

Revamping AYUSH curricula to make it research-oriented

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To standardise the curriculum of Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS), Bachelor of Homeopathic Medicine and Surgery (BHMS) and Bachelor of Unani Medicine and Surgery (BUMS) programmes at nearly 900 AYUSH colleges, the Ministry of AYUSH is focusing on enhancing the research. Instead of relying solely on ancient texts, the AYUSH regulatory body, National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM), has been revamping the curricula to make it more credible, research-oriented, based on modern biostatistics and clinical data.

Amid scrutiny regarding the scientific validity of traditional systems, the NCISM, the statutory body that regulates AYUSH education, research and practice and the National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH) that regulates homoeopathic education, have moved from 'text-based authority' to 'competency-based evidence'. Such reformatory moves are aimed to help the AYUSH practitioners gain status of Registered Medical Practitioners. The NCISM has been restructuring the curriculum to make it clinically relevant and phase out rote-learning models. The reformatory guidelines are preparing graduates who can engage in interdisciplinary research and work in integrated healthcare settings. This will be a step forward to strengthen training-based advanced training. Competency-based education by NCISM now involves clinical exposure, research training, and interdisciplinary learning alongside traditional treatment pattern.

"Medical science is evolving due to the changing health complexities and technological advancements. Hence, there is a need to update the curriculum to be applicable to new-age medical concerns," says Dr B Sreenivasa, former chairman, NCISM, describing the rationale for the overhaul. Pointing to structural changes, he says,

Regulators are overhauling the UG framework to prepare graduates who work in integrated healthcare settings

"In earlier syllabus only topics were mentioned, and no competencies were defined. The UG syllabus now follows a 1:2 lecture-to-non-lecture model, where one hour of classroom teaching is paired with two hours of activity-based learning, including practical and clinical training."

Scientific Inquiry

There is a shift from doctrine to demonstrable outcomes in AYUSH education. "NCH has introduced the Medical Research in Homoeopathy Regulations, 2023, to strengthen scientific inquiry and evidence generation," says Dr Tarkeshwar Jain, chairman, NCH. Research is a key component at the BHMS level, while the PG training reinforces protocol-driven research. "The BHMS and MD curricula include structured teaching hours in research methodology, biostatistics, and clinical research, with progressive complexity. Marking is based on theory examinations, internal assessments, dissertations, and viva-voce," Dr Jain adds.

The positive outcome involves the growing presence of UG researchers. Earlier, the final-year project was purely theoretical, while now the student needs to design the research protocols, following ethical guidelines, and measure results objectively.

Old Syllabus vs New Competency-Based Curriculum		
Feature	Old Syllabus (Traditional)	New Competency-Based Curriculum
Primary Authority	Classical Texts	Evidence-based texts validated by modern research and clinical data
Teaching Method	Didactic Lectures	1 hour lecture for every 2 hours of practical/activity
Research Exposure	Theoretical, mostly for Post-Graduates	Mandatory UG Modules: Research methodology, ethics, and stats (eg, SPUR)
Clinical Diagnosis	Subjective (Pulse/Symptoms only)	Objective: Uses modern tools (PFTs, Lab logs) alongside traditional methods
Treatment Style	Individualistic/Arbitrary application	Standardised: Based on Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) & SOPs
Outcome	Knowledge of the system	Competency to practice in integrated healthcare settings