



Challenges in Ayurvedic drug dispensing - A Review

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DOI:10.21760/jaims.10.1.24

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Ayurvedic medicine, rooted in centuries-old traditional knowledge, faces unique challenges in modern healthcare, particularly in the dispensing of its formulations. The complexity of drug preparation, varying storage requirements, lack of standardization, and individualized treatment protocols all contribute to significant barriers in integrating Ayurveda into mainstream health systems. This review examines the key challenges in Ayurvedic drug dispensing, focusing on quality control, formulation stability, patient compliance and the need for standardized protocols. Recommendations for addressing these challenges through innovation, regulatory updates and integration with modern pharmacological practices are also discussed.

Keywords: Ayurveda, drug dispensing, standardization, patient compliance, regulatory challenges, formulation stability

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Manuscript Received
2024-12-17

Review Round 1
2024-12-27

Review Round 2
2025-01-07

Review Round 3
2025-01-17

Accepted
2025-01-26

Conflict of Interest
None

Funding
Nil

Ethical Approval
Not required

Plagiarism X-checker
12.36

Note



Introduction

Ayurveda, one of the oldest and most comprehensive systems of natural medicine, is rooted in the philosophy that health is achieved by maintaining a harmonious balance between the mind, body and spirit. *Ayurvedic* treatments are individualized and based on the principles of balancing the three *Dosha* - *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* - through the use of herbal, mineral and metallic formulations. These formulations are prepared and dispensed in various forms, including tablets (*Vati*), powders (*Churna*), decoctions (*Kwatha*) and medicated oils (*Taila*), each tailored to the patient's specific needs and constitution.

Despite its deep historical roots and widespread usage, *Ayurvedic* drug dispensing faces significant challenges in the modern healthcare landscape. Traditional formulations often involve complex preparation methods that require precise knowledge and skill and many of these medicines have short shelf lives or specific storage conditions, making them difficult to manage in large-scale settings.[1]

Additionally, the lack of standardized dosing, compounded by variability in raw material quality and preparation techniques, poses challenges in ensuring consistency and safety across *Ayurvedic* practices. Furthermore, patient adherence to *Ayurvedic* treatments can be low due to factors such as the bitter taste, the need for specific *Anupanas* (adjuvants) during administration, and the long-term nature of many *Ayurvedic* protocols.[2]

In contrast, modern pharmaceuticals offer convenience and standardized dosing, making it difficult for *Ayurvedic* formulations to compete in terms of patient compliance and ease of use. This review aims to identify and discuss the challenges faced in the dispensing of *Ayurvedic* medicines, with a focus on formulation stability, dosage standardization, patient adherence and regulatory obstacles. It also seeks to explore how integrating modern drug dispensing practices into the *Ayurvedic* framework can enhance drug efficacy, safety and patient outcomes, while preserving the core principles of traditional *Ayurveda*.

Materials and Methods

Challenges in Ayurvedic Drug Dispensing

1. Suboptimal Hygienic Conditions: One of the primary challenges in *Ayurvedic* drug dispensing is the inadequate maintenance of hygiene standards during the handling and packaging of medicines. In some traditional settings, drugs are prepared and packaged in environments that do not meet modern sanitation protocols. This lack of proper hygiene can lead to contamination, thereby compromising the safety and efficacy of the formulations. In many *Ayurvedic* Health Centers (AHCs), medicines are often dispensed without following proper hygiene protocols. This can compromise the safety and efficacy of the treatments. Improved hygiene standards are essential for better patient care.

2. Improper Packaging Practices: *Ayurvedic* medicines are often produced and stored in large bulk containers, which are later unsealed to repack smaller portions for individual use. This repeated opening and resealing of large containers not only exposes the product to potential contamination but also compromises the integrity of the formulation, particularly with medicines that are sensitive to air, moisture, or temperature changes.

3. Lack of Sterilization Facilities: A significant challenge in maintaining the quality of *Ayurvedic* medicines is the absence of appropriate sterilization facilities, especially for the packaging materials. Without proper sterilization, packaging materials may introduce microbial contaminants, which could degrade the quality of the medicinal product and pose health risks to the patient. For instance, containers used for dispensing medicines in *Ayurvedic* Health Centers (AHCs) are frequently reused without adequate sterilization. This lack of proper sanitation can lead to contamination, compromising the purity and effectiveness of the medicines and potentially posing health risks to patients.

4. Use of Newspapers for *Pudia* (makeshift wrappers) Formation: In many traditional dispensaries, small doses of powdered medicines are commonly packaged in makeshift wrappers, often made from newspapers. This practice is not only unhygienic but also exposes the medicine to ink and other contaminants from the paper, potentially compromising the purity and safety of the drug. Moreover, such informal packaging is prone to damage, which can lead to spillage or contamination before the medicine reaches the patient.

5. Inconsistent Dosage Measurement: Another critical issue in *Ayurvedic* drug dispensing is the inconsistent and imprecise measurement of doses. In many cases, medicines are dispensed without proper weighing or measurement tools, leading to variability in the dosage provided to different patients. This lack of precise dosing can affect the therapeutic efficacy of the medicine and may result in either under-dosing or overdosing, neither of which is conducive to optimal patient outcomes.

6. Inadequate Labeling and Information Disclosure: Another significant challenge in *Ayurvedic* drug dispensing is the insufficient labeling and lack of comprehensive information provided to patients regarding the medication. When medicines are transferred from large bulk packaging into smaller containers for individual dispensing, they are often left unlabeled, or in some cases, labeled incorrectly with the name of a different drug or medication as most of the times empty containers of some other medications are used. The absence of this critical information can lead to misuse, reduced effectiveness, or even adverse reactions. Proper labeling, with detailed usage guidelines and warnings, is essential to ensure that patients can safely and effectively use *Ayurvedic* medicines.

7. Lack of Drug Dispensing Training Sessions for Pharmacists: The absence of Drug Dispensing Training Sessions for pharmacists poses significant challenges in the healthcare system. Without adequate training, pharmacists may lack essential skills in safe handling, precise labeling and accurate dispensing of medications, leading to increased risks of medication errors. This deficiency not only compromises patient safety but also undermines the efficacy of treatment regimens and the overall quality of care provided in healthcare settings.

Result

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to modernize *Ayurvedic* drug dispensing practices while maintaining the integrity of traditional methods. Implementing standardized hygienic protocols, adopting appropriate packaging techniques, ensuring sterilization of materials and using accurate dosing tools are essential steps to improving the safety, quality and efficacy of *Ayurvedic* formulations in contemporary healthcare settings.

1. Improvement of Hygienic Conditions: Implement standardized protocols for cleanliness and sanitation in all stages of drug preparation and packaging. Establish regular inspections to ensure that dispensaries adhere to modern hygienic practices to prevent contamination and maintain the integrity of *Ayurvedic*

2. Implementation of Proper Packaging Practices: Replace the practice of resealing large containers by using pre-measured, single-use packaging for individual doses. This would minimize exposure to air, moisture, and contamination, ensuring that the quality of the medicine is preserved from production to administration.

3. Provision of Sterilization Facilities: Invest in the installation of sterilization equipment at manufacturing and dispensing sites. Ensuring that all packaging materials undergo proper sterilization before use will prevent microbial contamination and extend the shelf life of the medicines.

4. Use of Hygienic, Standardized Packaging Materials: Discontinue the use of newspapers or other informal materials for *Pudra*. Instead, adopt standardized, hygienic and eco-friendly packaging options that protect the medicine from contamination while maintaining purity and safety.

5. Introduction of Accurate Dosing Tools: Equip all *Ayurvedic* dispensaries with appropriate measuring devices, such as digital scales and dosing spoons, to ensure precise measurement of drugs. Providing training to staff on accurate dose measurement will help ensure that patients receive consistent and effective treatment.

6. Enhancement of Labeling and Information Practices: Introduce comprehensive labeling requirements that include detailed dosage instructions, storage guidelines, expiration dates and potential interactions with other medications. Providing clear, patient-friendly information will help improve adherence and reduce the risk of misuse.

7. Drug Dispensing Training Sessions for Pharmacists: Drug Dispensing Training Sessions for pharmacists are critical to ensuring the accurate and safe administration of medications. These programs emphasize the importance of proper handling, labeling, and dispensing protocols, along with maintaining stringent hygiene and precision in dosage measurement.

By equipping pharmacists with advanced skills and knowledge, these sessions significantly reduce the risk of medication errors, enhance patient safety, and ensure adherence to regulatory and healthcare standards.

Discussion

The challenges faced in *Ayurvedic* drug dispensing, as outlined in this review, reflect confluence of traditional practices & modern healthcare demands. As *Ayurveda* seeks to integrate into contemporary health systems, it becomes imperative to address these challenges to enhance safety, efficacy & acceptance of *Ayurvedic* medicines.

Hygiene and Contamination Risks: The importance of maintaining optimal hygienic conditions cannot be overstated. Poor hygiene practices can lead to contamination, jeopardizing patient safety and the overall credibility of *Ayurvedic* medicine. Implementing standardized protocols for cleanliness in preparation and packaging processes is essential. This would not only ensure the integrity of formulations but also foster greater trust among patients and healthcare providers. Regular inspections can help enforce these standards, making hygiene a non-negotiable aspect of *Ayurvedic* practice.

Packaging Practices and Integrity of Formulations: The current practice of repackaging bulk medicines poses significant risks to product integrity. Adopting single-use, pre-measured packaging solutions would mitigate these risks, ensuring that medicines remain uncontaminated and potent. Transitioning to modern packaging techniques will also align *Ayurvedic* practices with consumer expectations, particularly as patients become increasingly conscious of safety and quality in their healthcare choices.

Sterilization and Quality Control: The absence of adequate sterilization facilities represents a critical gap in the quality assurance of *Ayurvedic* medicines. Investing in sterilization equipment and establishing rigorous quality control processes at manufacturing and dispensing sites will enhance the overall safety and efficacy of *Ayurvedic* formulations. By adhering to stringent quality standards, *Ayurvedic* practitioners can significantly reduce the risk of microbial contamination and ensure that patients receive products that are both safe and effective.

Informal Packaging and Labeling Practices: The use of informal packaging materials, such as newspapers, and the lack of comprehensive labeling are significant barriers to patient safety and adherence. Standardizing packaging materials to ensure hygiene and developing clear, informative labeling will empower patients with the knowledge needed to use *Ayurvedic* treatments safely. Comprehensive labeling that includes dosage instructions, storage guidelines, and potential interactions with other medications is crucial in enhancing patient understanding and compliance.

Drug Dispensing Training Sessions for Pharmacists: The significance of Drug Dispensing Training Sessions for pharmacists is paramount in ensuring safe and accurate medication administration. These programs equip pharmacists with essential skills in proper handling, labeling, and dispensing protocols, thereby reducing the risk of medication errors and enhancing patient safety. Conversely, the absence of such training creates significant challenges within the healthcare system. Without adequate preparation, pharmacists may struggle with critical competencies, leading to mislabeling, inaccurate dosages, and compromised patient care. This not only heightens the risk of adverse drug reactions but also undermines public trust in the healthcare system. To improve patient outcomes, it is crucial for healthcare systems to prioritize comprehensive training programs for pharmacists. By investing in ongoing education and development, we can empower pharmacists to deliver high-quality care, ensuring the safe and effective use of medications.

Conclusion

The successful integration of *Ayurvedic* medicine into modern healthcare necessitates a concerted effort to address the myriad challenges inherent in *Ayurvedic* drug dispensing. By prioritizing rigorous hygiene protocols, adopting contemporary packaging solutions, establishing robust sterilization facilities and ensuring comprehensive labeling practices, practitioners can significantly enhance the safety and efficacy of *Ayurvedic* formulations. Drug Dispensing Training Sessions for pharmacists are crucial in safeguarding accurate medication administration and minimizing errors, thereby significantly enhancing patient safety, whereas their absence can precipitate substantial risks and undermine the integrity of healthcare delivery.

Ultimately, this multifaceted approach will not only preserve the integrity of traditional *Ayurvedic* practices but also position *Ayurveda* as a credible and effective healthcare modality in the contemporary medical landscape, thereby enriching patient outcomes and promoting holistic wellness.

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