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MEDICAL CAMPS IN AYURVEDA - PRESENT SCENARIO, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS: PERSPECTIVE PROSPECTS FROM AN INTERN

Ms. Saba Fathima[1], Dr. Saher Fathima[2], Dr. Gholap Abhishek Ashok[3]

1. Intern, Rajeev Institute of Ayurvedic Medical Science and Research Centre, Hassan, Karnataka.
2. Post Graduate, Department of *Shalya Tantra*, Shri Jagadguru Gavisiddeshwara Ayurvedic Medical College, Koppal, Karnataka
3. Post Graduate, Department of *Prasuti Tantra* and *Striroga*, Shri Jagadguru Gavisiddeshwara Ayurvedic Medical College, Koppal, Karnataka.

Corresponding Author: Sabafathimaa17@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Medical camps in Ayurveda have emerged as a vital component of delivering community healthcare in India, particularly in rural and remote regions. These camps aim to provide preventive, promotive, and curative healthcare services based on the principles of Ayurveda. Despite their widespread initiation and implementation by the government, private organisations, and educational institutions, the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of such camps remain inadequately explored. The present article discusses the role, impact, challenges, and prospects of Ayurveda-based medical camps within the contemporary healthcare system. In addition, the article also highlights the need for scientific documentation, evidence-based practice, integration with digital health technologies, and structured follow-up mechanisms to improve their effectiveness and public acceptance.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Medical camps, Community health, Preventive healthcare, Public health, Integrative medicine.

INTRODUCTION

Healthcare camps have long been utilised as outreach programs to provide medical services to populations with limited access to healthcare facilities. [1] In Ayurveda, medical camps are organised to promote preventive healthcare, lifestyle modification, early disease detection, and management of chronic disorders through Ayurvedic interventions. [2] Ayurveda emphasises the maintenance of health through principles such as *Dinacharya* (~daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (~seasonal regimen), *Ahara* (~diet), *Vihara* (~lifestyle) and *Vichara* (~psychological factors). [3][4] Medical camps in Ayurveda therefore serve not only as treatment centres but also as educational platforms for community awareness. [5] With the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases, stress-related disorders, and lifestyle illnesses, Medical camps in Ayurveda have gained transformed significance. [6] However, questions regarding sustainability, scientific validation, continuity of care, and policy integration continue to influence their future. [7]

OBJECTIVES:

The following are the objectives of the present study,

1. To evaluate the existing role of Medical camps in Ayurveda in delivering healthcare.
2. To assess the benefits and drawbacks of Medical camps in Ayurveda.
3. To investigate future directions for enlightening the effectiveness of Medical camps in Ayurveda.

METHODOLOGY:

This narrative review article draws on insights from classical Ayurvedic literature, government health policies, published articles on community healthcare, and reports on Ayurvedic outreach programs. Relevant data were compiled and extracted from Ayurveda books, journals, AYUSH publications, public health literature and information generated by ChatGPT.

PERSPECTIVE:

As an intern, the following is my perspective on Medical Camps in Ayurveda. I have tried to describe a few of them below,

1. Present scenario and role of Medical camps in Ayurveda
2. Challenges of Medical Camps in Ayurveda
3. Future Directions of Medical Camps in Ayurveda

Present scenario and role of Medical camps in Ayurveda

a) Community Healthcare Delivery: Medical camps in Ayurveda extend healthcare services to rural and economically weaker populations where access to hospitals is inadequate. Medical camps commonly address chronic ailments like Musculo-skeletal disorders, Diabetes Mellitus, Obesity, Skin diseases, Gastrointestinal disorders, Stress and Sleep disorders. Medical camps in Ayurveda are known for addressing these concerns with the public.

b) Preventive and Promotive Healthcare: Ayurveda primarily focuses on the prevention of disease. Medical camps in Ayurveda frequently educate the public on healthy dietary practices, Seasonal regimens, Yoga and meditation, Stress management, and Personal hygiene. This aligns with the WHO concept of promoting education on preventive healthcare and holistic wellness.

c) Screening and Early Diagnosis: Many Medical camps in Ayurveda are intended to conduct screening for academic and clinical exposure on Hypertension, Diabetes, Obesity, Anemia, Arthritis and various Musculo-skeletal disorders. Intentionally, early identification of these diseases facilitates timely intervention and referral to one's own or other health care providers.

d) Public Awareness and Acceptance: Medical camps in Ayurveda are conducted to create awareness about the role of Ayurvedic therapies such as Panchakarma, Rasayana therapy, Herbal medicine, and Lifestyle modification in the above-mentioned diseases. It is believed that such outreach enhances public trust in and acceptance of Ayurveda.

Challenges of Medical Camps in Ayurveda

a) Lack of Follow-Up: Most medical camps in Ayurveda are conducted for one or two days without long-term patient monitoring. Few diseases require follow-ups for continuous care and further assessment. Patient's intention of free consultation, free medicines and other free services that are offered during Medical camps tends to drop during their visits to the respective hospitals. This is one of the main reasons for patients' lack of follow-ups. Many hospitals charge for their follow-ups. This obviously discourages patients from returning to the hospitals.

b) Poor Scientific Documentation: Many camps fail to maintain systematic records regarding the number of patients, complete data of patients, the right diagnosis, offered treatment and their outcomes, adverse events and follow-up results. Many a time, the documentation is screened and maintained by the students of their respective medical colleges. The consultants, faculty or in-charges of such Medical camps hardly take care of such documentation registers. This tends to limit the research opportunities and evidence generation.

c) Limited Infrastructure: Many times, the Medical camps arranged in the rural and unapproached areas may lack laboratory facilities, emergency support, standardised medicines and well-trained multidisciplinary teams. This discourages both the patients from those regions and the team of the Medical camp.

d) Variability in Clinical Practice: Differences in diagnostic approaches and treatment protocols among the practitioners can affect treatment evenness and credibility. A consultant at a Medical camp may advise starting a new treatment or withholding the existing treatment, which may confuse the patient who is on regular follow-up with his trusted family physician.

e) Public Perception: A section of society still believes or perceives the Medical camps conducted by the Ayurveda fraternity as temporary or promotional activities rather than a serious, structured healthcare service. We have experienced this in many of the medical camps conducted from our hospital. Nearly all three-digit patients enrol in a camp, but it turns out to be a single-digit number of patients approaching our hospital for follow-up.

Future Directions of Medical Camps in Ayurveda

a) Evidence-Based Ayurveda: Medical Camps in Ayurveda may assist in scientific evaluation through Standard clinical documentation, Outcome measures, Analysis of the data, and Publication of findings in standard Journals. These measures can improve global acceptance of Ayurvedic healthcare camps.

b) Digital Health Integration: Utilisation of Electronic medical records, Telemedicine, Mobile health applications and AI-assisted screening can improve the ability to reach patients for their follow-up and continuity of care. The Unique Healthcare Identification Number (UHID) implemented at many Ayurveda hospitals has yielded promising outcomes.

c) Integration with National Health Programs: Medical camps in Ayurveda can support integration with National health programs under the areas of Non-communicable disease control programs, Geriatric care, Mental health awareness and School health programs. One such was conducted at the initiative of the Ministry of AYUSH, New Delhi, under *Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav* in 2023. Then the outreach through Medical camps by Ayurveda institutions throughout India was a huge success.

d) Research-Oriented Camps: Ayurveda institutions can convert their intended Medical camps into community-based research models by collecting Epidemiological data, evaluating intervention outcomes and conducting comparative studies.

e) Multidisciplinary Approach: The alliance of Ayurveda through its Medical camps can collaborate with Yoga, Nutritionists, Psychologists, and Modern medical professionals. This collaboration can definitely improve the holistic care.

PERSPECTIVE PROSPECTS:

Medical camps in Ayurveda represent a strong and significant bridge between traditional Ayurveda and existing community medicine. The strength should ethically rely on accessibility, affordability, cultural acceptance, and an emphasis on disease prevention. The future of these Medical camps in Ayurveda should lie in transforming them from isolated outreach events into integrated and holistic public health initiatives supported by digital technology and scientific evidence. Needless to mention that the sustainability of Medical camps in Ayurveda should depend upon,

1. **Structured standard planning** on Pre-camp planning, Resource and Financial planning, Material resources, Publicity and Community mobilisation, Camp workflow structure, Treatment and drug dispensing, Documentation and Data management, Monitoring and evaluation, steps for overcoming the challenges faced previously.
2. **Institutional support** of Administrative, Financial, Human Resources, Infrastructure and Logistics, Medicine and Equipment, Academic and Research, Public and community collaboration with the institution.
3. **Significant Follow-up care** with Continuity of care (Revisit camps), Assessment of treatment outcomes, Reinforcement and Counseling of Lifestyle modifications, Prevention of disease progression, Clinical monitoring, and review of Medication
4. **Research documentation** for Evidence generation, validation of Ayurvedic practices, understanding Community health needs, Improvement of Clinical services, facilitation of Follow-up care, to support academic and research activities, Policy development and Institutional recognition, Digitalization and Data management.
5. **Standard treatment protocols** to ensure Uniformity in treatment, improve quality of care, facilitate quick clinical decision-making, support Research and documentation, enhance patient safety, facilitate training and Academic activities, promote evidence-based Ayurveda and strengthen public health outreach.

CONCLUSION

Medical camps in Ayurveda have significant potential to address preventive and primary healthcare needs, especially among rural and underserved populations. A successful Medical camp in Ayurveda depends upon evidence-based practice, systematic documentation, continuous patient follow-up, and integration with public health systems. By combining traditional Ayurvedic wisdom with modern research methodologies and digital technologies, Ayurveda medical camps can evolve into sustainable and impactful healthcare models.

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