

A Holistic Approach to Health Care

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WE are living in a scientific era and in a dynamic society where the socioeconomic conditions are changing rapidly giving rise to living standard and longevity of life to the people. According to our Constitution, Health is a 'State Subject' and the responsibility of States whose resources are at a premium. Under such circumstances the Health Care institutions have changed from non-profit organisations to limited companies as that of industries and corporate bodies and that of investors-owned chains of big business houses to gain competitive advantages. These institutions are symbols of sickness services, i.e., curative, and the very expectation of the community is that quality services will be provided by professionally qualified people in a professional atmosphere (congenial environment) equipped with all modern technologies and gadgets for diagnostic and operative procedures so as to affect a cure and return the people back to the community as productive units of that community.

The Concept

Embedded in this concept and expectation is the concept of Holistic Health. We are committed to provide Primary Health Care to All by the end of the year 2000 AD as per Declaration of Alma Atta, which in turn is holistic in nature.

In our approach to Primary Health Care to All by 200 AD one of the strategies of planning is a referral system. This referral system is planned in our State health services where the institutions of health care, viz., Sub-Centres, Primary Health Centres, Community Health Centres and then

teaching hospitals have been established. But these buildings do not make a referral system operative. What is needed is the establishment of a two-way communication system from the peripheral unit to the Centre and teaching hospital and back to the peripheral unit. Such a system envisages keeping of health record of each individual. In this respect we are still in infancy and have now started with 'Jacha Bacha' card system. This card continues till infancy and an infant death in the system so planned. Can we find a way of keeping health record system from Birth to Grave in this computer age with so advanced an information technology to be planned with Lan and Network Connections to be hooked with the National Informatics Centre. The individual can carry a visiting card size magnetic oriented card which can accommodate A4 size 1600 typed pages on the card containing a health history of life. This card could be carried always in pocket or the purse. What it needs is Reader and Writer at the peripheral and other centres: though a costly proposal at this juncture but we can strive for it. Till then we must find some other way.

Besides making 'referral system operative there is a need for setting standards so as to assure as to what quality of care is being provided. The standard setting is one of the instruments of evaluation of care - a yardstick and is one of the missing links in the provision of holistic health care. The standard word is not new to us. We derived it from the scripture (*Geeta*) wherein Lord Krishna preached in chapter 3.21:

*Yadyadocharati shreshthasatattdevetaro
janah,
Sayatpramanamkurutelokastadanuvartate.
(21)*

"What a great man does that very thing other men also do; whatever standard he sets up: the generality of the man follow the same".

Thus what we need is the parameters of care we provide so as to allow a measurable unit and is conspicuous by its absence in all hospitals of any medicine including Allopathic medicine. The Indian Medical Association spokesman advocated that the Medical Care provided by Medical man cannot be measured. It is the logical way to look and see what the quality is? But too often we rely, instead, on the simple, unsupported assurance, that all is well which is neither scientific nor convincing. We must actually look at objective, hard data on a multitude of dimensions of health care. First, the care most of the time is not good enough and, second, we are nagged by knowledge that consistently good performance is not accidental, but, rather, the result of a systematic process; yet, most of the health care institutions do not seem to have such a process management with health care delivery whether in the hospital or the field. Such standards establish accountability to the profession, people and the system we practise and maintain professional discipline which we shrink even when the Consumer Protection Act is now applicable.

Professional Approach

Should we now assume that we are professionals and will use a professional approach rather than the institutional care approach or disease care approach which is individual? This individual, according to our scriptures, is 'Prakriti and Purusha'. Nature (Prakriti) is said to be the formation of

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body and Purusha the soul. Spirit is the cause of expression of pleasure and pain guided by mind; intellect, ego, etc. Chapter 13:19, stanza, Verse, speaks on only primordial Prakriti with her evolutes, viz., mind, intellect, ego and the five gross elements. Thus, the individual is a whole with body, mind and soul; so the wholeness of the individual is our concern. This holistic approach gives rise to a new model of health care based on life energy rather than on a pathological concept of approach. This is one of the rising concerns in medicine, primary care, community medicine, alternative medicine, administrative medicine and health education. Unfortunately, we have been sustaining a hotchpotch arrangement that works in a highly unprofessional atmosphere. It is too visible, too loud and too ceremonial to perform the right job in a right way at the right time that is and should be our goal.

Maintenance of health care is embedded in the concept of Holistic

Health Care (Primary Health Care) theory which is action oriented and is in infancy - a theory in evolution - a loose collection of assumptions, treatment plans and activities with adequate teaching of health thus implementing the teachings of the scripture (*Geeta*) spoken by Lord Krishna (Chapter 17:8):

*Aayuh sattvabalarogya sukh preeti vivardhanah,
Rassyah srigdah sthira hridaya aaharah
saattvikpriyah (8)*

"The food that promotes length of life, vitality, strength, health, happiness, and cheerfulness, and then that are sweet, oily, nourishing, agreeable, are favourite of good health."

Again, Chapter 6:17:

*Yuktahar viharasya yupta cheshtasya
karmasu,
yukta swapnavabodhasya yogo bharati
dubkhaba (17)*

"Regulate your diet and recreation

means, the regulation of their quantity or degree as well. 'Satvik' properties suited to one's circumstances and taste and in regard to one's health and power of digestion, as well as one's interest of spiritual practice."

Before I close, I quote Chapter 2:50:

*Buddhiyukto jabatib ubha sukritdushkrite,
Tasmadyogaya yujjaswa yogah karmah
kaushalam (50)*

"Yoga Karamshu Kaushalam - efficiency should be your motto which is skill in action and is said to be Yoga."

This can be obtained by the people of vision and futuristic approach. So let us introspect ourselves - our knowledge - and wake ourselves from the stupor of our present stereotyped thinking. Let us try to create a new tomorrow for the betterment of mankind throughout scriptural teaching and alternative medicine shredding the old colonial traditional medicine.

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