



Conference Report

Ayurveda: The future in the tradition

The 3rd International Congress on Ayurveda, “Ayurveda: The Meaning of Life – The Future in The Tradition” organized by the Italian Scientific Society of Ayurvedic Medicine (SSIMA—Società Scientifica Italiana di Medicina Ayurvedica) and Ayurvedic Point, School of Ayurveda, Milan, Italy with international partnership of Asthavaidyan Thriissur Thaikat Mooss SNA Oushadhasala, India, was held in Sesto S. Giovanni, Milan, Italy on September 16, 2016. The general event included the 3rd meeting of INDRA – International Network for Research in Ayurveda and a series of professional pre-Congress workshops and “Salute futurA”, a parallel exhibition for general public with free educative conferences along with Expo. The Congress was a great success and it was attended by a large number of scientists, doctors and professional Ayurvedic practitioners; it was also a big occasion for the knowledge and diffusion of Ayurveda through media in Italy. The former edition, held in 2009 in Milan was also successful and constitutes a milestone for the diffusion of Ayurveda worldwide.

The Congress has been an event devoted to analyze the relationships between tradition and future, between linear and circular time with the aim to interface Ayurvedic and Vedic System of Knowledge with the Modern Science and Biomedicine.

Thirty invited speakers among the highest experts in Ayurveda and biomedicine from India and Europe presented their latest research and participated in the discussion on the possibilities of collaboration between Ayurveda and modern medicine.

The Congress had a very important political impact since it was honored by the participation of many institutional representatives. Of particular relevance was the participation of Senator Maurizio Romani, Vice President Health Commission of the Senate, Italian Republic, the General Consul of India in Italy Shri Charanjeet Singh and an important delegation of the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India lead by Dr. Manoj Nesari, Advisor.

The subtitle of the Congress “The Future in the Tradition” was intended to focus on shared rooting elements between Traditional and Modern Systems of Knowledge. Awareness of the essence of the existing gap between knowledge systems is crucial and the identification of contact points, commonalities and conceptual references is essential to build a new “Rosetta Stone”. Only through an appropriate, faithful translation of traditional notions into modern scientific language, will a fruitful dialog between modern medicine and Ayurveda be possible. The interfacing of different epistemologies and inferential analysis of contact points will allow emergence of new paradigms of knowledge and common platforms for the future development of Science and Medicine. The idea

underpinning this initiative is that of Collaborative Medicine and Science – CoMS recently introduced to the scientific community.

The Congress aimed to gather researchers who are making an attempt in this direction and to give a coherent vision to these efforts, in order to identify a pathway that will facilitate the interfacing process. The Coherence between Traditional and Modern Systems of Science and Knowledge has been the main target of the event, which has been addressed by the single lecturers pointing out the trans-epistemological value of their research and results.

The aspects that were taken in to consideration constitute the sessions of the Congress itself:

1. Session 1 – coherence in concepts and vision

During this session the epistemological basis of the two different knowledge systems have been considered in order to define common elements for “making science”. It has been proved that the different methodological systems of Ayurveda and modern medicine can interface for the common aim of health. Moreover, the interfacing of the two systems may provide new inputs for scientific research especially in the complex scenario of multifactorial non-communicable diseases.

An example came from the “Evidence Validation Acceptance model”: based on experiential clinical evidence, it is possible to apply and validate a new paradigm (i.e. reverse pharmacology). Another way to make the two systems communicate came from clinical studies of Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) metabolomics; in order to further understand Ayurvedic preparations and functions, NMR technique was used without deviating from the principles of Ayurveda.

The strength of Ayurveda in representing a comprehensive paradigm for understanding human physiology, pathology and prevention of diseases, was outlined.

2. Session 2 – coherence in basic research

In this session the most relevant and recent topic of basic research with high impact on both systems was presented and discussed, such as Ayurgenomics and Nutrigenomics. In fact, modern medicine has now recognized the need of a person-centered approach, where each individual requires personalized diet, lifestyle, and therapeutics, as Ayurveda already taught us since hundreds of years. Ayurgenomics is a new way for the progress of personalized health and integrative medicine.

During this session, the “scientific basis” of Ayurvedic concept, such as *Prakriti* or *dosha* were explored, from a modern biology

and modern physics perspective, to make them understandable also for western doctors.

The need of in-depth studies of the ancient texts combined with experimental scientific studies to understand the significance and biological effects of Ayurveda were pointed out. Many talks outlined the need of modern synthesis of Ayurvedic concepts, in order to make them usable for western scientists. Ayurveda does not need to be proven but to be used to question reality in a modern sense. Need for systems approach and nonlinear complexity sciences is intensely felt. In modern terms, the global model of health described in Ayurveda can be described and accepted through the logic of Complex Adaptive Systems; health is an emergent phenomenon derived from an optimal coherence of the organism's functions.

3. Session 3 – coherence in clinical studies

During this session the main attention was focused on results from clinical studies with innovatively designed protocols to consider the specific needs of therapeutic approach of Ayurveda in the context of modern medicine. Among others, reports from clinical evidence of successful management of chronic renal failure with Ayurveda in India, and from the clinical trial on gonarthrosis conservative treatment through a multilevel Ayurvedic approach in Europe were shown. The ongoing clinical trial on Muscular Dystrophy in Italy was also presented.

A prolific discussion was opened on the necessity of finding the best clinical trial design acceptable to the conventional medicine scientific system and at the same time suitable for the scientific Ayurvedic perspective. In fact, nowadays many clinical studies in Ayurveda expected to show higher positive results lose their full strength in modern medicine, due poor understanding of the method of approach in Ayurveda. The need of proving the effect of Ayurvedic multilevel approach more than of Ayurvedic formulations alone was outlined. More publications on case reports record has been encouraged, rather than force data into small clinical trials with inappropriate methods, often rejected from international scientific journal.

4. INDRA

The event hosted also the 3rd meeting of INDRA – International Network for Development of Research on Ayurveda, an association of individuals and institutions across the globe to promote, initiate and co-ordinate research activities on Ayurveda.

INDRA has been initially conceived as IRSA – International Research Seminar on Ayurveda in 2013 at Birstein during the yearly International Symposium of Ayurveda of the Rosenberg European Academy for Ayurveda and renamed in this occasion in relation to a deep restructuration of its organization.

The principal aim of INDRA is to establish Ayurveda as an acknowledged medical system on a global scale, to indicate research guidelines, to promote, co-ordinate and initiate international research projects and to validate research methodologies.

In this meeting the core group of INDRA presented to the participants and to the delegation of the Ministry of AYUSH the passage from IRSA to INDRA and introduction of new organizational concepts. The core group also presented a white paper about indications for optimal research strategy and proposed seminal ideas for research projects to be developed. The presentation was followed by an interesting open debate between the participants including the delegates of Ministry of AYUSH. During the

discussion, the need of a comprehensive, recognized Ayurvedic education both for westerns and Indians emerged.

Moreover, the inter-exchange from Europe to India was encouraged, as well as the creation of an equipe of different professional figures involved in interdisciplinary research. Finally, it was reiterated that we need to be patient enough and go into depth to find the right scientific context and model for showing the results of Ayurveda, rather than bend Ayurveda to scientific publications just for the meaning of being there.

In order to nurture and foster this innovative approach for bridging modern and traditional systems of knowledge and optimize research methodologies between young generations, the INDRA AWARD for the best research on Ayurveda has been created. Researchers from India, Europe and other parts of the world answered sending their abstracts and 3 finalists were selected: the first prize was won by Dr. Maja Kolarevic of Slovenia for research on “Depression between Biomedicine and Ayurvedic Medicine”.

In conclusion, the 3rd International Congress on Ayurveda has been an important event for the diffusion and international networking of Ayurveda. Like in the previous editions, the encounter between scientists coming from diverse milieu brought interesting synthesis and new perspectives for research which will be put into effect in future. Moreover, the interest showed by the political world is forecasting a new wave for the legitimation of Ayurveda and its correct diffusion in Europe. In this regard, it has to be noted that the Congress has been linked with the event that Senator Maurizio Romani organized along with AMCP (Associazione Medicina Centrata sulla Persona), a Symposium at the Senate of Italian Republic in Rome, Italy, on September 29th, on “The Traditional Medicine, Complementary and Non Conventional in the National Health Service for equal health rights beyond regionalism experiences: Salutogenesis and Prevention, Learning Defined Profile, Good Clinical Practice, Clinical Research Nonprofit, Critical social needs, future prospects: an interdisciplinary approach”. The Section of Ayurveda was mainly represented by Ayurvedic Point. H.E. Anil Wadhwa, Ambassador of India to Italy was invited and participated in this historical event, addressing the audience with an insightful speech on the importance of Ayurveda and other traditional medicines linked with the Indian tradition and WHO indications and guidelines.

Other international events for networking are desirable in order to keep together scientists, Ayurvedic practitioners and medical doctors from all over the world in the aim of spreading Ayurveda. Only through the construction of conceptual bridges we can discover a deep mutual cooperation in the two systems of health care for human welfare. This is the meaning of life, the building of continuous relationships without any attachments to the results. As Ayurveda teaches us, the future is in the tradition.

Conflict of interest

None.

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