

## ESSENCE OF 'PREVENTIVE MEDICINE AND HOLISTIC HEALTH'

The first editorial of the journal will be devoted to its very own core principle i.e. preventive medicine and holistic health. Holistic health is an art and science of healing that considers, the person receiving treatment, as a "whole" rather than an individual with an ailing body part. Aristotle has rightly said that "An individual is more than the sum of their individual parts/ organ systems". While considering the person as a whole it is important to consider the three dimensions of an individual i.e. body, mind and spirit. Whereas the conventional allopathic system of medicine is devoted towards the cure of the disease and elimination of physical symptoms; holistic medicine focuses on integrating all the available systems of medicine with the objective of promoting optimal health and also simultaneously prevent and treat disease by reaching out to the root cause of the disease. It endeavors to strike a balance between mind, body and spirit, thereby aiming to achieve overall health of an individual rather than mere alleviation of symptoms and cure of disease at physical level.

The principles of holistic health underlie the basic essence of the principles of Preventive medicine, which aims at achievement of optimal health by all in all the dimensions i.e. social, physical, mental and spiritual and by all the means. Preventive medicine treats the organ as a part of whole body; the illness as a part of the whole spectrum from illness to absolute health; the individual as a part of the community in which he/she lives in and interacts and therefore promotes the use of coordinated efforts of all sectors for achievement of health of the people. The proponents of "butterfly ripple effect" state that the whole world is connected to each other and to express it in contextual terms "the flap of the wings of a butterfly in Brazil could set off a Tornado in Texas." This is the reinstating of the same principle of our Hindu scriptures which states that the whole universe is one single unit "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*", which is also reiterated in the following shloka:

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते  
पूर्णंश्च पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ।।

Achievement of good mental health and spiritual health has been given utmost emphasis in our ancient texts and scriptures i.e. Vedas. It was well understood in early days that origin and end point of most of the diseases lay in the mind. Our Indian culture had realized this association from time immemorial and since ages focused more on achieving good mental health and more importantly spiritual health, which focuses on realizing one's own self as "soul or *atma*" rather than the "physical body", where all the ailments occur. The recognition of own self as physical body rather than the soul, which is non destructible, is the cause of all the misery arising out of the ailments and this misery is the actual cause of trouble for the ailing person as well as his/her family members, than the physical ailment itself. Socrates, a great saint of his times, also opined and promulgated the fact that the part can never be well unless the whole is well. Therefore to heal the ailing part of the body we need to heal the body as a whole rather than an organ. The modern day medicine has started finding evidences in support of this philosophy and actual and potential pathways between psychological factors and disease end points are now deciphered for most of the diseases of modern world today. Another major important factor in the treatment and prevention of almost all the major diseases, especially the chronic diseases, which are coming up as a mammoth group, are behavioural factors. These behavioural factors are important from the perspective of both the cause as well as the outcome of most of the diseases, including both non-communicable as well as communicable diseases. Holistic health emphasizes on seeking the cause of diseases and viewing the effects of the treatment in a wholesome manner and essentially includes mental, spiritual and behavioural components of health.

The coordinated use of various systems of medicines which are in vogue in India, i.e. Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Allopathy, Yoga, Siddha etc. can prove to be extremely useful in provision of health to people. The reasons for coordinated use stem from the fact that each system of medicine has its own advantages and disadvantages. While Allopathic system of medicine is unparalleled by others in treatment of emergencies including trauma; it has a limited role in providing cure for lifestyle diseases and usually binds the person with lifelong medications. Also people have different levels of belief in different systems of medicine for different ailments, which means that they would benefit from the one with maximum faith. These allied systems of medicines are based on laws of nature which states that the human body, as occurs for other organisms, best functions in its natural habitat. Modernization has increased the gap between these two and also modified the relation between two, thus enhancing the risk of diseases. A major deterrent to the coordinated use of all these systems of medicine is the lack of evidence based research in all except Allopathic system. Due recognition and use of all the systems of medicine in a "scientific" manner would go a long way in providing optimal health to people in the most cost effective and efficient way. Holistic health will help people to reach higher levels of wellness as well as prevent illnesses. People would enjoy the vitality and well-being that would emanate from their positive lifestyle changes, and would be motivated to continue this process throughout their lives.

**B. B. Bhasin and Ranjeeta Kumari**