



7th International Symposium on Ayurveda

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Ayurveda in the modern world

Dr Kostopoulos

Modern world faces an energy crisis. This reflects the way thought has developed in the modern scientific era. We are thinking of materials and goods like they are the only means to gain happiness, freedom and security in an ever changing cosmos.

The recent financial crisis proved otherwise. It is discrimination, ability to restrain and an inner sense of awareness that offer happiness security and freedom in the world. If these three mental qualities exist then material wealth follows as a natural consequence.

These qualities have been described in old Ayurvedic texts (Astanga Hrdayam) as the ideal therapies for the mind.

धीर्धैर्यात्मादिविज्ञानं मनोदोषौषधम् परम्॥२६॥

Discrimination, courage, strong will and knowledge of the Self
are the ideal therapies for the mind.

Ast.Hrd.Su..I 21,26.

In modern medicine we have focused mostly in molecules trying to understand an amazingly complex biological system. They are useful indicators of health but it is over simplistic to assume that they describe the totality of health.

Ayurveda without denying the importance of tissues, enzymes and molecules, describes three physical and three mental energies: Vata, pitta, kapha and Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Their interplay with molecules and their role in defining an individual gives more tools in the hands of a physician to understand, prevent and treat diseases in a holistic way.

Recently a big research project proving that there are molecular correlations supporting the theory of tridoshas was published in the

Journal of Translational Medicine (9 September 2008) with the title:
Whole genome expression and biochemical correlates of extreme constitutional types defined in Ayurveda

And this is how the results were published :

“Individuals from the three most contrasting constitutional types exhibit striking differences with respect to biochemical and hematological parameters and at genome wide expression levels. Biochemical profiles like liver function tests, lipid profiles, and hematological parameters like haemoglobin exhibited differences between Prakriti types. Functional categories of genes showing differential expression among Prakriti types were significantly enriched in core biological processes like transport,

regulation of cyclin dependent protein kinase activity, immune response and regulation of blood coagulation. A significant enrichment of housekeeping, disease related and hub genes were observed in these extreme constitution types.”

And the conclusion follows:

“Ayurveda based method of phenotypic classification of extreme constitutional types allows us to uncover genes that may contribute to system level differences in normal individuals which could lead to differential disease predisposition. This is a first attempt towards unraveling the clinical phenotyping principle of a traditional system of medicine in terms of modern biology. An integration of Ayurveda with genomics holds potential and promise for future predictive medicine.”

So the theory of tridosha, has now at least through this publication been proven, establishing a new horizon for preventative medicine using the vata-pitta-kapha terms to define different physical constitutions.

An other concept that is used in Ayurveda is the use of whole herbs rather than single molecules and chemicals. Again work published in the scientific community proves that this approach can be very useful in dealing with disease in the modern world.

Quoting again from the scientific literature:

“Ayurvedic medical system practices the use of dry powder or crude extract, and assignment of bioactivities to a particular compound is not preferred.

Interestingly, the mainstream pharmaceutical research is also on its way towards veering from mono-molecular or single target approach to combinations and multiple target strategies.

Perhaps, multi-site mechanisms of action of herbal preparations from the crude extracts may offer greater chances for success where conventional single-site agents have been disappointing.

Journal of Translational Medicine 2008, 6:14 doi:10.1186

So nowadays there is evidence for the basic principles of Ayurveda and the way forward will be clinical research based on how fast and how much patients improve using Ayurvedic approach and treatment.

In this way it will be possible to open the treasures of Ayurveda and use them in a holistic way in the modern world . We should remember that the classical texts of Ayurveda describe both constitutions and diseases and these should be used jointly to achieve the best result for our patients.

Ayurveda is an art of Life and this is how it should be applied for the benefit of humanity!