

Review of: "The Ancient Indian Knowledge System and the Medical Sciences"

Robert Ancuceanu¹

¹ Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy

Potential competing interests: Although this is not necessarily relevant for this report, in the past I received consultancy or speakers' fees from UCB, Sandoz, Abbvie, Zentiva, Teva, Laropharm, CEGEDIM, Angelini, Biessen Pharma, Hofigal, AstraZeneca, and Stada.

"People are turning to Indian culture and attempting to integrate it into their daily lives because ancient Indian medical sciences are considered superior to modern allopathic treatments." As long as traditional Indian remedies are not homeopathic in nature (and there is good reason to believe they are not, as homeopathy is a rather modern concept), they are all allopathic (although not modern, granted). In another sentence in the paper, the author states: "When an allopathic doctor checks a patient's wrist, they typically only assess the rhythm of the pulse." Again, the assumption is that an Ayurveda doctor is not allopathic, which I find it hard to believe, because the only antonym for allopathy I am aware of is homeopathy.

"When we visit a doctor, they use a stethoscope to examine us, check our tongue and eyes, and sometimes perform nadi pariksha, which is also known as E-HEALTH ANALYSIS." It should probably to be understood as "When we visit an Ayurveda doctor", but the sentence is somewhat ambiguous, because on the other hand, I find it difficult to believe that in ancient times Ayurveda doctors used "e-health analysis".

"It is an admirable fact that the ancient sage Maharishi Sushrut managed to identify even the minutest channels in the body, which were challenging to observe with the naked eye." The author suggests here that these channels (suggested in the following sentence to be "energy channels") are somehow anatomical and can be experimentally observed (even with a naked eye). It was useful if the author explained these channels to a person familiar only with the conventional medical sciences.

I find the paper rather summarily written, more focused on the philosophy of Ayurveda rather than on its relevance for the current medical science. I have no doubts that ancient Indian knowledge described today as Ayurveda signified progress and contributed to the progress of medicine, but it is unlikely that it was a coherent system of medicine with performance metrics similar to those of the current medicine. It had obvious limitations and they have to be acknowledged. I would have found therefore interesting to see a discussion on the valuable aspects that form the legacy of Ayurveda for the medicine of today, as well as its limitations (I may be wrong, but tend to believe that any system of medicine in the Antiquity and even in the 19th century was a victim of many wrong ideas; even today, we are probably entertaining medical ideas that in one decade or in one century will be rejected).

The author makes reference in two places to the work of the Indian Council of Medical Research with respect to the

Ayurveda traditions, but no results of these efforts are discussed, so as to enlighten the reader about the way in which this organization has put into value particular pieces of knowledge from the past.