the potential use of TCI.<sup>8</sup> Given the increasing demand for

Ayurveda and the limited dialogue between patients and healthcare professionals on TCI, patients often resort to exploring treatment centres independently, risking unreliable and unauthorised sources that may undermine treatment safety and effectiveness.

To address these challenges, patients urgently need access to credible information sources for informed decision-making. Effective communication between HCPs and patients is crucial to address this informational gap. Healthcare professionals can improve patient literacy and guide them to credible services by facilitating open communication and offering evidence-based insights on the benefits, risks and limitations of Ayurvedic treatments.

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It also thus becomes imperative to ensure that HCPs are well equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to cater to this growing interest. Currently, there is a gap in availability of educational materials for HCPs on Ayurveda, leading to potential challenges in providing effective guidance.<sup>3</sup> Developing targeted educational materials will empower HCPs with evidence-based information, enhancing their ability to advise patients on the safe, appropriate and effective use of Ayurveda. Also, there is a need to build a robust research base for Ayurveda because, although promising results in treating chronic diseases have been documented,<sup>9–13</sup> they are insufficient to establish a definitive role for Ayurveda. Fostering collaborations with Ayurvedic institutions in India can help develop the educational resources and research projects. The WHO's draft on traditional medicine strategy 2025–2034<sup>14</sup> further underscores the importance of international collaborations and creative solutions in shaping pluralistic health and care approaches. These collaborations between Europe and India can bridge the gap between patient demand and reliable information, supporting informed decision-making and promoting a holistic, patient-centred healthcare environment.

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