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# Scope of Integrative Approach in Present Era

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** In today's technologically advanced era, ancient traditions like *Ayurveda* gain recognition for their holistic healthcare approach. *Ayurveda* offers a comprehensive perspective, acknowledging the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit. Amid rising challenges such as chronic diseases, mental health issues, and environmental degradation, *Ayurveda's* integrative principles regain prominence. By prioritizing personalized treatments, lifestyle adjustments, and environmental harmony, *Ayurveda* aligns with contemporary healthcare needs. **Materials:** The materials utilized in this study include peer-reviewed articles, academic journals, books, and policy documents spanning disciplines such as medicine, public health, anthropology, and philosophy. **Discussion:** The discussion centers on the opportunities and challenges inherent in integrating *Ayurveda* into mainstream healthcare. While Western medicine's scientific rigor and technological advancements offer undeniable benefits, its limitations necessitate a reevaluation of healthcare paradigms. *Ayurveda's* holistic approach and emphasis on personalized medicine align with contemporary healthcare needs, yet barriers to integration persist. Overcoming these barriers requires concerted efforts to bridge the gap between conventional and traditional medical systems, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, promoting cultural sensitivity, and addressing regulatory hurdles. **Conclusion:** In conclusion, the integration of *Ayurveda* into mainstream healthcare holds promise for addressing the multifaceted challenges facing global health. By embracing emerging knowledge while remaining faithful to its foundational principles, *Ayurveda* offers a holistic alternative to the pharmaceutical-centric model of Western medicine.

**Key words:** Integrative approach, Global health, Ayurveda, Traditional medicine.

## INTRODUCTION

The essential role of traditional, complementary and integrative healthcare (TCIH) in achieving health and well-being and universal health coverage (UHC) is stated in the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy: 2014–2023 (WHO TM Strategy) and in the Astana Declaration on Primary Health Care, with its corresponding operational framework.<sup>[1]</sup>

As the World Health Assembly has decided to extend

the current WHO TM Strategy until 2025 and for WHO to develop a new 10-year strategy, reflection on progress and the way forward is needed.<sup>[2]</sup>

To date, much of the focus on the implementation of the WHO TM Strategy has focused on the progress made by its member states, with less focus on stakeholders such as professional and patient organizations, educational institutions, researchers and practitioners. This might be attributed to the lack of clear reporting mechanism for stakeholders so far. We aim to assess progress in the WHO TM Strategy implementation, and to delineate a traditional, complementary, and integrative healthcare (TCIH) stakeholder perspective for the next WHO TM Strategy.

Various terminologies are used in this field. WHO has defined 'traditional medicine' and 'complementary medicine' and merged these terms as T&CM.<sup>[1]</sup> The WHO also uses the term 'traditional, complementary and integrative medicine' but has not yet defined 'integrative medicine' nor the broader umbrella term.

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For the purpose of this paper, we use the more inclusive term 'traditional, complementary and integrative healthcare' (TCIH) to refer to the respectful collaboration between various systems of healthcare and their health workers with the aim of offering a person-centered and holistic approach to health.

Countries report that the most common challenge with regard to implementing the WHO TM Strategy was insufficient research data. Seventy-five countries acknowledged having national research centers for TCIH and 12 reported providing public funding to TCIH research.<sup>[3]</sup> The establishment of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in India marks a significant milestone in the recognition and integration of traditional healthcare systems into global health initiatives. This initiative underscores the increasing acknowledgment of the value of traditional medicine in addressing contemporary health challenges.

Scientific studies have demonstrated the efficacy and safety of various traditional medicine practices, including *Ayurveda*, which is prominent in India. Research published in peer-reviewed journals has highlighted the evidence supporting the effectiveness of traditional medicine interventions in treating a wide range of health conditions. For example, studies have shown the efficacy of *Ayurvedic* herbs and formulations in managing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and arthritis. Additionally, research has explored the mechanisms of action underlying traditional medicine practices, shedding light on their physiological and biochemical effects.

Furthermore, the focus areas of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine align with the key principles of evidence-based medicine and sustainable healthcare. Scientific evidence and data analytics will play a crucial role in evaluating the safety, efficacy, and quality of traditional medicine interventions. Innovation and technology will facilitate the integration of traditional medicine into modern healthcare systems, ensuring accessibility and scalability while promoting equity in healthcare delivery.

Overall, the establishment of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in India represents a collaborative effort to leverage the evidence-based practices and holistic principles of traditional medicine to enhance global health outcomes. Through rigorous scientific research and strategic initiatives, this initiative has the potential to drive advancements in traditional medicine research, practice, and policy, benefiting populations worldwide.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Clinical Efficacy and Safety:** Numerous studies have investigated the clinical efficacy and safety of integrating *Ayurveda* into modern healthcare systems. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of *Ayurvedic* interventions in managing various health conditions, including chronic diseases, mental health disorders, and lifestyle-related ailments. For example, a systematic review published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* (2019) found evidence supporting the use of *Ayurvedic* treatments for conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and irritable bowel syndrome, with favorable outcomes in terms of symptom relief and quality of life improvements.<sup>[4]</sup>

*Ayurveda's* emphasis on personalized medicine and lifestyle modifications aligns with the principles of integrative healthcare. Studies have explored the integration of *Ayurvedic* principles, such as *Prakriti* (individual constitution) and *Dinacharya* (daily routines), into modern healthcare practices to tailor interventions to individual patient needs. Research published in the *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine* (2020) demonstrated the effectiveness of personalized *Ayurvedic* lifestyle interventions in improving metabolic health parameters among individuals at risk of metabolic syndrome.<sup>[5]</sup>

*Ayurveda's* holistic approach to health emphasizes disease prevention and health promotion through lifestyle modifications, dietary interventions, and wellness practices. Scientific literature has highlighted the potential of *Ayurvedic* interventions in promoting overall well-being and preventing the onset of chronic

diseases. A review published in the Journal of Evidence-Based Integrative Medicine (2018) summarized evidence supporting the role of *Ayurveda* in promoting healthy aging and longevity through strategies such as *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) therapies and dietary modifications.<sup>[6]</sup>

Integrating *Ayurveda* into modern healthcare requires interdisciplinary collaboration and educational initiatives to bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary medical systems. Research has explored innovative approaches to incorporating *Ayurvedic* principles into medical education curricula and fostering collaboration between *Ayurvedic* practitioners and conventional healthcare providers.

A study published in BMC Medical Education (2021) evaluated the impact of an interdisciplinary training program on medical students' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions towards *Ayurveda*, highlighting the potential for collaborative learning and knowledge exchange.

The integration of *Ayurveda* into mainstream healthcare systems necessitates attention to policy and regulatory frameworks to ensure quality assurance, safety, and standardization of practices. Scientific literature has addressed challenges and opportunities related to policy development, regulation, and accreditation of *Ayurvedic* practices within the broader healthcare context. Research published in the International Journal of *Ayurveda* Research (2019) examined regulatory issues and proposed strategies for enhancing the integration of *Ayurveda* into national healthcare policies, emphasizing the importance of evidence-based practices and quality standards.<sup>[7]</sup>

Overall, the scientific literature underscores the scope and potential of integrating *Ayurveda* into present-day healthcare systems through personalized medicine, preventive interventions, interdisciplinary collaboration, and policy initiatives. By leveraging *Ayurveda's* holistic principles and evidence-based practices, integrative approaches offer promising avenues for addressing the multifaceted health challenges of the modern era.

### Scope of *Ayurveda* as an integrated approach in different fields one such emerging field is Integrative oncology:

Across the world Integrative Oncology (IO) is gaining momentum with integrating the Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) systems in cancer management with the western mainstream or conventional medicine for comprehensive care. Cancer patients, survivors and caregivers have many unmet needs, and often are unaware of the evidence-based practices from these integrative systems. The recommendations and guidelines for such practices are based on the evidence Grade from published clinical studies for e.g., acupuncture and acupressure for general cancer pain and massage for pain during palliative care.<sup>[8]</sup>

In the realm of cancer care, the utilization of both pharmacological and non-pharmacological modalities of Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) has emerged as a substantial yet underreported aspect. Despite the growing recognition of Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine TCIM's potential in enhancing cancer treatment outcomes and improving patients' quality of life, there remains a gap in the documentation and publication of such practices. This discrepancy underscores the urgent need for robust research efforts aimed at generating evidence to support the integration of Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) into mainstream cancer care protocols. Recognizing this imperative, the Journal of *Ayurveda* and Integrative Medicine (JAIM) has responded promptly by dedicating a special issue to the exploration of Integrative Approaches to Cancer Care and Research.

The thematic representations of some articles reflect the multifaceted nature of integrative cancer care, encompassing a spectrum of perspectives and methodologies aimed at addressing the complex needs of cancer patients. At the forefront of this endeavor are thought-provoking articles that offer insights into the philosophical underpinnings and conceptual frameworks guiding integrative cancer care practices.



These thought leadership pieces serve as catalysts for discourse and innovation, laying the groundwork for the development of novel approaches to cancer treatment and supportive care.

Complementing theoretical explorations and clinical case reports that provide invaluable insights into the practical application of integrative cancer care principles in real-world settings. Through detailed accounts of patient experiences and treatment outcomes, these case reports offer compelling evidence of the potential efficacy and safety of Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) modalities in complementing conventional cancer therapies. Furthermore, comprehensive reviews synthesize existing evidence on Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) interventions in cancer, providing clinicians and researchers with a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge in this field.

## MATERIALS

### 1. Integrative approach in oncology:

Cancer is one of the major causes of the mortality and there is increasing burden across the world including India. The present scenario demands affordable, accessible, and equitable cancer care as a priority. There are numerous reasons why the cancer patients, survivors, and caretakers seek nonconventional modalities, ranging from physical to psychosocial and other issues.<sup>[9]</sup> The gap in conventional care for cancer patients needs to be addressed by integrating Traditional complementary and Integrative medicine with conventional care at various time lines of cancer patients, which comprises all stages from prevention early detection, diagnosis, treatment, palliative care and quality of life.

In the contemporary context, there is a need to delineate the scope of *Ayurveda* as an integrative approach for addressing life-threatening conditions necessitating collaboration among diverse schools of thought.

As identified, Integrative Oncology is patient-centered, evidence-informed and utilizes mind and body

practices, natural products, and/or lifestyle modifications from different traditions alongside conventional cancer treatments. Integrative Oncology aims to optimize health, quality of life, and clinical outcomes across the Cancer care patients and to empower the patients to prevent cancer progression and become active participants in their own care before, during, and beyond cancer treatment. Institutes across the world are working towards providing a comprehensive cancer care through research and practice based Integrative Oncology models.

Integrative Oncology is the multidisciplinary approach that involves active participation of every component i.e. Traditional Complementary and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) experts, oncologists, nurses, support staff, researchers, biostatisticians, and patients. Integrative Oncology addresses cultural and social perspectives along with the whole system approach of TCIM while integrating the TCIM with conventional care. Such integration is beyond merely adding to or replacing the formulations/drugs of the conventional medicine by natural products or other traditional/complementary medical practices.<sup>[10]</sup>

In India, Integrative Oncology (IO) is currently undergoing a formative phase of development, characterized by both governmental and non-governmental initiatives aimed at integrating traditional healthcare systems, particularly *Ayush* (*Ayurveda*, *Yoga* and *Naturopathy*, *Unani*, *Siddha*, *Homeopathy*, and *Sowa-Rigpa*), into cancer care. This concerted effort is bolstered by the emergence of private institutes offering *Ayush*-based Integrative Oncology services, alongside numerous individual practitioners, who leverage a combination of research-backed approaches and clinical expertise to provide comprehensive care to cancer patients.

Governmental support for *Ayush*-based Integrative Oncology is evident through various policy measures and institutional frameworks aimed at promoting the integration of traditional medicine into mainstream healthcare. Notably, the 139th Report of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing

Committee on Health and Family Welfare sheds light on the scope and role of Ayush in cancer care planning and research.

This report underscores the significance of *Ayush* systems in augmenting the existing cancer care landscape, emphasizing the need for evidence-based practices and collaborative research efforts to maximize their potential impact.

The burgeoning interest in *Ayush*-based Integrative Oncology is fueled by a growing recognition of the holistic principles and therapeutic modalities offered by traditional Indian systems of medicine. *Ayurveda*, with its emphasis on personalized treatments, dietary modifications, and lifestyle interventions, complements conventional cancer therapies by addressing the multifaceted needs of cancer patients. Similarly, Yoga and Naturopathy offer non-invasive approaches to symptom management, stress reduction, and enhancing overall well-being, making them valuable adjuncts to cancer care protocols.

Furthermore, *Unani*, *Siddha*, *Homeopathy*, and *Sowa-Rigpa* systems contribute unique perspectives and therapeutic interventions to the Integrative Oncology landscape. *Unani* medicine, rooted in Greco-Arabic traditions, emphasizes the restoration of balance and harmony in the body through herbal remedies, dietary advice, and lifestyle modifications. *Siddha* medicine, originating from ancient Tamil culture, employs herbal formulations, mineral-based preparations, and therapeutic practices to address the underlying imbalances contributing to cancer pathogenesis.

*Homeopathy*, based on the principle of "like cures like," utilizes highly diluted substances to stimulate the body's innate healing mechanisms, offering gentle yet potent therapeutic options for cancer patients. Similarly, *Sowa-Rigpa*, the traditional Tibetan medicine system, emphasizes the holistic integration of body, mind, and spirit in disease management, employing herbal medicines, dietary recommendations, and spiritual practices to promote healing and well-being.

The integration of *Ayush* systems into cancer care is facilitated by a research-driven approach that seeks to validate traditional practices, optimize treatment

outcomes, and ensure patient safety. Collaborative research initiatives involving multidisciplinary teams of scientists, clinicians, and traditional healers are pivotal in generating robust evidence to support the efficacy and safety of *Ayush*-based interventions in cancer care. By leveraging the strengths of both conventional and traditional medicine systems, India's Integrative Oncology landscape holds promise for delivering comprehensive, patient-centered care that addresses the diverse needs of cancer patients across the country.

The report recommends the integration of *Ayush* systems with modern medicine to harness its potential benefits for cancer patients. The report suggests the need for training of *Ayush* personnel in the domain, with adequate funding for infrastructure development and R&D.<sup>[11]</sup>

The Ministry of *Ayush* (MoA) and Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) are supporting integrative health research at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in various domains including cancer. A new Integrative Centre for Treatment Research and Education in Cancer (ICTREC) was initiated by the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) under the Department of Atomic Energy. Their objective is to provide comprehensive cancer care including *Ayush* and conventional medicine.

The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), under Ministry of Ayush, Govt of India signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) in 2020 to collaborate with the United States NIH- National Cancer Institute, Office of Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine, (NCI-OCCAM). This effort has included a series of webinars with international presentations and discussions related to collaborations between *Ayurvedic* and Western medicine physicians and scientists to work together and develop research initiatives. NCI-OCCAM has also initiated a survey of U.S. Ayurvedic professionals that interact with cancer patients and will collect information about Ayurveda practices for cancer care. The results of the survey will help to educate allopathic and Ayurvedic practitioners and encourage more integrative oncology initiatives in the U.S and India.<sup>[12]</sup>

Integration of Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) into oncological practice involves multiple experts from various disciplines and cultures and hence there is need to have mutual trust and understanding for transparent discussions, and consensus for conducting the research and practice. There is a communication challenge in the translation of Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) traditional texts and concepts for the mainstream scientific audience. Ayurvedic concepts such as *Shatkriyakala*, *Prakriti*, *Agni* and *Ama* provide profound contributions to the understanding of the disease process and could be explored as they are expressed in cancer patients undergoing or recovering from treatments.<sup>[13]</sup>

The integration of (TCIM) into oncological practice necessitates the collaboration of multiple experts, including oncologists, traditional medicine practitioners, researchers, allied healthcare professionals, and patients themselves. Each stakeholder brings unique perspectives, expertise, and cultural insights to the table, making interdisciplinary collaboration essential for developing comprehensive and patient-centered approaches to cancer care. However, fostering mutual trust and understanding among these diverse stakeholders is paramount for overcoming barriers and facilitating effective communication and collaboration.

Transparency and consensus-building are fundamental aspects of integrating Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) into oncological practice. Transparent discussions allow stakeholders to openly express their perspectives, concerns, and preferences, fostering a collaborative decision-making process. Consensus-building ensures that decisions regarding research priorities, treatment protocols, and patient care strategies are informed by a shared understanding and agreement among stakeholders. This collaborative approach not only enhances the quality and relevance of TCIM integration efforts but also promotes inclusivity and equity in healthcare delivery.

Communication challenges pose significant obstacles to the integration of TCIM into mainstream oncology.

Traditional TCIM texts and concepts, often rooted in centuries-old traditions and cultural contexts, may be unfamiliar or inaccessible to the mainstream scientific audience. Translating these texts and concepts into language and frameworks understandable to oncologists, researchers, and healthcare professionals requires bridging cultural, linguistic, and epistemological divides. Effective communication strategies, such as plain language summaries, cross-cultural dialogue sessions, and interdisciplinary training programs, can facilitate knowledge exchange and promote mutual understanding between traditional and modern medicine systems.

Despite these challenges, *Ayurvedic* concepts offer valuable insights into the understanding of cancer and its treatment. *Shatkriyakala*, the six stages of disease progression according to *Ayurveda*, provides a holistic framework for understanding the trajectory of cancer development and progression. By delineating the subtle changes occurring at each stage, *Shatkriyakala* offers opportunities for early detection, intervention, and personalized treatment planning. Similarly, the concepts of *Prakriti* (individual constitution), *Agni* (digestive fire), and *Ama* (toxins) provide valuable diagnostic and therapeutic insights into the underlying imbalances contributing to cancer pathogenesis. Exploring these *Ayurvedic* concepts in the context of cancer patients undergoing or recovering from treatments holds promise for enhancing our understanding of the disease process and optimizing patient care strategies.

Other barriers include financial constraints, ethical and medico-legal issues, lack of trained manpower in the domain, potential of herb-drug interactions and the availability of sufficient evidence for TCIM interventions in IO. There is progress in building IO capacity as described in one article in this Special issue which outlines efforts of *Ayush* expert in oncology in the integrative settings of a large city hospital with an Ayurveda treatment capacity.<sup>[14]</sup>

## 2. Integrative approach in cardiovascular disease

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are largely the product of interactions among several modifiable risk factors

that are too common in developed nations and increasingly of concern in developing countries. Effective, integrated health promotion programs and policies are our best tools to counteract the epidemics of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke that are emerging worldwide.<sup>[15]</sup>

The etiology of CVDs is multifactorial, involving intricate interplays between genetic predispositions, environmental influences, and lifestyle behaviors. Genetic susceptibility, coupled with environmental factors such as unhealthy dietary patterns, physical inactivity, tobacco use, and psychosocial stressors, predisposes individuals to the development of CVDs. Furthermore, the epidemiological transition occurring globally, characterized by rapid urbanization, industrialization, and adoption of Westernized lifestyles, has exacerbated the prevalence of these risk factors, particularly in developing countries.

Addressing the rising burden of CVDs necessitates a comprehensive and integrated approach to health promotion, encompassing both individual-level interventions and population-based strategies. Effective health promotion programs and policies are pivotal in mitigating the epidemics of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke, which collectively contribute to the onset and progression of CVDs. These interventions aim to modify risk behaviors, promote healthy lifestyles, and create supportive environments conducive to cardiovascular health.

Individual-level interventions focus on empowering individuals to adopt healthier behaviors and make informed lifestyle choices. These interventions may include dietary counseling, physical activity promotion, smoking cessation programs, and stress management techniques. By targeting modifiable risk factors at the individual level, such as unhealthy diet patterns, physical inactivity, and tobacco use, these interventions aim to reduce the incidence and severity of CVDs and their associated complications.

Population-based strategies, on the other hand, aim to create environments that support cardiovascular health and facilitate healthy lifestyle choices at the societal level. These strategies may include policy

initiatives to promote access to healthy foods, restrict the marketing of unhealthy products, implement smoke-free laws, and create walkable communities. Furthermore, health education campaigns, mass media interventions, and community-based programs play a crucial role in raising awareness about the importance of cardiovascular health and empowering communities to take collective action.

Multidisciplinary teams are increasingly favored as a means of delivering comprehensive primary care. Teams might include, e.g., family physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers, dietitians, pharmacists, and other allied health professionals. A systematic review of controlled trials examining quality improvement interventions for hypertension management found that interdisciplinary team-based care was the only strategy that significantly improved Blood Pressure.<sup>[16]</sup>

### 3. Integrative approach to life style management

In the contemporary landscape of global health, there exists a compelling opportunity to reevaluate the approach to lifestyle management. Lifestyle interventions, as integral components of health promotion and disease prevention strategies aimed at fostering sustainable health and well-being, must possess certain defining characteristics to effectively address the multifaceted nature of human health. Specifically, such interventions should encompass a holistic framework that targets all dimensions of health and well-being, including physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects. Moreover, they should be capable of translating into responsible human behaviors, both at the individual and collective levels, while being simple and effective for widespread adoption by diverse populations.

At the heart of this integrative approach lies the recognition of the interconnectedness of various dimensions of health and well-being. Traditional systems of medicine, rooted in ancient wisdom and cultural traditions, offer unique perspectives and practices for promoting holistic health across physical, mental, and spiritual domains. These systems emphasize the importance of harmony and balance in



achieving optimal health, viewing illness as a manifestation of underlying imbalances that need to be addressed at multiple levels. By integrating traditional approaches with evidence-based interventions from modern medicine, such as pharmacotherapy, behavioral therapy, and preventive medicine, a more comprehensive and personalized approach to lifestyle management can be realized.

Furthermore, the integration of traditional and modern approaches to lifestyle management holds promise for promoting responsible human behaviors at both the individual and collective levels. Traditional systems of medicine often emphasize the role of community, culture, and social support networks in promoting health and well-being. By incorporating these social determinants of health into lifestyle interventions, alongside evidence-based strategies for behavior change and adherence, interventions can be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of diverse populations. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of lifestyle interventions but also fosters a sense of ownership, empowerment, and collective responsibility for health promotion within communities.

Rationality behind this integrative approach to life style management is Standard definitions of Health: 'Wellbeing' and 'Quality of Life' incorporate dimensions beyond just a bio-medical domain. They include both 'objective' and 'subjective' traits which range across physical, mental, emotional, vocational, spiritual, and social dimensions. Integrative health refers to integrating conventional and non-conventional disciplines in a systematic and scientific way, that will best address the health, wellbeing, and quality of life.

Today the health systems are more focused on managing illnesses than preventing them. The agenda of disease prevention and health promotion is well articulated in the policies but continue to suffer poor implementation on the ground. However recent initiatives with regards to strengthening prevention agenda and wellbeing is praiseworthy. India's flagship national program 'Ayushman Bharat' is aiming to build

over 150,000 health and wellness centers across the country to augment focus on wellbeing.<sup>[17]</sup>

At a global scale, research endeavors in the domain of integrative health remain deficient, highlighting an urgent need to escalate investments in this pivotal area. While recent years have witnessed a gradual uptick in research activities, particularly in disciplines such as yoga, meditation, Ayurveda, and Chinese medicine, the existing body of literature suffers from deficiencies in terms of robustness, scale, and methodological rigor. Despite the wealth of knowledge and therapeutic regimens documented in ancient systems like Ayurveda, spanning millennia and showcasing efficacy, particularly in addressing non-communicable diseases and cancers, their critical validation and integration into mainstream healthcare are imperative.

Efforts spearheaded by the Government of India to establish the AYUSH Mission, aimed at bolstering research and practice in integrative health through collaborative initiatives, merit commendation. Through strategic partnerships and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) forged with foreign nations, endeavors are underway to promote education, research, and dissemination of AYUSH practices on a global scale. Moreover, emerging evidence underscores the potential of indigenous traditional health practices in fostering community self-reliance, offering promising avenues for further exploration and validation.

Integrative Lifestyle' brings together the science and practice of Lifestyle Medicine, Ayurveda, Yoga and Meditation, and seem to have potential to achieve holistic wellbeing. Empowering communities to drive the 'lifestyle change' movement, collaboration with widely dispersed wellbeing programs. With few years left to realize the SDGs, global and country level effort should accelerate research, policy, and action toward scaling up integrative approaches to health and wellbeing.<sup>[18]</sup>

The integrative approach in Ayurveda research acknowledges the importance of synergizing traditional knowledge with evidence-based practices

to advance understanding and application in modern healthcare. By combining insights from ancient healing traditions with contemporary scientific techniques, researchers can unlock the full potential of Ayurvedic principles and therapies. This integrative approach not only facilitates the validation and standardization of traditional remedies but also promotes the development of novel therapeutic interventions tailored to address pressing health issues.

In the present era, the scope of integrative Ayurveda research extends beyond individual disciplines to embrace interdisciplinary collaboration and cross-cultural exchange. By fostering partnerships between Ayurvedic practitioners, biomedical scientists, pharmacologists, and public health experts, researchers can leverage diverse perspectives and expertise to tackle complex health challenges more effectively. This collaborative model not only enriches the research landscape but also fosters a more inclusive and holistic approach to healthcare delivery.

Furthermore, the integrative approach in Ayurveda research aligns with global initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being. By emphasizing the potential of natural products and traditional medicine in promoting holistic health and combating antibiotic resistance, Ayurveda research contributes to achieving broader public health objectives. This alignment underscores the relevance of Ayurveda in addressing contemporary health priorities and advancing towards a more sustainable and equitable healthcare system.

## DISCUSSION

Cancer, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), and lifestyle-related health issues are significant global health challenges, demanding innovative and comprehensive approaches for prevention, treatment, and management. The integrative approach discussed in the provided material offers a promising framework that combines conventional medical treatments with traditional and complementary practices to address these complex health issues.

Integrative Oncology (IO) emerges as a patient-centered approach that integrates traditional, complementary, and conventional medicine to optimize cancer care outcomes. This approach acknowledges the multifaceted needs of cancer patients and emphasizes empowerment, quality of life, and holistic health promotion throughout the cancer journey. By leveraging the strengths of both conventional and traditional medical systems, Integrative Oncology aims to fill the gaps in cancer care and provide personalized, evidence-informed treatments.

The collaborative efforts between government bodies, research institutions, and healthcare providers underscore the growing recognition and support for integrating traditional medicine into mainstream oncology. Challenges such as communication barriers and the need for robust evidence base highlight areas for further research and development in Integrative Oncology.

The integrative approach to cardiovascular disease focuses on addressing the multifactorial nature of CVDs through a combination of individual-level interventions and population-based strategies. By targeting modifiable risk factors and creating supportive environments for cardiovascular health, this approach aims to mitigate the epidemics of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Multidisciplinary teams play a crucial role in delivering comprehensive primary care, emphasizing the importance of collaborative and coordinated efforts among various healthcare professionals. However, challenges such as limited research on integrative interventions and the need for scalable population-based strategies underscore the importance of further investment and innovation in this area.

Lifestyle management emerges as a cornerstone of preventive healthcare, with an integrative approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of various dimensions of health and well-being. By combining traditional wisdom with evidence-based interventions, this approach offers holistic strategies for promoting responsible human behaviors and fostering community self-reliance.

Efforts to integrate lifestyle medicine, *Ayurveda*, *Yoga*, and meditation hold promise for achieving sustainable health and well-being on both individual and societal levels. However, the need for robust research, policy support, and global collaboration remains imperative to scale up integrative approaches and realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to health and well-being.

In conclusion, the integrative approaches discussed offer innovative and promising strategies for addressing complex health challenges such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and lifestyle-related issues. By combining the strengths of conventional and traditional medicine systems, these approaches aim to optimize patient outcomes, promote holistic health, and foster sustainable well-being. However, addressing challenges such as communication barriers, research gaps, and policy support will be essential for realizing the full potential of integrative healthcare in improving global health outcomes.

## SUMMARY

In the present era, the integrative approach to healthcare represents a holistic and forward-thinking paradigm that acknowledges the complexity of human health and the interconnectedness of various factors influencing well-being. This paper explores the integration of traditional healing modalities, such as *Ayurveda*, with evidence-based practices from modern medicine, to address pressing health challenges in oncology, lifestyle management, and cardiovascular disorders.

In oncology, the integrative approach combines conventional cancer treatments with complementary therapies such as *Ayurveda*, *Yoga*, and mind-body practices. By integrating these modalities, patients receive comprehensive care that addresses physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of healing, leading to improved quality of life and treatment outcomes.

Lifestyle management is another area where the integrative approach shines, offering personalized interventions that encompass dietary modifications, physical activity, stress reduction techniques, and

mindfulness practices. By incorporating traditional wisdom with modern scientific evidence, individuals can adopt sustainable lifestyle changes that promote optimal health and prevent chronic diseases.

In cardiovascular disorders, the integrative approach emphasizes a multifaceted approach to prevention and treatment, combining conventional medications with lifestyle interventions, dietary supplements, and mind-body practices. By addressing the root causes of cardiovascular disease and promoting holistic well-being, this approach aims to improve cardiovascular outcomes and reduce the burden of heart disease worldwide.

Overall, the integrative approach in contemporary healthcare represents a synergistic blend of ancient wisdom and modern science, offering innovative solutions to the complex health challenges of our time. By embracing a holistic perspective and fostering collaboration among diverse healing traditions, we can optimize health outcomes and promote well-being for individuals and communities globally.

## CONCLUSION

The integration of conventional medical treatments with traditional and complementary practices, as discussed in this discourse, represents a promising approach to addressing significant global health challenges such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), and lifestyle-related issues. Integrative Oncology (IO) exemplifies a patient-centered model that leverages both conventional and traditional medical systems to optimize cancer care outcomes, emphasizing empowerment, quality of life, and holistic health promotion. Similarly, the integrative approach to cardiovascular disease targets the multifactorial nature of CVDs through individual-level interventions and population-based strategies, aiming to mitigate the epidemics of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Lifestyle management emerges as a cornerstone of preventive healthcare, integrating traditional wisdom with evidence-based interventions to promote responsible human behaviors and foster community self-reliance.

While these integrative approaches offer innovative and promising strategies, several challenges such as communication barriers, limited research on integrative interventions, and the need for scalable population-based strategies persist. Addressing these challenges will require further investment, innovation, and collaboration among government bodies, research institutions, and healthcare providers. Moreover, robust research, policy support, and global collaboration are imperative to scale up integrative approaches and realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to health and well-being.

In conclusion, the integration of conventional and traditional medicine systems holds immense potential to optimize patient outcomes, promote holistic health, and foster sustainable well-being. By addressing challenges and fostering collaboration, the full potential of integrative healthcare can be realized, contributing to improved global health outcomes and the achievement of SDGs.

#### Take home message:

- Holistic Patient Care:** Integrative approaches prioritize patient empowerment, quality of life, and holistic health promotion throughout the healthcare journey, recognizing the multifaceted needs of individuals facing complex health challenges.
- Collaborative Efforts:** Collaborative efforts between government bodies, research institutions, and healthcare providers are essential for integrating traditional medicine into mainstream healthcare, addressing communication barriers, and advancing evidence-informed treatments.
- Preventive Healthcare:** Lifestyle management emerges as a cornerstone of preventive healthcare, offering holistic strategies for promoting responsible human behaviors, fostering community self-reliance, and achieving sustainable health and well-being.
- Challenges and Opportunities:** While integrative approaches offer promising solutions, challenges

such as limited research on integrative interventions and the need for scalable population-based strategies persist. Addressing these challenges requires further investment, innovation, and collaboration among stakeholders.

- Realizing the potential:** Robust research, policy support, and global collaboration are imperative to scale up integrative approaches and realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to health and well-being, ultimately contributing to improved global health outcomes.

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