

CONFERENCE REPORT: INSIGHT AYURVEDA 2013

The Arya Vaidya Pharmacy Research Foundation organized Insight Ayurveda 2013, an International Research Conference on Ayurvedic Research and Education on May 24-25, 2013 at The Ayurvedic Trust Campus, Coimbatore, India. The conference intended to set standards for scientific conferences in Ayurveda. It was attended by over 200 participants including many eminent researchers and post-graduate students from Ayurveda and allied biomedical disciplines.

The highlight of the conference was an inspiring key note address by Dr. Daniel Eric Furst, an eminent Rheumatologist from University of California, USA wherein he highlighted the need for flexibility in contemporary research methodology and statistics when incorporating them into Ayurveda clinical trials. He then elaborated regarding the first ever National Institute of Health (NIH), US funded clinical trial conducted in collaboration with Ayurvedic Trust, Coimbatore to test the efficacy of the whole system Ayurveda in Rheumatoid Arthritis.^[1] He discussed the trials and tribulations undergone by the team in designing the study keeping in mind crucial factors such as blinding and placebo development etc.

The plenary sessions included lectures on diverse topics like Ayurvedic approaches for diagnosis and treatment of Amavata, Vatarakta, Autism spectrum disorder, anorectal conditions, emerging trends in Snehapana and Panchakarma etc. by seasoned practitioners. The lectures also emphasized on needs for standardization, regulations and safety of Ayurvedic medicines, good clinical practice, reporting guidelines for clinical trials in Ayurveda and bioethics. There were select discussions on developing strategies for dissemination of Ayurveda at the global level keeping in mind the education systems of different countries, the need for and current scenario of Ayurveda education abroad.

A total of 2 key parallel sessions were held on CONSolidated Standards Of Reporting Trials In Ayurveda (CONSORTIA) and Ayurveda Teaching Reforms Initiative (ATRI). CONSORTIA is an ongoing effort

initiated by the Institute of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine with an intent to make reporting of Ayurveda clinical trials transparent, unbiased and in keeping with the scientific temperament of Ayurveda. The guidelines are based on the original Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials checklist and its extensions and elaborations.^[2,3] The session was attended by select experts including editors of Ayurveda journals, researchers and faculty in Ayurveda and was chaired by Dr. Daniel E Furst. Dr. Furst applauded the effort for initiating these guidelines and asserted the need to maintain high standards to enhance the rigor of research in Ayurveda. There were deliberations regarding length of research articles, use of non-standard juxtapositions for Sanskrit terminologies, inexplicable mimicking of Western biomedical end points in Ayurveda trials, constraints involved in applying these guidelines to Ayurveda trials and few suggestions for modifications. The guidelines though not intended to be prescriptive necessitate transparent methodical reporting. In due course, it is hoped that the guidelines will also aid better protocols to be developed.

ATRI involved a select group of 20 faculty members, researchers and post graduate students of Ayurveda, all with a common concern for improvising and bringing new initiatives for education in Ayurveda. Sri. Swashpawan Singh, permanent representative of India to UN, World Health Organization, Geneva chaired the session. The members present felt a need for a program in the continuum that can enhance the knowledge base of Ayurveda. It was preliminarily decided to create a web resource of lectures by Ayurveda experts across India and a network of professionals for informed clinical decision.

In addition, there were few excellent oral and poster presentations by young researchers in Ayurveda and allied sciences. The best research paper was awarded to Dr. Supriya Bhalerao for the work on Prakriti (Ayurvedic concept of the constitution) and variations in platelet aggregation published in BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine 2012.^[4]

Ayurveda conferences have yet to improvise a lot in terms of the qualitative profile of research work. There were many methodological issues and most of the research work presentations lacked originality. We also have a long way to go if we are to digress from the temptation of attaching irrational Western biomedicine parameters for Ayurveda treatments. Insight Ayurveda 2013 has attempted to set a trend in terms of qualitative scrutiny of presentations and speakers that we hope will be emulated by other organizers of Ayurveda conferences in future.

Access this article online

Quick Response Code:



Website:
www.jaim.in

Jaideep Sitaram Sriranjini

*Center for Clinical Research, Institute of Ayurveda and
Integrative Medicine, Bangalore, Karnataka, India
E-mail: drsriranjini@gmail.com*

REFERENCES

1. Furst DE, Venkatraman MM, McGann M, Manohar PR, Booth-LaForce C, Sarin R, *et al.* Double-blind, randomized, controlled, pilot study comparing classic ayurvedic medicine, methotrexate, and their combination in rheumatoid arthritis. *J Clin Rheumatol* 2011;17:185-92.
2. Moher D, Hopewell S, Schulz KF, Montori V, Gøtzsche PC, Devereaux PJ, *et al.* CONSORT 2010 explanation and elaboration: Updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials. *BMJ* 2010;340:c869.
3. Moher D, Hopewell S, Schulz KF, Montori V, Gøtzsche PC, Devereaux PJ, *et al.* CONSORT 2010 Explanation and Elaboration: Updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials. *J Clin Epidemiol* 2010;63:e1-37.
4. Bhalerao S, Deshpande T, Thatte U. Prakriti (Ayurvedic concept of constitution) and variations in platelet aggregation. *BMC Complement Altern Med* 2012;12:248.

How to cite this article: Sriranjini JS. Conference Report. *J Ayurveda Integr Med* 2013;4:126-7.