

Surgery as part of Ayurveda

Why in news?

- A recent government notification listed out specific surgical procedures that a postgraduate medical student of Ayurveda must train themselves in and acquire skills to perform independently.
- The notification has invited sharp criticism from the Indian Medical Association (IMA).

How far is surgery part of Ayurveda?

- Ayurveda practitioners are trained in surgeries, and do perform them.
- In fact, they take pride in the fact that their methods and practices trace their origins to Sushruta, an ancient Indian sage and physician.
- Sushruta's comprehensive medical treatise Sushruta Samhita makes descriptions of illnesses and cures.
- It also has detailed accounts of surgical procedures and instruments.
- There are two branches of surgery in Ayurveda:
 1. Shalya Tantra refers to general surgery
 2. Shalakya Tantra pertains to surgeries related to the eyes, ears, nose, throat and teeth.
- All postgraduate students of Ayurveda have to study these courses.
- Some go on to specialise in these, and become Ayurveda surgeons.

How about the procedures?

- For several surgeries, Ayurvedic procedures almost exactly match those of modern medicine about how or where to make a cut or incision, and how to perform the operation.
- There are significant divergences in post-operative care, however.
- The only thing that Ayurveda practitioners do not do is super-speciality surgeries, like neurosurgery.
- For most other needs, there are surgical procedures in Ayurveda, and is not very different from allopathic medicine.

What were the earlier regulations for postgraduate students?

- Postgraduate education in Ayurveda is guided by the Indian Medical Central

Council (Post Graduate Education) Regulations framed from time to time.

- Currently, the regulations formulated in 2016 are in force.
- The latest notification in November 2020 is an amendment to the 2016 regulations.
- The 2016 regulations allow postgraduate students to specialise in Shalya Tantra, Shalakyata Tantra, and Prasuti evam Stree Roga (Obstetrics and Gynaecology).
 - These three disciplines involve major surgical interventions.
 - Students of these three disciplines are granted MS (Master in Surgery in Ayurveda) degrees.
- Students enrolling in Ayurveda courses have to pass the same NEET (National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test).
 - Their course runs for four-and-a-half years, followed by one year of internship, 6 months of which are spent at an Ayurveda hospital.
 - The remaining 6 months is spent at a civil or general hospital, or a primary health care centre.
- Postgraduate courses require another 3 years of study.
 - They also have to undergo clinical postings in the outpatient and inpatient departments at hospitals.
 - This is apart from getting hands-on training in Ayurvedic treatment procedures.
 - Medico-legal issues, surgical ethics and informed consent are also part of the course apart from learning Sushruta's surgical principles and practices.

What is new now?

- The surgeries mentioned in the notification are all that are already part of the Ayurveda course. But there is little awareness about these.
- So the latest notification just brings clarity to the skills that an Ayurveda practitioner possesses.
 - With the notification, patients now know exactly what an Ayurveda doctor is capable of as the skill sets have been defined clearly.
 - It mentions 58 surgical procedures that postgraduate students must train themselves in and acquire skills to perform independently.
 - These include procedures in general surgery, urology, surgical gastroenterology, and ophthalmology.

Why is IMA opposing the move?

- IMA doctors are not opposed to the practitioners of the ancient system of medicine.

- But the new notification seems to give the impression that the skills or training of the Ayurveda doctors in performing modern surgeries are the same as those practising modern medicine.
- IMA sees this as misleading, and an “encroachment into the jurisdiction and competencies of modern medicine”.
- IMA questions the competence of Ayurveda practitioners to carry out surgical procedures.
- It also called the notification an attempt to legitimise “mixopathy”.
- The IMA is also upset with the recent decision of NITI Aayog to set up four committees for integrating the various systems of medicine.
 - This is in terms of medical education, practice, public health, and administration, as well as research.
- IMA says such an integration would lead to the death of the modern system of medicine.
- The IMA has demanded that the notification as well as the NITI Aayog move towards ‘One Nation One System’ be withdrawn.

Source: The Indian Express

