

Ayurveda for the West

The correspondence by Patwardhan *et al.*¹ on the neglect of Ayurveda healing is right on target. As Chairman of a non-profit organization and its Science Advisory Committee, which consists of a dozen world-class scientists, including several members of the National Academies and H. P. Duerr, successor to Einstein and Heisenberg as Director of the MPI-Physics, we are also keen to rectify this amazing omission.

We have started to change the attitude of the US community – referred to in the correspondence – regarding Whole Person Healing (WPH) or Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) to be more aware of the Indian traditional healing practices on a scale similar to the amazing acceptance of Chinese acupuncture (15,000 certified practitioners) and now, Qi Gong masters. It is true that yoga and medita-

tion have fully penetrated Western culture. Meditation is of course universal, the distinctively Indian herbs and advanced health practices are hardly known at all, as Patwardhan *et al.* have pointed out.

I am working with Deepak Chopra and David Simon (Director of the Chopra Center near San Diego, CA) to establish a focal point in the Chopra Ayurvedic Institute, for both training at the MS level and clinical research. We need the support of two groups. First, the Indian business community (dot.com and others) in the US (and elsewhere). Second, the Indian Government and research groups to set up joint research, personal exchange, etc. for quality control, teaching and media exposure for the results from CSIR data. The route of gaining acceptance through research publications while important, is

a third component. The WPH–CAM movement in US took over the nation (50% of Americans now use WPH–CAM) by direct consumer access. Partnerships between Indian and the US groups are essential.

-
1. Patwardhan, B. *et al.*, *Curr. Sci.*, 2003, **84**, 1165–1166.
-

RUSTOM ROY

*The Pennsylvania State University,
102, Materials Research Laboratory,
University Park,
PA 16802, USA
e-mail: rroy@psu.edu*

UGC model curriculum: Some suggestions for the next edition

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has recently circulated model curricula for 33 subjects. I have some comments on the postgraduate programs.

- First of all, the size of the curriculum is different in different subjects, running to as little as 30 pages in some subjects to more than 500 pages in some others. This is because different committees have discussed altogether different details and/or the same details to different depths. Each committee has evolved its own format of presentation of details and there has been no proof-reading.
- There is no uniformity in the terminology, abbreviations and captions used by different committees while presenting the details of the curriculum.
- Total number of papers and credits recommended is different for different subjects. Hence the credit/work load and the total number of marks for a two-year postgraduate programme are different in different subjects. Weightage given to theory vis-à-vis laboratory and compulsory vis-à-vis optional courses is considerably different.

Further, the scheduling of recommended courses over the semesters like compul-

sory topics/electives, etc. is also different. Not all universities in the country insist on project work. Even in the same university, some colleges complete the degree with project work and some without it. This makes sense. There are lot of practical difficulties and undesirable consequences, if project work is made obligatory in view of the huge number of students involved.

- Though UGC recommends choice-based credit system, the system to be adopted has not been apparently appraised to the committees. It is probably not in the spirit of the credit system to have as many theory and laboratory courses as suggested in different programmes. Credit system demands that there be a shift in the pattern of examination and evaluation. UGC has not dwelt on this.
- There should not be any ambiguity in the 'formal instructional time' prescribed. Unfortunately, there is too much of flexibility now; the number of days per semester varies anywhere from 60 to 90 days per semester. Committees should also ponder over the question, 'How much time is really required to cover the recommended syllabus to the desired depth, both

from the teacher's and student's point of view?'

- UGC does not mention anything about course work for Ph D programmes. Students come from a variety of backgrounds to register for Ph D in the same discipline.
- The extent to which bibliography is given, as also its manner and format vary a lot between and within a curriculum. Moreover, there are no electronic references in any curriculum, which are must nowadays and are given in modern textbooks.
- Mentioning clearly the requirements of human, financial and material sources for running a specific programme may help the relevant authorities to take steps, to ensure some standards.
- The manner in which course contents of the syllabus are introduced is different. For example, while some directly start listing the contents, others give a caption like learning outcome, course rationale, etc. The way the syllabus is further divided also is different.

A. S. RAO

*Department of Biotechnology,
Bharathidasan University,
Tiruchirapalli 620 024, India
e-mail: asraobio@yahoo.com*