

Diagnostic Procedures in Ayurveda and Their Utility in Modern Era

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For successful treatment of a disease proper diagnosis is must. Until and unless a proper diagnosis is made the treatment never shows its efficacy. Hence in modern medical science a separate branch is opened giving the nomenclature "Pathology". A pathologist knows the abnormality in the physiological activities of the human body and the process of reflecting them in blood, excreta, body fluids etc. For diagnosis of a disease, in modern pathology, the help of x-ray, ultra sonography, computerized tomography etc. are also taken.

In the ancient times there was no such instruments to help the scientists to visualize the abnormalities in different samples collected from the human beings for diagnostic purposes. But the ancient scholars of medical field (Ayurvedic scholars) discuss a lot reflecting the importance and procedures of diagnosis of diseases.

In an important verse the great scholar Charaka says that, "if a physician cannot enter into the depth of the patient's heart by virtue of his knowledge and study the condition of the patient then it is impossible for him to treat successfully. So a physician must get appropriate training in the field of diagnosis along with treatment" [1]. Such a physician who is expert in diagnosis can only be designated as the "Royal physician" [2].

Considering the importance of diagnosis before treatment the Ayurvedic scholars developed some procedures of examination of patients. For examination of a patient a physician is advised to utilize his 5 sense organs and the mind. A good number of diagnostic procedures from different angles can be cited from the Ayurvedic classics as example –

Three procedures of examination [3]: - The three procedures for diagnosis of a disease are – (a) advice and quotations of the seniors and experts – It indicates the theory of coming to a decision about the diagnosis of a disease recalling the advice of the teachers and the theoretical knowledge after collecting the necessary data from the patient and the attendant. (b) Acquiring direct knowledge with the help of the sense organs – Use the sense organs and mind to collect necessary data like, colour, temperature, taste, touch, sound etc. and with the mind (thinking and intelligence). (c) Assumption – After collecting the required data about the patient and disease the physician has to analyses the data and should make a decision following the procedure of exclusion and inclusion depending upon theoretical knowledge and advice of the teachers.

Ten procedures of examination [4]: -The ten procedures of examination during and before treatment include a vast area like – (a) examination of the qualities and knowledge of the physician from whom the treatment is going to be taken , (b) examination of the qualities of medicines expected to use , (c) examination of the disease going to be treated , (d) examination of the necessary equipments for treatment, (e) examination of the expected benefit , (f) examination about the expected longevity of the patient, (g) examination of the physical status and the residential place of the patient , (h) examination of the age of the patient and the time , (i) examination of the environment to start treatment and (j) total estimation of the qualities of the necessary things for successful treatment . Out of these 10 points the major responsibility to attain success in treatment goes to the physician as he is the person to organize all the other necessary substances.

Ten examination procedures in relation to the patient [5]: - It is clearly stated that, thorough examination of the patient is a novel duty of a physician who expects success, popularity and happiness. For the patient examination 10 important points are described by the great scholar of Indian Medicine, Charka. These examinations provide a detail knowledge about the patient that guide the physician to install appropriate treatment. (a)examination of the constitution of the patient to get the information about the dominance of the body humors, (b)examination of the patient with an aim to find out his abnormality, (c)examination of the patient to assess the dominance among the body constituents, (d)examination for assessment of the compactness of the body of the patient, (e)measurement of the different parts and organs of the patient and assessment of the proportionate status of them, (f)assessment of the homologation of the patient in relation to diet and behavior, (g)examination and assessment of the mental status of the patient, (h)examination for assessment of digestive capacity of the patient. (i) Examination for assessment of the capacity of exercise. (j) Examination and assessment of the age of the patient.

The concept and understanding of the ancient scholars of health sciences (Ayurveda) reflect the importance and utility of two fold examination procedures viz. the patient and the disease. To treat a patient successfully a physician must assess the status of the patient as well as the disease.

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2. Charaka Samhita, Vimana Sthana, Chapter 6, Sloka 19
3. Charaka Samhita, Vimana Sthana, Chapter 4, Sloka 3, 4
4. Charaka Samhita, Vimana Sthana, Chapter 8, Sloka 84-91
5. Charaka Samhita, Vimana Sthana, Chapter 8, Sloka 94-131

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