

An Insight to Ayurvedic Medicine

Introduction

Ayurvedic medicine is the traditional way of cure practiced in the South East Asian region and has a history of a few thousand years. This medical practice has its own unique methods and values. Although Allopathic medical approach is dominant in Sri Lanka, Ayurvedic medicine is also practiced widely in society and has successfully maintained its historical social recognition. In Sri Lanka, people believe that herbal medicine can cure majority of their sicknesses. The main objective of this project is to collect specific data systematically, to identify and understand the values and beliefs in Ayurvedic medicine and its approach in treating and curing three specific diseases that are considered to have successful treatment methods. Three diseases are: Hypertension, Hyperlipidemia and Diabetes Mellitus. The main involvement of this project is scientific fact finding through analysis of data, collected through available literature, observations and interviewing techniques. The project focuses on two main frames. First is to explore treatment methods, medications, pharmacological values and second, to holistically investigate values and beliefs contributed to the claimed success of Ayurvedic medicine. Though there are some research papers published on plural approach and existence of Ayurvedic medicine in Sri Lanka, it is almost impossible to access any published literature or findings of research conducted on the treatment methods for these three diseases. This project focuses on these three diseases because, my initial investigation through discussing with the Commissioner of Western Province, Ministry of Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka, Dr. Nimal Karunasiri, confirmed that the Ayurvedic hospitals are treating these three diseases successfully and hence have managed to win popularity. I will gear this project to collect the information on these diseases, and collect information on values and beliefs thus focusing the project in the above two frames.

Background

My roots were in Sri Lanka until I reached 18 years. Ayurvedic medical strategy always fascinated me. The belief in the society regarding the curable power of Ayurvedic medicine made me enthusiastic and I developed a desire to investigate the basis of this medical approach. In my childhood, my grandmother used to relate stories about this subject as her uncle had been an Ayurvedic doctor. She used to tell me about leaches, and traditional herbs used to cure diseases such as boils or blood poisoning, arthritis and vascular problems. Further, in her house there had been Ayurvedic literature on ola leaf manuscripts which elaborately explained the methods for treating diseases. She considered those as very precious because they were family inherited and some being secrets. Further, her uncle had been respected and honored by the villagers because of his medical ethics and values. Ayurvedic medical service was delivered regardless of any monetary benefits.

This childhood environment made me realize that Ayurvedic medicine possessed a unique curing

power together with its own values and beliefs in delivering medical care. It is also evident that the collectivistic cultural qualities in Sri Lankan society have laid the foundation in deriving these ethics and qualities associated with this medical approach. There were incidents that I have heard about curing diseases where Allopathic medicine had failed to cure. Initially, I thought these as just beliefs lacking much scientific validity, but this school of thoughts was changed through my own experience.

In my childhood, when allergic and asthmatic conditions worsened, my parents used to take me to Ayurvedic doctors because, for these types of diseases people preferred natural herbs to western medicine. Those doctors always issued syrup made out of many herbs from their own dispensaries which gave me relief. Also, there was a time my father was suffering from a chronic pain in his ankle for about 3 years. Initially, he got Allopathic medications but it failed to cure the illness. Then he consulted an Ayurvedic doctor. I was with him when he went to this doctor's clinic which was his residence, an average house with herbs and ointment, different sizes of bottles, packed on cabinets. The doctor inquired about the history and examined the ankle by using palpation and percussion methods. After a while he sternly uttered that he could cure the sickness completely. Then he gave an ointment to apply daily at night for three weeks and advised to keep the affected area warm. That medicine cured his sickness completely. There are incidents where Ayurvedic medicine competently corrected dislocations and unhealed fractures. It claims that it can remove eye cataract without surgery. There are many incidents where Ayurvedic medicine cured strokes. These incidents gave me the insight to the strength and power of the curing methods and techniques of Ayurvedic medicine and I was motivated to investigate the value of those which might add benefit to Allopathic medical sciences as well.

There are some researches, conducted by university students, available and accessible through the web. Ediriweera et.al found that Hemiplegis is successfully cured by Ayurvedic Medicine⁴. Weerasinghe et.al states Ayurvedic medicine is popular on treating snake bites, paralysis and fractures⁷. Mano et.al tests with mice found that the herbs used in treating diabetes can reduce the blood sugar levels⁵. However, the well claimed treating methods on above mentioned three sicknesses are not explicitly researched or published.

Taking these facts into consideration, I was determined to explore further and it was my desire to investigate any valuable medicines, methods, values and beliefs which are practiced in this system to treat diseases. I feel I have the required knowledge to explore the scientific aspect of Ayurvedic medicine in treating and curing the diseases mentioned and now it is the opportune time for me to convert my desire in to practice.

Project explanation

Before proceeding to actual project explanation, I would like to shed some light on the benefits

and the potential that this project can carry to Sri Lanka and to the USA as well. Through literature reviews I have found some facts on Ayurvedic and Allopathic medicine prevailing in Sri Lanka, because those as institutions are linked to the social, economic and political structure of the society¹. Dr. Diyanath Samarasinghe, a profound psychiatrist, being a critique to the paper published by Judith and Themothy², states that health planners in under developed countries are often faced with the difficult problem of what role they should assign to traditional therapists. Further, the government wants to decide whether or not Ayurvedic doctors be used to meet the severe shortfall of Allopathic medical doctors in primary care³. Some scientific findings on the methods and success of treatments could help in this health planning decision making process. Further, raising the awareness about these treating strategies and relevant medications with a scientific background can contribute positively to Allopathic medicine. With this potential, now I will proceed to explain the project.

As I have explained, I will be investigating on how Ayurvedic medicine treats the three distinct diseases: Hypertension, Hyperlipidemia and Diabetes Mellitus and the values and beliefs associated with the system. I would like to divide this project into two main focuses. The first is to identify the treatment processes and the second to analyze and understand the overall values and beliefs of Ayurvedic medical practice.

I wish to collect data through literature reviews, interviews and observations from three different reputable sources. First source is medical practitioners and patients in Ayurvedic hospitals and clinics. There are Ayurvedic licensed medical doctors practicing in different parts of the country. I will be choosing two reputable Ayurvedic doctors to obtain information. In Ayurvedic medicine the treatment strategies, methods and equipment used might vary from one practitioner to another. Due to this heterogeneity interviewees need to be selected to represent the entire population. I will be selecting two doctors from different parts of the country. The second source will be from the lecturers in the College of Indigenous Medicine (CIM) established under the Institute of Indigenous Medicine of Sri Lanka (IIMSL). There are three CIMs in Sri Lanka and I will be choosing the one in Colombo at Nawala, Reajagiriya. The third source is from researchers in Bandaranayake Ayurveda Research Institute (BARI) of the IIMSL, located in the suburbs of Colombo. The contact details of these institutes and doctors are given in Annex 1. I have contacted the director of the college of indigenous medicine, Dr. R.A Jayasinghe and he has given me the assurance and confirmation of the availability of lecturers whom I can interview and library sources which I can utilize to obtain data for my project. Further I have obtained the permission from the Ministry of Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka to carry out this project and this permission will grant me the access to lecturers and library sources in CIM and to researchers in BARI to obtain data.

This multi-source data collection will enable me to gather a conclusive dataset on the two focuses of my project. The purpose of obtaining information from many sources is to be assured that my

data is reliable and valid. The findings of the first focus of the project will be systematically documented. This documentation is detailed in Annex 2. Under the second focus I will investigate the beliefs and values in Ayurvedic medicine that contribute to the success of curing the diseases. The data for this section will be collected by interviewing the two Ayurvedic medical practitioners and patients in the hospital where they practice. The contact information of the two Ayurvedic medical practitioners and the address of the hospital are mentioned in Annex 1. The interviews will be conducted through structured conversations in a casual manner to avoid difficulties and stress to the interviewee and will be conducted using a structured guideline to obtain answers to the specific questions on values and beliefs given in Annex 3. By analyzing the answers to these questions, I will be able to obtain information on beliefs and values of Ayurvedic medicine in a holistic manner.

Detailed time line of the project is given in Annex 4.

Methods

This project will be conducted through three main methods to gather data. They are literature reviews, use of interviewing techniques and visual observation. Given the fact finding nature of the project, I will not involve in sophisticated statistical analysis. Literature review will be done through National Ayurvedic and Allopathic medical libraries in Sri Lanka. This review will be focused to the research findings and published articles relevant to the three diseases and data available on pharmacological values of the herbs used in treatments.

To obtain data on these three pathological conditions and on values and beliefs, visual observations will be carried out by shadowing the two Ayurvedic medical practitioners in their clinics. I will also be interviewing lecturers who conduct classes and research personnel and the two licensed Ayurvedic medical practitioners. The access to interview the lecturers and research personnel has been obtained with the permission of Dr. Nimal Karunasiri and his permission letter will be attached in Annex 5. Further, in Annex 5, I have also attached the letters from the two medical practitioners who have agreed to guide me and support me throughout this project by facilitating shadowing events, patient interviews and sources to obtain data such as medical libraries and self-interviews.

As the above three institutions are located within a 30 miles radius from my former residence, I will be commuting to these places during weekdays and probably be spending most of my time in clinics and hospitals with interviews, shadowing, observations and reading. There is a public transport system in Sri Lanka and also an affordable private transport system which I will be making use of.

The systematic documentation of the diseases will include both categorical and numerical data. The numerical data for item #8 listed in Annex 2, will contain the number of patients seeking

treatment, their economic, social and educational background and success rates for the three diseases. Given the limited time period, retrospective data which will be obtained through BARI and CIM, will be utilized. The documentation of the rest, from items #1- #7 shown in Annex 2, will be categorical data. The documentation of values and beliefs will mostly be categorical data as this section will be framed by the questionnaire mentioned in the Annex 3.

Systematic documentation will be done by using the format mentioned in Annex 2, which will also include visuals whenever possible. One of the ways to obtain the pharmacological values of specific herbs and their ability to cure sicknesses will be interviewing the two Ayurvedic medical practitioners, profound faculty members and researchers in the CIMs and BARI respectively. Subsequently, attempts will be made to clarify details through library resources.

As I have well established roots in Sri Lanka, logistics, accommodation and contacts of mentors and institutes can be obtained without difficulty. I can get free accommodation in my former residence, located 15 miles away from CIM and BARI. I have informed the IIMSL, BARI and CIM and have obtained contact information and permission to collect data for my project. I will also access Allopathic medical libraries in Sri Lanka to gather information on Ayurvedic medical strategies as these libraries have different sections compiling literature of Ayurvedic medicine. This access will be obtained through a licensed Allopathic medical practitioner, who is my aunt, a consultant ENT surgeon in Colombo South teaching hospital in Sri Lanka.

Through my social connections in Sri Lanka, I have contacted the Ayurvedic Commissioner of Western Province, Ministry of Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka, Dr. Nimal Karunasiri and two other licensed Ayurvedic doctors who have given me written assurance on the support and assistance they could extend to carry out this project. Further, Dr. Nimal Karunasiri has given me permission to conduct this project in Sri Lanka and to access Ayurvedic medical literature and other resources in the BARI, and CIMs and connected hospitals. The contact information of these personnel is given in Annex 1.

Expense

The budget for this project is roughly calculated as follows.

Expense	Amount (SLRs)	Amount (\$)
Travel by Air		1700

Accommodation	5,000	50
Food	30,000	300
Transportation	10,000	100
Office ware (compute access, printing, etc)	5,000	50
Miscellaneous	20,000	200
Total		2400

Works Cited

1. Waxler-Morrison NE. "Plural Medicine in Sri Lanka: Do Ayurvedic and Western Medical Practices Differ?" 1988. Web. 27 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2976194>>.
2. Glynn, J. R. "Factors That Influence Patients in Sri Lanka in Their Choice between Ayurvedic and Western Medicine." *British Medical Journal* 291 (1985): 470-72. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1416745/?page=2>>.
3. Jeyarajah R. "Factors That Influence Patients in Sri Lanka in Their Choice between Ayurvedic and Western Medicine." 28 Sept. 1985. Web. 27 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1416745/?page=1>>.
4. Ediriweera ER ER. "Clinical Study on the Efficacy of Chandra Kalka with Mahadalu Anupanaya in the Management of Pakshaghata (Hemiplegia)." Jan. 2011. Web. 27 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22131754>>.
5. Mano H. "Mechanisms of Blood Glucose-lowering Effect of Aqueous Extract from Stems of Kothala Himbutu (*Salacia Reticulata*) in the Mouse." Jan. 2009. Web. 27 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19028559>>.
6. Nordstrom CR. "Exploring Pluralism--the Many Faces of Ayurveda." 1988. Web. 27 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3227356>>.
7. Weerasinghe MC. "Paradox in Treatment Seeking: An Experience from Rural Sri Lanka." Mar. 2011. Web. 27 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20935237>>.

The contacts of mentors and other respective sources

Commissioner of western province, Ministry of Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka

Name- Dr. Nimal Karunasiri,

Designation - Commissioner of Western Province, Ministry of Indigenous Medicine Sri Lanka

Address- Ministry of Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka

Contact information- Tel 01194777675679

Email- Nimalskl@gmail.com

National Ayurvedic Medical College and hospitals

Name- Dr. R.A. Jayasinghe

Designation - Director of indigenous medicine - Rajagiriya

Address- National Ayurvedic Medical College, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka

Contact information- Tel +94775412312

National Ayurvedic research center

Name- K.D.S. Ranaweera

Designation- Professor

Address- Institute Bandaranayaka Memorial Research Institute, Navinna, Sri Lanka

Contact information- Tel +942850302 or 333 /0712413537

Licensed Ayurvedic medical practitioners

Name- Dr. H.A.M Sriyani

Designation- Doctor of Ayurvedic Medicine

Institute- Ayurvedic Hospital

Address- Minipe Pradeshiya Saba (provincial level hospital), Hasalaka, Sri Lanka

Contact information- Tel- 01194772865364

Name- Dr. H.P Jayadasa

Designation- Doctor of Ayurvedic Medicine

Institute- Gampaha Ayurvedic dispensary

Address- 40. A, Rahula Road, Katubadda, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

Contact information- Tel- 01194777551389

Address of the hospital where the shadowing of doctors and interviewing patients will take place-

Minipe Pradeshiya Saba (provincial level hospital)

Hasalaka

Sri Lanka

Licensed Allopathic medical practitioner

Name: Dr. Malkanthi Jayasinghe

Designation- Doctor of Allopathic medicine, Consultant ENT surgeon

Institute- Kalubowila Government Hospital

Address- ENT Department, Kalubowila Government Hospital, Sri Lanka

Contact information- Tel 01194112775248

Email- Mjayasinghe@sltnet.lk

Place of my former residential address

26/1, Kandawala Mawatha, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka

Annex - 2

Systematic documentation of the first focus of the project will be structured in the following format:

1. *Disease of interest*- This will be one of the three diseases
2. *Investigation and diagnosis*- Pertaining to Ayurvedic medicine, the clinical symptoms of these diseases. The methods used to investigate and diagnose the pathological conditions. This could be via physical examinations, laboratory tests and any other methods used by Ayurvedic doctors.
3. *The approach*- What is the plan of treatment after the diagnosis. Example: Herbal drugs, therapy such as massage and heat, etc.
4. *Treatment strategies*- Treatments given based on gender and age via different routes to the body such as oral, through skin contact, etc. and therapy
5. *Medications used*- This will include a list of all the ingredients used to prepare herbal medications.
6. *Pharmacological value of the medications*- This will include the scientific and pharmacological value of using the above mentioned ingredients such as different herbs, in preparing medications.

7. *Theoretical basis of using the medications*- This will include the rationale behind the usage of each medication for specific diseases.
8. *Expected time period of healing and success rate*- Report of the time period and the success rate of treatment.

Annex - 3

The questionnaire to obtain data on values and beliefs of Ayurvedic medicine, i.e. the second focus of the project

Beliefs

1. Does the Ayurvedic medical practice rely on Astrological beliefs?
2. If yes, how one could tie those beliefs with treatments for specific diseases?
3. What other social or cultural beliefs does the Ayurvedic medical practice have?
4. If known, how these beliefs have evolved in this field of medicine?
5. Are there any specific cultural or social beliefs associated with specific diseases and their treatments?
6. If yes, what are those and why does Ayurvedic medicine believe that these beliefs are important in the process of treatment for specific diseases?

Values

1. What are the core values of Ayurvedic medical practice? For example, in Allopathic medical practice one of the core values is “do no harm”. Likewise, what are the values in Ayurvedic medical practice?
2. Are there any strategies or methods that Ayurvedic medicine uses to deliver sensitive information to patients?
3. How does Ayurvedic medicine value patient’s confidentiality?
4. How does Ayurvedic medicine approach a terminally ill end-stage patient with respect to values and ethics?
5. How does Ayurvedic medicine value the patient-physician relationship? Are there any physician paternalism expressed in this relationship?

Annex - 4

Time line of the project

May 12 - Travel to Sri Lanka.

May 15th- 18th- Introducing the project goals and targets to Ayurvedic medical practitioners, Ayurvedic medical school and to the Ayurvedic research center and completing the initial requirements to access Ayurvedic medical literature. Setting appointments with Ayurvedic medical school, national Ayurvedic research center and Ayurvedic medical practitioners

Investigation on hyperlipidemia and hypertension

May 21th- May 23th – Visit Ayurvedic medical school for interviews, investigation and data collection.

May 26nd - May 28rd -Visit national Ayurvedic research center for interviews and obtain data

May 28th - May 30th – Visit Ayurvedic medical practitioners for interviews and obtain data

May 31st- June 4nd- Visit national libraries for collecting literature

Investigation on diabetes mellitus

June 5th – June 7th – Visit Ayurvedic medical school for interviews, investigation and data collection

June 8th – June 12th -Visit national Ayurvedic research center for interviews and obtain data

June 13th – June 15th – Visit Ayurvedic medical practitioners for interviews and obtain data

June 18th- June 19th - Visit national libraries for collecting literature

Investigating and obtaining information regarding values and beliefs of Ayurvedic medicine

June 20th – June 22nd – Visit Ayurvedic medical school for interviews, investigation and data collection

June 25th – June 27th -Visit national Ayurvedic research center for interviews and obtain data

June 28th – July 2nd – Visit Ayurvedic medical practitioners and patients for interviews and obtain data

July 3rd – July 5th - Visit national libraries for collecting literature

Inclusion of gathered data to a thesis and summarize the project in a conclusive manner

July 8th – July 12th –Documentation of the obtained data and writing a paper

July 12th – July 17th – Making a power point presentation

July 17th – July 20th – Final wrap-ups

Annex - 5

Below are the letter of permission to carry out this project in Sri Lanka and letters from the two medical practitioners who have agreed to guide me and help me throughout this project.

2/15/12

To whom it may concern,

I wish to inform that, I will give support and guidance for Mr.Jithma Abeykoon to carry out his research by providing required data and facilitating interviews with patients.

Register no: 9411

Medical officer

Dr.H.P.Jayadasa

No:40 A

Rahula RD.

Katubedda

Moratuwa

Sri Lanka.

2/14/12

To whom it may concern,

I will be happy to assist Mr. Jithma Abeykoon, Medical Student attached to the University of U. S. A. (School of Medicine) to carry out his research by providing data from interviews, reviews and also shadowing in clinical rounds.

Register No: 9181

Medical officer

Dr. H. A. M Sriyani

Nidahas Ayurvedic Dispensary

Minipe Pradeseya Sabha Hasalaka

Sri Lanka

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කාර්යාල அலுவலகம் : Office :	2588840			

To whom it may concern;

This letter is regarding to Jithma Abeykoon's research project which he intends to carry in Sri Lanka during May-July of 2012. I have gone through the project proposal and wish to grant permission to carry this project in Sri Lanka. Further it is my best interest to assist him with the needs of this project by providing the access to data sources which he has mentioned in the project proposal.

If you have any further concerns please contact me via email: nimal skl@gmail.com

Thank you

Sincerely Yours



Dr. M.H. Nimal Karunasiri,
 Commissioner of Ayurveda ,
 Department of Ayurveda,
 Western Province.