The hardships of a career in Ayurvedic practice

Why in news?

Despite the publicity campaigns to promote Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH), there is a trust-deficit in these systems.

What is AYUSH?

- AYUSH systems are based on definite medical philosophies and represent a way of healthy living with established concepts on prevention of diseases and promotion of health.
- In 1995, with the objective of optimal and focused development of these systems, the *Department of Indian Medicine and Homeopathy* was created in the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- In 2003, this Department was re named as Department of AYUSH.
- India has a rich heritage of medical wisdom derived from the Vedas that prevailed as Ayurveda.
- AYUSH is the principal medical practice of the country for centuries, forming part of Indian ethos and culture.

Why AYUSH is viewed with scepticism?

- **Credibility of Ayurvedic theories –** There is widespread scepticism in the public mind about the soundness of Ayurvedic theories and the fruitfulness of its practices.
- *Archaic theories* that are apt to *arouse suspicion* in the minds of educated patients are peddled as sophisticated dogmas.
- **Not in line with today's science –** The Ayurveda establishment has failed to keep pace with the intellectual and scientific advances of the times.
- **Lack of scrutiny –** Treatments are made to escape straightforward experimental scrutiny because of their supposed rootedness in such theories.
- **Lack of evidence –** A major reason for the trust-deficit in Ayurveda is its diminished evidence-based quality.
- **Slow treatment –** That Ayurveda treatments are slow to heal is another common view that characterises the public image of Ayurveda.

What is the status of AYUSH today?

- **Contemporary to modern science –** Ayurveda has grown and adapted like any other medicine or school of medicine in the world.
- **National Ayush Mission (NAM) –** It is a flagship scheme of Ministry of AYUSH.
- The basic objective of NAM is to promote AYUSH medical systems through cost effective AYUSH services.
- It envisages flexibility of implementation of the programmes which will lead to

substantial participation of the State Governments/UT.

What are the difficulties faced by the AYUSH practitioner?

- **No practical lessons –** The practitioner would discover that what has been taught to them in college training is a *huge corpus of ancient medical wisdom, where only a part is practically usable*.
- **Lack of ecosystem –** Ayurveda does not have a vibrant ecosystem of science and research, the poor practitioner has to *depend on himself to discover treatments and approaches that actually work*.
- **Affects reputation –** The process involves a lot of trial and error with patients and predictably leads to erosion of the practitioner's reputation.
- **Gimmicks –** Few practitioners who are using regular newspaper columns, television shows, and social media sites, entrap gullible patients.

What is the need for integrating various medicine fields?

- **China –** In the 1970s, it pushed traditional medicine, through its economic and political agenda to get total quality Chinese medicine outside China, which eventually was accepted by the world.
- **India –** India has a brand ambassador in yoga and wellness as our Prime Minister, and wellness is being accepted across the world.

The e-health market size is estimated to reach US$ 10.6 billion by 2025.

- **Wellness –** We should focus on pushing wellness on a larger horizon and approach it from the point where it complements whatever is going on in allopathic hospitals.
- **Post-surgery recovery –** Ayurveda can be used to complement what hospitals do, especially after surgeries when they have to recover.

To know more click here.

What is the way forward?

- **Policy making –** Appropriate policy-making can solve a lot of these problems faced by the Ayurveda practitioners.
- **Focus on primary care –** Primary-care doctors are becoming an endangered species in India's health-care system.
- Rejuvenating primary care is a sine qua non if a country is to secure the health of its citizens.
- **Training –** Ayurveda graduates can contribute enormously towards this rejuvenation if trained properly.
- **Promotion of Ayurvedic theories –** A vigorous evidence-based appraisal of Ayurvedic theories and practices in order to sift the usable from the obsolete will help the cause.
- **Modern medicine –** Ayurveda graduates must be allowed to practise modern medicine in stipulated primary care areas.

- These reforms would help create a workforce that can function effectively to meet the primary health-care needs of both urban and rural India.

References

1. The Hindu | The hardships of a career in Ayurvedic practice
2. The Economic Times | India's challenge is to combine Ayurveda and contemporary medicine

