

Ayurceuticals: A stride worth taking

08 May 2017 | Column | By Anjali Jha



As we are moving towards modernised era, our food is losing some traditional ways which used to serve the nutritional needs. Influence of working culture, changing lifestyle and reducing time to indulge in quality cooking is driving people towards thinking about their health and wellness.

Interestingly, the world is gradually showing curiosity in traditional medicine. The most ancient yet living traditional medicine in India has been Ayurveda. Also, efforts are being taken to observe and standardise traditional herbal medicine. Although India has been successful in promoting its therapies with more research and science-based approach, it still needs more extensive research and evidence base.

India developed the concept of Ayurveda between 2500 and 500BC. The literal meaning of Ayurveda is “science of life”, because ancient Indian system of healthcare focused on views of man and his illness. It has been pointed out that the positive health means metabolically well-balanced human beings.

Ayurveda is also called the “science of longevity” because it offers a complete system to live a long healthy life. It offers programmes to rejuvenate the body through diet and nutrition. It offers treatment methods to cure many common diseases such as food allergies, which have few modern treatments.

Various nutraceutical amalgamations have entered the international market through exploration of ethno-pharmacological claims made by different traditional practices.

Ayurveda is more of an interactive system that is user friendly and educational in nature rather than a ‘magic bullet’. Dr Sunanda Ranade, Vice-Chairman of International Academy of Ayurved, said that fresh organic food consumed according to agni (digestive power), constitution, at proper time maintain the health and reduces the risk of chronic diseases. According to Chhandogya Upanishad, a small part of digested food nourishes the mind also. Sattvic food has good impact on mind

keeping the good health of mind and giving a person ability to think what is good for him and what is not.

Therefore, Ayurveda inculcated responsibility and self-empowered in the patient. Ayurveda helps to build nutritional system which provides well-being and prolonged freedom from illness.

Nutraceuticals: Budding alternative to Ayurveda

In recent time, food safety regulator FSSAI, for the first time, came out with draft safety norms for nutraceuticals, health supplements and products containing ingredients based on Ayurveda and Unani, among others.

The limit has been fixed as maximum usage levels per day for use as a health or food supplements which are based on Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani. The order also said that the benefits of specialty foods containing ingredients based on Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha and other traditional health systems of India, should be shown by science-based evidence.

Various risk factors related to health result from an imbalance in nutrition. These imbalances in India are widely prevalent leading to adverse outcomes. Dietary supplements and herbal remedies are popular complementary or alternative products for people. These are the supplements that are intended to supplement the diet and contain one or more dietary ingredients, including vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, amino acids, and other substances or their constituents.

PK Dave, President and CEO of Nature's Formulary, Clifton Park, NY stated that Ayurveda offers a wide choice of products for daily well-being, for adjuvant support in disease treatment, for treating health conditions with fewer side effects, and let us not forget, for beauty. As more of these products come to market, the consumer will find these tried and true remedies becoming an indispensable part of their own healthcare.

These are intended to be taken by mouth as a pill, capsule, tablet, or liquid and are labelled on the front panel as being a dietary supplement. Such products may range from isolated nutrients, dietary supplements, and diets to genetically engineered designer foods, herbal products, and processed foods such as cereals, soups, and beverages. These botanicals are sold in many forms as fresh or dried products, liquid or solid extracts, tablets, capsules, powders, tea bags, and so forth.

About 90 per cent of the daily diet should be made up of nutrient-rich plant foods, whose calories are accompanied by health-promoting phytochemicals, vegetables, fresh fruits, beans and legumes, raw nuts, seeds, and avocados, starchy vegetables, and whole grains. These foods or nutraceuticals construct a health-promoting, disease-preventing diet with protective substances. The rich nutrient food intake will provide maximum protection against not only infections, asthma, and allergies but also against heart disease and cancer in adulthood.

Successful blend of traditional and modern med science

For some long-lasting acceptance by consumers, association of nutraceuticals with traditional medicine is a must. It is found that the acceptance is more hearted when supported by modern medical research. For example, Ayurvedic herbs can be developed as nutraceuticals for the management of NCDS. Also, eggs enriched with Omega-3 fatty acids or curd enriched with lycopene can have more varieties by using carom (ajowan), or shunth (dry ginger), for the use of people suffering from Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

In recent times, there has been a lot of focus on research on medicinal plants as well as herbs that form a part of our daily diet. There has been a large body of evidence that forms a basis for their use as nutraceuticals due to their capacity to bring about modulations in various bio-chemical processes that offer protective effects to various organs. More and more people are getting health conscious and are warming up to dietary supplements for their preventive or curative effects along with an excellent safety profile.

Dave said, "Efforts also need to be made to provide information and education to the retailer and consumer. This job has usually been left to the finished product marketer, as well it should. However, the raw material supplier needs to play more of a role in this respect. After all, the sales of the raw material greatly depend on consumer acceptance of the finished product, particularly if the product is new in the marketplace."

"Last but not least, it is important that marketers of Ayurvedic products educate retailers and consumers about the herbs in a way that creates differentiation. Ayurvedic products must stand out rather than "blend in" to the crowded field of herbal supplements. Without this, there may not be a compelling reason for consumers to switch from an herb (or brand) that they are already using," he said.

To formulate new products which has essence of both the sciences majorly we need better understanding of various metabolic processes, convergence of traditional, modern health knowledge and modern nutritional science. So that with the help of ayurceuticals of traditionally used products for better health outcomes we aim basic nutrition along with reduced

disease risk for illness