Traditional Medicine in ICD-11

Why in News?

International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) was recently updated to integrate traditional medicine systems of healthcare practices related to Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani.

What is International Classification of Diseases (ICD)?

- **International Classification of Diseases (ICD)** – Serves as the _cornerstone of global health data_, providing a standardized language for classifying diseases, injuries, and causes of death.
- **Foundation of Global Health Data** – For over a century, the ICD has been instrumental in _tracking health trends, informing public health policies, and facilitating research_.
- It _enables comparisons of mortality and morbidity data across countries_ and time, providing crucial insights into disease burden and healthcare needs.
- **Latest version** – ICD-11.

Core Purpose	Serves as the universal language for health professionals worldwide.
	Standardizes the recording, analysis, and interpretation of mortality and morbidity data.
	Enables comparison of health data across countries and time periods.

What is Key Features and Advancements in ICD-11?

- **Adopted by** – The _World Health Assembly in 2019_ and effective since 2022, represents a significant leap forward.
- It is more comprehensive, digitally adaptable and incorporates contemporary medical knowledge.
- **Enhanced Interoperability** – ICD-11 seamlessly _integrates with other health information systems_ and standards like Orphanet and MedDRA, facilitating data

exchange and analysis.

- The 2025 update enhances this with FHIR API integration and advanced Natural Language Processing (NLP), enabling _real-time data exchange and improved accuracy_.

FHIR stands for **Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources**. It is a standard for exchanging healthcare information electronically.
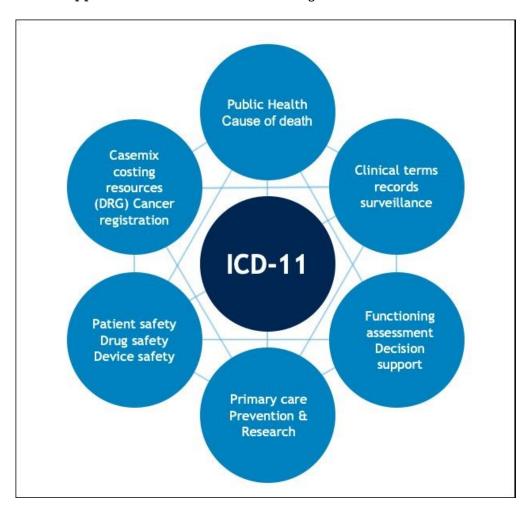
It's designed to be easier to implement than some older standards, using modern web-based technologies.

- **Improved Accuracy and Ease of Use** – Features like enhanced spelling correction and language variation recognition minimize errors in data entry.
- This, coupled with a user-friendly design, makes ICD-11 more accessible and efficient for healthcare professionals.
- **Multilingual Expansion** – _Available in 14 languages_ with ongoing expansion, ICD-11 promotes global accessibility and inclusivity.
- **Digital Integration** – ICD-11 is _designed for the digital age_, offering online and offline access, APIs, and tools that enhance data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- This digital focus is crucial for _leveraging AI and advanced analytics in healthcare_.
- **Conceptual Framework** – ICD-11's framework is independent of language and culture, ensuring its applicability across diverse populations and healthcare settings.

What are the significance of integrating Traditional Medicine with ICD 11?

- **Traditional medicine** – One of the most ground-breaking aspects of the ICD-11, particularly highlighted in the 2025 update, is the inclusion of a module for traditional medicine conditions.
- This module specifically addresses **Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani**, recognizing their significant role in healthcare, especially in certain regions.
- **Policy Development** – Supports evidence-based policymaking for integrating traditional medicine into national health systems
- Guides insurance coverage decisions for traditional treatments.
- **Global Recognition** – This inclusion marks a pivotal moment for traditional medicine, elevating its status in global health reporting, research and policymaking.
- It facilitates the _systematic tracking of traditional medicine services_, enabling evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation.
- **Quality and Safety** – Standardizes terminology for better quality monitoring.
- Improves safety through systematic documentation.
- **Dual Coding** – The module _allows for dual coding, where both traditional and conventional diagnoses can be recorded_.
- This comprehensive approach provides a more holistic understanding of patient health and facilitates research into the effectiveness of traditional practices.
- **Data Collection and Research** – By providing standardized terminology, the module enhances data collection on the use and outcomes of traditional medicine by:
  - Paving the way for rigorous research and evidence-based integration into healthcare systems.

- **Cultural Sensitivity** – Recognizing and incorporating traditional medicine reflects a growing understanding of the importance of culturally sensitive and holistic healthcare approaches.
- **Economic Impact** – Creates framework for _insurance coverage of traditional treatments_.
- Supports development of traditional medicine industry.
- **Patient Care Enhancement** – Enables comprehensive patient records across different medical systems.
- Supports informed decision-making in treatment choices.

What are its Implications for Global Health?

- **Improved Data Quality** – Enhanced accuracy and interoperability lead to better data quality, which is _essential for informed decision-making in public health_.
- **Strengthened Health Systems** – By facilitating efficient data management and analysis, ICD-11 contributes to strengthening health systems at national and global levels.
- **Enhanced Research** – The standardized framework enables large-scale research, including comparative studies of different treatment approaches, _both conventional and traditional_.
- **Universal Health Coverage** – The inclusion of traditional medicine supports the WHO's goal of universal health coverage by recognizing the diverse healthcare needs of populations and promoting integrated healthcare approaches.
- **Progress towards SDGs** – ICD-11 contributes to achieving health-related Sustainable

Development Goals by providing the data and tools necessary to monitor progress and address health inequalities.

What are the Challenges?

- **Implementation** – Effective implementation requires training healthcare professionals, updating health information systems and ensuring data quality.
- **Data Analysis** – Leveraging the vast amount of data generated by ICD-11 requires robust analytical capabilities and infrastructure.
- **Ongoing Updates** – The dynamic nature of medical science necessitates continuous updates and revisions to ICD-11 to reflect new discoveries and evolving understanding of diseases.

References

1. PIB – ICD-11
2. WHO – ICD-11