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## **SWITCHING TRENDS FROM ALLOPATHIC TO AYURVEDIC SYSTEM OF MEDICINE: A SURVEY IN AYURVEDIC HOSPITAL OF LALITPUR (U.P.)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Conventional treatment modalities are hindered by adverse effects and produce only a partial remission. Ayurvedic drugs have been used for the treatment of various clinical conditions such as diabetes, gout, common infections etc. Because of the limitations of Allopathic therapy, there has been renewed interest in other alternative therapies with medicinal plants, which may have comparable efficacy to prescription medications while lacking their severe side effects. This article therefore concerns the reasons behind the worldwide shifting of the therapy from Allopathic to Ayurvedic medicine system and the beliefs and perceptions of patients towards Ayurveda. The responses obtained on the questionnaire from 242 patients have been presented as pie charts, column charts and tabular form depending upon the type of responses along with the general conclusions on observational basis.

## INTRODUCTION

The global crisis of health care is deepening that can largely be attributed to the shortcomings of the dominant allopathic system of medicine. In spite of Allopathy's very real achievements in accident and emergency, intensive care, surgery and so on, once its hazards are experienced, many people search for an effective alternative.<sup>[1]</sup> The expression "Allopathic medicine" is used to refer to "the broad category of medical practice that is sometimes called Western medicine, biomedicine, evidence-based medicine, or modern medicine."<sup>[2]</sup> Modern allopathic usually aims to develop a patentable single compound or a "magic bullet" to treat specific conditions. Traditional medicine often aims to restore balance by using chemically complex plants, or by mixing together several different plants in order to maximize a synergistic effect or to improve the likelihood of an interaction with a relevant molecular target.<sup>[3]</sup>

According to the 2007 National Health Interview Survey, more than 2,000,00 US adults had used Ayurvedic medicine in 2006 alone. Marketing strategies of major pharmaceutical firms have changed and 'Ayurvedic wings' of drug manufacturing have begun. In 2007, there were more than 8400 licensed Ayurvedic pharmacies in India and the approximate turnover of this industry was Rs. 4000 crore, which accounted for nearly a third of the total pharmaceuticals business of the country.<sup>[4]</sup> Recently, in August 2010, Department of AYUSH of the Government of India has modified Rule 158 of The Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 to facilitate licensing and export of Ayurvedic herbal medicines under categories of Ayurvedic cosmeceuticals, Ayurvedic nutraceuticals and Ayurvedic extracts.<sup>[5]</sup>

Ayurveda which means 'Science of life' is derived from the Sanskrit words 'Ayur' meaning life and 'Veda' meaning knowledge.<sup>[6]</sup> It is at least a 5,000-year-old system of Indian medicine (1500–1000 BC) designed to promote good health and longevity rather than to fight disease and was practiced by physicians and surgeons (called bheshaaja or vaidya).<sup>[7]</sup> Herbs are staging a comeback and herbal 'renaissance' is happening all over the world.<sup>[8]</sup> From the standpoint of Ayurveda, understanding and determining the prakurthi or temperament (constitution) of the patient is a prerequisite to starting treatment. Prakurthi of a patient is a composite outcome of vata, pitta and kapha (these are the three balancing forces or doshas in the body) states of the body.<sup>[9]</sup> These are known as vata, pitta, and kapha. Vata governs all movement in the mind and body: it is dry, light, quick and evasive. Pitta governs all digestion and metabolism in the mind and body: it is hot, sharp, and intense. Kapha governs the physical structure of the mind and body: it is heavy, sweet, slow, and dull. Aggravation of one or more of these doshas leads to imbalances that may in turn lead to disease.<sup>[10]</sup> Ayurveda provides better solution in the forms of proper dietary management, lifestyle advises, Panchakarma

like detoxification and bio-purification procedures, medicaments, and rejuvenation therapies.<sup>[11]</sup> In India around 20,000 medicinal plant species have been recorded recently but more than 500 traditional communities use about 800 plant species for curing different diseases.<sup>[12]</sup> According to WHO, 80 % of people in developing countries still rely on traditional medicine based largely on species of plants and animals for their primary health care.<sup>[13]</sup> Therefore this study was conducted to explore the reasons behind the switching trends of therapy from Allopathic to Ayurvedic system of medicine in health care practices.

## **EXPERIMENTAL SECTION**

### **Study Design**

This was a descriptive, cross-sectional survey involving face-to-face interview with patients based on combination of a structured questionnaire composed of framed questions affording little flexibility in choosing options (YES/NO) and an unstructured survey where a liberal opinion was sought on certain situations. This study was carried out in the outpatients department of the state Ayurvedic hospital at Mahroni (Lalitpur), Uttar Pradesh.

### **Study Population**

The study population include 242 (144 Males & 98 Females) randomly selected outpatients attending the Ayurvedic hospital who were approached and identified through a personal method of interrogation to collect the survey responses.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The study was reviewed and approved from State Ayurvedic Hospital, Mahroni (Lalitpur), Uttar Pradesh. After the eligible study population was identified, the patient information sheet was given to the patients. The nature of the survey was explained to the patients in terms of its objective and methodology. The patients were also informed of the confidentiality of the survey. Patients were only interviewed after obtaining their consents. If the patients were physically incapable of responding or in any other situation that would not allow the patients to answer, family members were allowed to answer on behalf of the patients. A face-to-face interview was conducted with each patient by the interviewer.

### **Survey Instrument**

Patients were interrogated through a questionnaire and were asked to answer. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section was patient demographic profile including name, gender, age and address. The second section (patient data information) comprises questions relating to the preferable use of allopathic and Ayurvedic medicines. The questionnaire also inquired about the reason of shifting trends from allopathic to Ayurvedic system of medicine.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected from the responses (242) obtained on the questionnaire was compiled into pie, column charts and tabular form to represent the results graphically and the responses were categorized to identify the following trends:

1. Epidemiological and socio-economic observations.
2. Patients seeking Ayurvedic medicine.
3. Patients switching from Allopathic to Ayurvedic system of medicine.

### **RESULTS**

#### **Characteristics of the surveyed patients**

A prevalence of male patients was observed in the total surveyed population with predominance of the middle class (79.33%) was observed among patients visiting the Ayurvedic outpatient department. This was narrowly followed by patients from the lower class (20.66%) and no patients from the upper class were noted. Out of the total patients interviewed 126 (53%) were knowing about the traditional Ayurvedic and herbal medicines along with Allopathic medicine system, 70 patients (30%) were found aware of Ayurvedic, Allopathic as well as Homeopathic system of medicine whereas 40 responders (17%) were undergoing treatment but not having any clear understanding relating to medicine system (Fig. 1).

#### **Characteristics of Patients preferring Ayurveda in different age groups**

In the present study, most of the patients preferring Ayurveda were in the age group of 41-60 years (51%) and less preference was found among the patients ranging from 21-40 years of age. Small populations (7%) of patient of age below 20 years were found for using Ayurveda for their acute diseases (Fig. 2).

#### **Reasons to shift from allopathic to Ayurvedic system of medicine**

Among 242 patients those were undergoing treatment, 36% patients shifted towards Ayurvedic medicine due to the high cost of allopathic medicine. About 20% patients were given the reason of side effects associated with the allopathic medicine (Fig. 3).

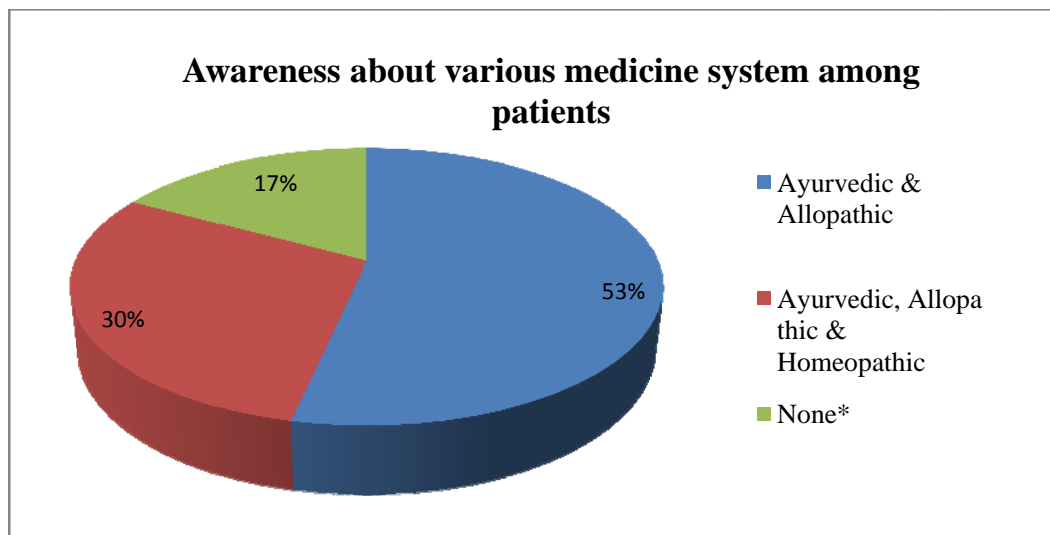
#### **Preferable medicine in current and prevailing illness**

This study exposed that 39% patients out of 242 responders were opted for Ayurveda as the first care provider and have not tried any other system of medicine for their current illness. A substantial number of patients (45%) were dissatisfied with allopathy and had chosen Ayurveda as the second option of treatment. A lesser number of patients (16%) were taking both allopathic and Ayurvedic medicines, out of which 7% patients were taking both medicines for their current illness and rest 8%, were taking both medicines for their prevailing illness (Fig. 4).

### Preferable medicine in common ailments and medical emergencies

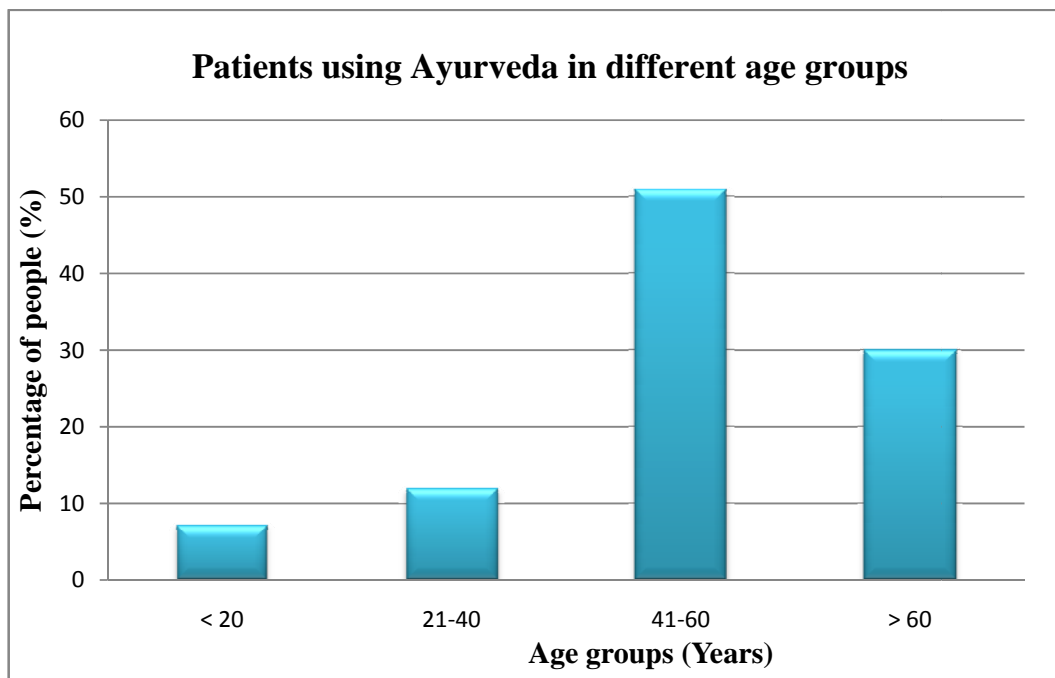
In case of common ailments 78% people preferred Allopathic, 10% preferred both Ayurvedic and allopathic whereas 12% preferred home remedies. A majority of Patients (98%) preferred allopathy in case of medical emergencies (Fig. 5).

**Fig. 1:**

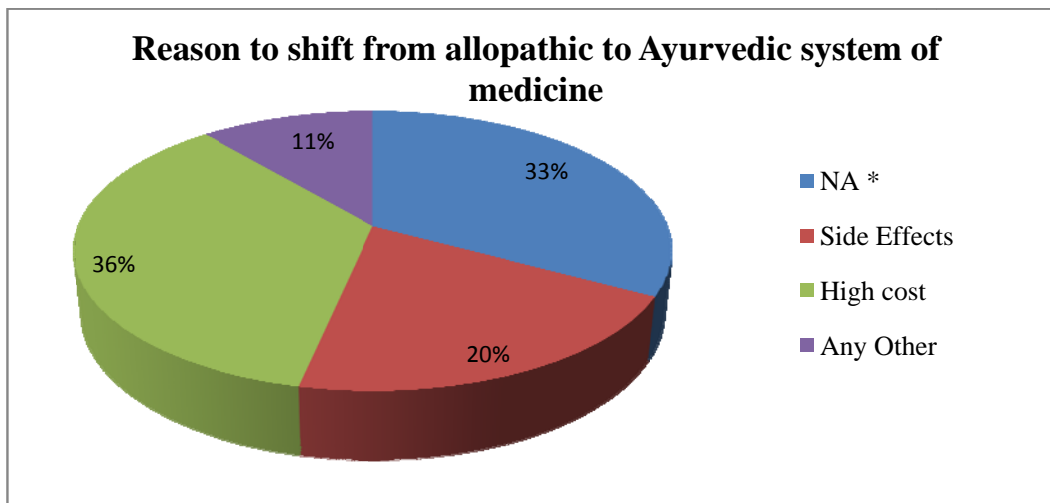


\*Children are excluded

**Fig. 2:**

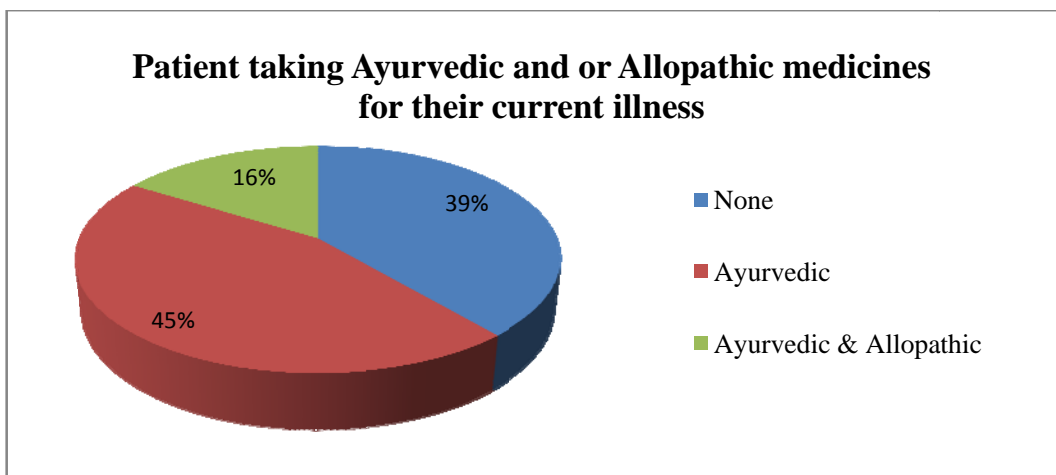


**Fig. 3**

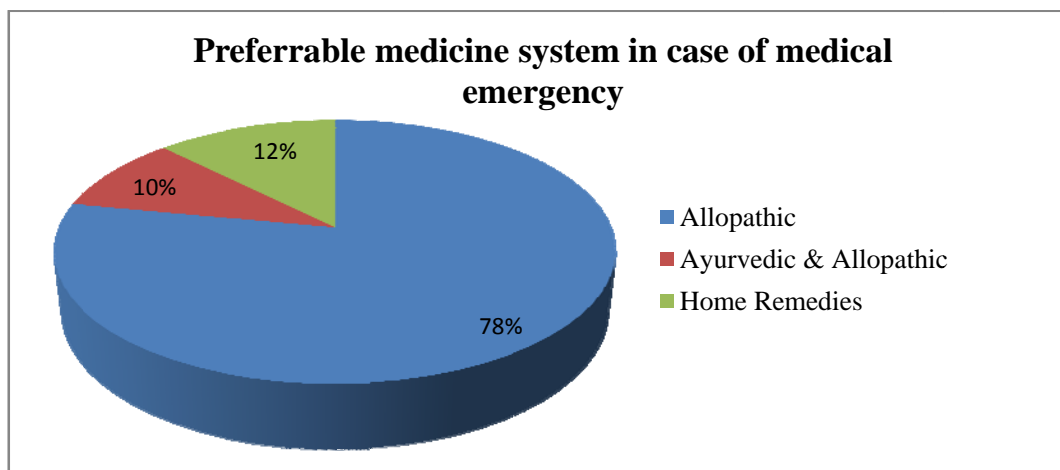


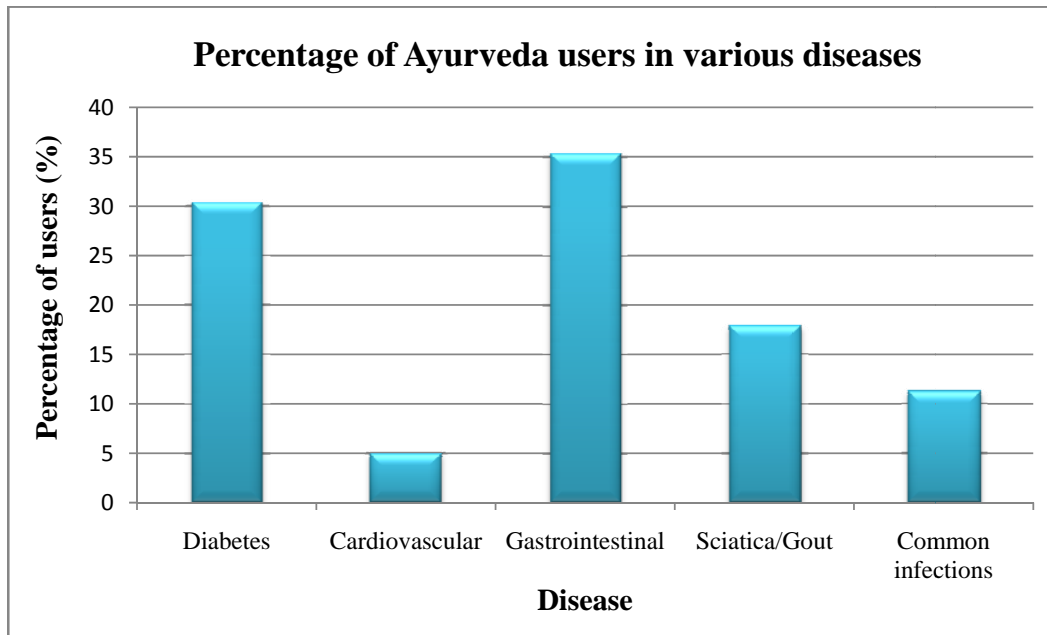
\* NA- New Cases (inclusive of patients simultaneously taking allopathic and Ayurvedic medicine)

**Fig. 4:**



**Fig. 5:**



**Fig. 6:**

**Attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions questionnaires of benefit toward Ayurvedic therapy:**

**Table 1:**

Attitudes, beliefs and perceptions towards Ayurveda	n	%
Awareness about the available traditional Ayurvedic and herbal drugs	56	23
Believe Ayurveda can help the disease control	73	30
Patient compliance	102	42
Ease of availability	39	16
Using Ayurveda after getting inspired from other users	80	33
View for tilt of common man towards Ayurveda and herbals	134	55

## CONCLUSION

The findings from the present study revealed that maximum number of people undergoing Ayurveda therapy for their illness had shifted from Allopathic system of medicine. Majority of people seeking Ayurveda treatment are from middle class. In addition, the basic reasons for the shifting towards Ayurveda and herbals are the inability of Allopathic medicine to reach the root causes of chronic disease, and its general failure to find safe, economical cures. But still, in spite of general tilt towards herbal drugs, the Allopathic system remains the first choice in state of medical emergencies and preferred mostly in case of common ailments. In this context, it was found from

the present study that the patients having diabetes and gastrointestinal problems mostly prefer Ayurveda therapy. Recently, considerable attention has been paid to utilize eco-friendly and bio friendly plant-based products for the prevention and cure of different human diseases. Considering the adverse effects of synthetic drugs and from the existing evidence it appears that Ayurveda have got vast potential as a source of therapeutics aids and has attained a significant role in health system all over the world for wellbeing not only in the diseased condition but also as potential material for maintaining proper health, but this potential has remained largely unexplored. Thus, a rationally designed interdisciplinary research program i.e. involvement of scientists from diverse disciplines of biomedical sciences is required for the development of alternative remedies through sustainable and cost-effective use of medicinal plant resources.

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