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## Review Article

## Exploring the efficacy of integrative medicine for chronic conditions: The role of combining allopathy, ayurveda, homeopathy, naturopathy, diet and lifestyle

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## ABSTRACT

Chronic diseases are significant and increasing causes of illness and disability throughout the world with significant targeted implications for individual quality of life as well as health systems. Even though these medicines have been proven to be very effective in the so-called 'acute 'symptomatic relief 'of ailments, the conventional biomedicine diagnosis and treatment regimens, particularly the drugs and medicines do not effectively address the chronic diseases that are lifestyle diseases with psychological connotations like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus or arthritis, etc. Thus, a treatment or therapy plan based on a patient's constitution and lifestyle might be the solution to improved compliance as well as satisfaction with the integrative approach. However, this is a model that has some concerns of confusion with the pluralism of the treatment approach; thus, it may pose a threat to the modality and standardization while handled by specialized players. However, walking around various therapeutic modalities could initially amount to higher costs and although the costs could be higher, long-term implications such as lowered disease complications and hospitalizations could lead to more cost savings.

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## 1. Introduction

Chronic diseases are among the leading causes of morbidity in the world reducing quality and quantity of life with increased cost to health care systems. The regular treatment which is based mostly on the concept of the system of allopathic medicine is suitable for curing with the purpose of attaining rapid alleviation of the various symptoms as well as initial control of the diseases.<sup>1</sup>

Chronic kind of illnesses include cardiovascular diseases or diabetes mellitus in which the underlying pathophysiology and duration based on picked-up lifestyle changes in diet/physical activity or other conditions/emotional stresses may cause chronic physiological changes that may not be aboriginal with usual medical management.

This integrative framework provides for a more individualized approach to therapy that will allow healthcare providers to design treatment that may be individually tailored for each patient based on individual constitution and lifestyle. Chronic illnesses often pose significant challenges for disease management within the healthcare setting, highlighting the need for innovative and comprehensive treatment approaches.<sup>2</sup> These approaches not only aim to relieve symptoms but also address the underlying causes of disease, fostering a more integrative understanding of health and well-being.<sup>3</sup>

With this collaborative approach, patients get involved in managing their own health and begin thinking about well-being as a holistic rather than compartmentalized concept. Not only does such a method enrich the therapeutic environment but it also increases patient independence by allowing patients to be more engaged in their recovery journeys.<sup>4</sup> A method that considers each patient's individual

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needs and preferences sustains creation of the personalized treatment plans which has the effect of increasing the chance for patient adherence to the therapies and, as a result, better health outcomes. Furthermore, combining different fields and points of view enhances healthcare professional's ability to solve the intricacies of existing illnesses, accommodating both the physical as well as mental aspects of health. In this study, integrated medicine is explored as a method for the management of chronic disorders.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Discussion

Combining multiple therapeutic approaches is promising but fraught with problems. While ayurveda, homeopathy, naturopathy, diet, lifestyle and allopathy are each on different levels of empirical support, allopathy, the main treatment method around the globe, is well-regulated and has solid evidence.<sup>6</sup> However, each of these approaches has its own benefits and these approaches, each addressing patients with chronic conditions can be tailored carefully using these unique mechanisms so that they can work for patients too.<sup>7</sup> This is because a unique combination of these approaches that promote a more patient-centered aspect of treatment leads to increased patient satisfaction and better adherence especially when the types of approaches suggested by patients hold on to doing good for their own health needs and lifestyle.<sup>8</sup>

Integrative methods are typically more expensive upon investment due to combining several treatments while delivering the potential for decreasing long-term healthcare expenses through reduced disease complications and hospital admissions. This combination of these different systems, could cause confusion in the patient about guidelines for treatment, leading to conflicting advice and hampering care delivery. The standardization necessary to effectively manage chronic conditions can be impacted by this challenge. It also may encourage patients to self-treat or to delay conventional medical care, and risk their health worsening.<sup>9</sup>

However, the proposed collaborative approach may have unintended adverse consequences on the expertise of specialists from different systems. Each system differs based on unique principles which may be combined causing confusion about their particular strong and weak points. This blending also has the potential to unintentionally legitimizing unverified practices threatening patient safety.<sup>10</sup>

Promoting patient empowerment through collaborative decision making and community engagement will always lead to better health outcomes. Recognising that patients come with a range of health literacy and access to resources, some patients may struggle with the intricacies of integrated care. Instead, it could actually widen health disparities.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, the merging of various therapeutic approaches is not merely an extension of individual patient care but should imply the reevaluation of both healthcare policy and the education system as well. The growing acceptance of integrative medicine calls for the development of standardized training for this complex landscape that should equip practitioners with the necessary skills to guide. Such programs would facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and enhance professional knowledge not only of their own methodologies but of their colleagues' practices too. The sharing of this knowledge can help providers to improve communication among each other and that results in more coordinated treatment plans that focus on both patient safety and effective outcomes.<sup>12</sup>

To effectively meet the public health needs of this emerging population, public health initiatives must include integrated components that enhance awareness and accessibility and attend to health literacy disparities that can limit patients' ability to self-manage their health. With advanced technology and data analytics, healthcare systems can personalize treatment plans in ways never before thought of, these can then be adjusted in real-time according to the process of how quickly the patients are changing. A combination of allopathy, ayurveda, homeopathy, naturopathy, diet and lifestyle for chronic disease management is an attractive idea but concerns over the effectiveness and safety of these integrative modalities remain.<sup>13</sup>

Critics contend that the limited scientific validation for numerous alternative therapies raises concerns regarding their reliability and effectiveness. Unlike allopathic medicine, which is firmly rooted in evidence-based research, alternative approaches often do not undergo the same level of scrutiny and may lack the extensive clinical trials required to establish their efficacy.<sup>14</sup>

An analysis by the NIH's National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) shows a rise in complementary health approach usage among U.S. adults from 19.2% in 2002 to 36.7% in 2022, with notable growth in pain management methods.<sup>15</sup>

A national survey found that around 13% of middle-aged and older adults use alternative treatments, mainly through AYUSH, alongside conventional medicine for chronic conditions like chronic pain and joint issues in India. Usage is higher among rural residents and those with lower socioeconomic status.<sup>16</sup>

Approaches to health that integrate allopathy, ayurveda, homeopathy, naturopathy, diet and lifestyle are envisioned to be used in managing chronic illnesses. Each therapy has its own set of therapeutic benefits specific to the pathology of chronic conditions – a much more complex problem. This literature review considers blending these practices and evaluates the potential advantages and challenges of using integrated methods to manage chronic disease with

hypothetical data.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

Integration of Allopathy, Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, diet and lifestyle provides a potential solution to chronic diseases by dealing with their symptoms as well as their causative factors. Rapid symptom relief, proactive strategies, lifestyle adjustments, etc. vary from discipline to discipline. This is likely to have a prolonged effect on metabolic health, inflammation, and psychological health outcomes, according to the research. But although these modalities are likely to interact in creative and effective configurations, definitive clinical trials are necessary to verify effectiveness, to provide some degree of standardization that can enhance the effectiveness of such integrative care for chronic conditions.

### 4. Source of Funding

None.


### 5. Conflict of Interest

None.

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