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Role of alternative medicine systems in achieving universal health coverage in India


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Alternative systems functional in India are Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy, collectively referred as AYUSH systems. With total 3,601 AYUSH hospitals in the country, total AYUSH dispensaries are 25,492. There are 513 undergraduate and 145 postgraduate colleges. The country has total 7.37 Lakh AYUSH practitioners. There is a huge potential to utilize this workforce to meet public healthcare needs of vast population. Although mainstreaming AYUSH in public health system has been a national agenda, it yet to get translated on ground in its true essence. Government has made provision of co-locating AYUSH doctors at block and district level public health facilities which has helped to ensure better coverage of the population. However, mainstreaming will further need making

AYUSH services available at grassroot level facilities to make them more accessible for masses. AYUSH systems need to be integrated in national health program wherever possible. Standardization of treatment protocols, quality of education and research needs to be promoted further. With poor allopathic doctor: population ratio (1: 11,082 people), it is essential that AYUSH workforce is streamlined to mitigate unmet needs of healthcare, especially in rural and tribal counterparts of the country. These indigenous medicine systems are cost effective and offer holistic approach being patient centric and patient friendly. Additional government patronage is needed to promote these systems further.

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