CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH IN
AYURVEDA

Dr. Komal Mahana¹, Dr. Nameet Kumar Patni², Dr. Sarvesh Kumar Agrawal³

¹MD Scholar, ²Ph.D. scholar, ³Associate Professor
Department of Swasthavritta & Yoga, National Institute of Ayurveda

Abstract: Mental health is indeed a fundamental aspect of our overall well-being. It encompasses our ability to effectively manage stress, harness our strengths and abilities, and engage positively with our communities. The National Mental Health Survey conducted in 2016 was a significant effort aimed at understanding and addressing the mental health needs of the population. Its findings underscored the urgency of developing a comprehensive roadmap for mental health services. With an estimated 150 million individuals requiring mental health interventions and care, it's evident that the impact of mental health issues is widespread across various demographic groups and geographic areas. The core principles of Ayurveda revolve around nurturing both physical and mental well-being while preventing and treating illnesses. Central to Ayurveda is the maintenance of equilibrium between the body and mind. Ayurveda places great emphasis on the mind-body connection. The Charaka Samhita offers an elaborate explanation of the mind, its types, mental attributes (Mansikagunas), mental disorders (Mano-vikara), and their treatments as part of the Brihtrayi. According to Ayurveda, the integration of the body, senses, mind, and soul gives rise to a living being. Mental disturbances can disrupt bodily systems, just as physical imbalances can impact mental health. Ayurveda advocates practices such as Sadvritta (good conduct), Achara Rasayan (code of conduct), and Dharniya Vega (controlling urges) to foster inner harmony. These guidelines encompass social, emotional, psychological, and ethical aspects, aiming to deepen the connection with traditional knowledge systems and promote health awareness. Through a brief analysis of Ayurvedic texts, this essay underscores the significance of integrating conventional wisdom with contemporary health practices.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Mansikagunas, Mano-vikara, Swasthya, Arogya, Sadvrittta.

INTRODUCTION:

Mental health as a basic human right emphasizes the importance of ensuring that everyone has access to the resources, support, and opportunities necessary to maintain and enhance their mental well-being. Indian philosophy and Ayurveda share a close association. Despite advancements, finding effective treatments for mental illnesses with minimal side effects and high compliance rates remains a challenge. Recent insights suggest a deep connection between lifestyle and brain health. Ayurveda's concept of health, termed "swastha," and the notion of life, known as "ayu," extend beyond the material and mental realms to encompass the spiritual dimension. According to Ayurveda, life is the amalgamation of the mind, soul, cognitive organs, and body. [1] The overarching goal of Ayurveda is to preserve well-being and eradicate illnesses. [2] This ancient discipline has intricately explored both mental and physical health since the third century B.C. (Charaka Kala). The Sushruta Samhita offers a comprehensive understanding of "swastha" as a state of holistic health. [3] A person with balanced "dosha," a harmonious metabolism, normal bodily tissues and excretions, and a mind and senses aligned with the self is considered healthy. Such individuals typically experience a sense of contentment and happiness. [4] According to Charaka, the individual should have a balanced distribution of muscle mass throughout the body, and the body should exhibit compactness without excess or deficiency. Strong sensory and motor organs. The sensory organs and motor organs (such as muscles and nerves) should be robust and fully functional, enabling the individual to perceive stimuli effectively and respond appropriately. [5]

Need of study

The prevalence of mental health problems varies widely and is influenced by a wide range of factors, including location, socioeconomic status, cultural influences, availability to treatment, and awareness of mental health issues. Mental health problems, however, are widespread worldwide. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of mental health issues and efforts to reduce stigma and increase access to mental health therapies. In order to significantly reduce the incidence and consequences of mental health disorders worldwide, it is critical that initiatives to raise awareness, improve mental health service accessibility, and address the underlying social and economic factors that contribute to
mental health issues persist. Generally speaking, promoting individual well-being, building virtuous communities, and reducing the burden on healthcare facilities and society at large all depend on placing emphasis to the prevention of mental health. Prioritizing mental health prevention is generally necessary to promote personal welfare, build wholesome communities, and ease the burden on healthcare facilities and society at large.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that one in four persons worldwide will suffer from a mental health illness at some point in their lives. Depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and drug use disorders are common mental health conditions. Numerous factors, including location, socioeconomic level, cultural influences, access to treatment, and understanding of mental health issues, influence the frequency of mental health difficulties, which varies greatly. On the other hand, mental health issues are common everywhere. Growing awareness of mental health concerns and initiatives to lessen stigma and improve access to mental health treatments have been observed in recent years. To effectively lower the prevalence and impact of mental health disorders globally, it is imperative that efforts to increase awareness, enhance access to mental health services, and address underlying social and economic factors that contribute to mental health difficulties continue. In general, encouraging personal wellbeing, creating wholesome communities, and lessening the strain on healthcare institutions and society at large all depend on giving priority to mental health prevention.

Aims-Objectives

- To understand the concept of mental health in Ayurveda.
- To explore the diagnosis and treatment of mental health.

Material and methods

Material related to mental health is collected from various Samhita’s online databases, such as PubMed and Google Scholar.

Mental health in the Ayurveda concept

Because of its holistic approach, Ayurveda places a high value on mental wellness. In Ayurveda, psychiatry unites the body, mind, and spirit. Ayurveda puts a high value on the mind-body connection since physical imbalances can impair mental health and mental disease can impair bodily processes. During the fifth month of intrauterine life, the concept of mana begins to develop. Mana, in conjunction with the body, senses, and soul, plays a pivotal role in the initiation of life. It acts as the driving force behind consciousness within the soul, facilitating the perception of the environment and emotions. The fundamental pillars of life—Satva (Mana), Atma (soul), and Sharir (body)—together form the Tridanda, culminating in the creation of Purusha, a living entity. To perceive anything, a simultaneous convergence of the soul, senses, mana, and objects is necessary. Thus, mana plays a crucial role in enabling sensory organs to effectively process the surrounding world and experiences. The mana regulates every feeling (indriyabhigraha) and maintains being aware of oneself. (Swasyanigraha) Mana encompasses various cognitive functions such as thinking, judgment, logical analysis, interpretation, goal-setting, and resolution. A healthy mind serves as the foundation for rational and analytical cognition, while an unhealthy mind can lead to illogical thinking, diminished analytical capacity, and adverse effects on the body. Centuries ago, Charaka delineated these aspects individually. In the Charak Sharir Santhana, the term "arth" encompasses concepts such as contemplation, reflection, consideration, contemplation, and determination.

3. Uhyam: utilizes rational interpretation and understanding.
4. Dhyeyam: Represents purpose and objective.
5. Sankalpam: Embodies the act of making resolutions and commitments.

The Tridosha and Triguna Theories Top of Form

Central to Ayurvedic philosophy are the concepts of Tridosha (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) and Triguna (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas). These theories explain the physical and mental constitution of individuals. Mental health is primarily influenced
by the balance of the Gunas. The mental aspect of illness symbolizes the fragile balance between Rajas and Tamas, the two manasika dosas. The cause of mental equilibrium is the Sattva. People with a predominance of Satva Guna overcome obstacles and difficulties with courage and success, whereas Rajasik and Tamsik people are more likely to suffer from mental illnesses.

Sattva: A person who embodies wisdom, virtue, and goodness and who establishes stability, harmony, and balance. Rajas: Although rajas are energizing and pleasurable, their imbalanced nature causes them to cause pain and suffering very fast. Tamas: Known for being heavy or burdensome in action, bland, gloomy, and inactive. It is gloomy, lacks confidence in God, behaves badly, lacks intelligence, ignorant, ignores responsibilities, and sleepy.

A man who follows certain dietary and behavioral guidelines, moves carefully, is not attracted to sexual pleasure, donates, practices equality, is truthful and forebears, and is driven by treating others with respect does not contract any sickness. A person who possesses intelligence, words, and actions that result in positive outcomes, as well as a submissive mind, clear comprehension, knowledge, and penance, is immune to disease.

An individual described as sagacious possesses qualities of inner strength, contentment, detachment, fearlessness, and emotional equilibrium. These qualities are indicative of wisdom and contribute to mental well-being and spiritual growth. In the realm of mental health, two conditions akin to depression are avasada and vishada. The primary factor exacerbating these conditions is vishada. This concept represents a cornerstone in Ayurvedic understanding of mental well-being. Ayurvedic psychiatry integrates the aspects of body, mind, and spirit, emphasizing a holistic approach to mental health. According to Ayurveda, the intricate connection between the mind and body holds significant importance. Disturbances in mental health can disrupt bodily systems, just as physical imbalances can influence mental states. In Ayurvedic philosophy, the mind comprises several components essential to mental function:

- Dhi, representing intellect,
- Dhruti, responsible for processing information, and
- Smruti, governing memory.

Chitta, also known as the karmic mind, holds subconscious memories. These elements collectively contribute to mental function, with memory processing falling under the purview of the objective mind. Optimal mental health is achieved when these components synchronize seamlessly. In addition to the manasika dosas, which are imperceptible to the senses, vata, pitta, and kapha traverse the entire body through various srotas, or channels. These three doshas utilize the entirety of the sentient body as their vehicle and field of operation. Oja and manas are centered in the heart. Emotional states such as grief and anger can deplete Oja, leading to feelings of anxiety and fear, as well as hindering clear thinking. A significant depletion of Oja can result in symptoms such as fainting, confusion, delirium, and in extreme cases, even death. When Oja is diminished, the body may manifest psychological symptoms such as insomnia, mental instability, reduced activity, stiffness, lethargy, muscle loss, and delirium. Conversely, an increase in Oja promotes the proper functioning of the mind and contributes to overall well-being. The interaction between the body (Sharira) and the mind (Sattva) is recognized as integral to all aspects of life. This interaction occurs across various spheres of existence, highlighting the interconnectedness of physical and mental well-being.

Factors:

1. **Asatmendriyathsamyoga**: This refers to inappropriate or excessive contact between the senses (Indriya), the objects of the senses (Artha), and the mind. When the senses come into contact with inappropriate objects or in excessive amounts, it can lead to disturbances in the mind and overall health.
2. **Pragyapradha**: Pragyapradha refers to mistakes or errors in judgment, leading to actions that are detrimental to health. These errors can arise due to ignorance, negligence, or improper understanding of one's true nature and well-being.
3. **Parinama**: Parinama refers to natural changes or transformations that occur in the body and mind due to various factors such as aging, environmental influences, lifestyle choices, and genetic predispositions. These changes can contribute to imbalances in physical and mental health.

Acharya Charaka specifically identifies Pragyapradha as the root cause of psychological disturbances such as jealousy (Irsay), grief (soak), fear (bhaya), anger (krodha), arrogance (mana), and envy (devsa). This highlights the significance of understanding and addressing cognitive errors and misjudgements in maintaining mental well-being. Pragyapradha

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refers to mistakes or errors in judgment, leading to actions that are detrimental to health. These errors can arise due to ignorance, negligence, or improper understanding of one's true nature and well-being. The concept of derangement of understanding, where there's a confusion between the eternal and the non-eternal, as well as between good and evil. In essence, it points out that true understanding always discerns correctly between these concepts. This indicates the importance of clarity and insight in distinguishing between what is eternal and transient, as well as what is beneficial and harmful, to navigate life wisely. In the event that when the will or volition becomes deranged or distorted, the mind, which constantly seeks its objects or desires, becomes incapable of being restrained from undesirable objects or actions. The will is portrayed as the controlling force in this context, indicating that its condition significantly influences the mind's ability to resist negative impulses or inclinations. Thus, the passage underscores the importance of maintaining a balanced and healthy willpower to guide the mind towards beneficial and constructive actions. The derangement of memory, which occurs when the mind becomes clouded with passion and delusion, leads to the loss or destruction of true knowledge retention. In this state, what is memorable or important fails to remain in memory due to the influence of passion and delusion. This underscores the idea that clear perception and understanding are essential for accurate memory retention.

Acharya Vagbhatt told in his valuable commentary that an individual should control his senses and negative thoughts in mind like greed, irritability, anger, competition, and attachment. According to Charaka It's important to recognize that everyone experiences these urges to some extent, and managing them is a continual process that requires self-awareness, self-discipline, and sometimes external support. Greed, grief, fear, rage, vanity, shamelessness, envy, obsessive attachment, and the temptation to take another person's possessions are among the urges that people should suppress. This suggests that the wise practice moderation and self-control, abstaining from actions or feelings that have a detrimental impact on both themselves and other people. The wise seek to preserve moral behavior, harmony, and inner serenity in their lives by controlling these cravings. Should refrain from saying things that are harsh, deceptive, premature, or false. It is important to have restraint when it comes to stealing, wanting other people's partners, and using violence against others. The significance of moral behavior and respecting the rights and boundaries of others is emphasized.

Preventive and ethical conduct in Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, "Nidana Parivarjana" refers to the principle of avoiding the causative factors or etiological factors of diseases. It emphasizes the importance of prevention rather than solely focusing on treatment after the onset of illness. This concept underscores the idea that by avoiding or minimizing exposure to factors that can lead to disease, one can maintain health and well-being. Indeed, Ayurveda offers various preventive measures outlined in texts such as the Brihatrayi (the three major Ayurvedic texts: Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya). Ayurveda emphasizes preventive care through ethical conduct and daily routines. Practices like Sadvritta (good conduct) and Achara Rasayana (ethical behavior) are designed to foster mental harmony. These include guidelines for ethical living, controlling urges, and maintaining a balanced lifestyle, which together help prevent mental disorders.

1. Ritucharya: This refers to seasonal regimens, which involve adjusting one's diet, lifestyle, and activities according to the changes in seasons. Each season is believed to have its own impact on the body, and Ritucharya provides guidelines for maintaining balance and health during each season.

2. Dincharya: Dincharya refers to daily routines, which include practices such as waking up early, cleansing routines (like brushing teeth and scraping the tongue), exercise, meditation, and regular meal times. These routines are believed to promote physical and mental well-being by aligning with the natural rhythms of the body.

3. Sadvritta: Sadvritta encompasses ethical and moral principles that guide behavior and lifestyle choices. This includes principles such as honesty, nonviolence, moderation, and self-discipline. Following these principles is believed to promote inner harmony and prevent the accumulation of negative karma, which can lead to disease.

4. Achara Rasyana: Achara Rasyana refers to the rejuvenation of conduct or behavior. It involves cultivating positive qualities such as compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, and contentment. By fostering a positive mindset and emotional well-being, individuals can strengthen their resilience and prevent mental and emotional disturbances.

By incorporating these preventive measures into daily life, individuals can support their overall health and well-being according to Ayurvedic principles. Nidana Parivarjana, or avoiding the causative factors of disease, remains a cornerstone of Ayurvedic practice, emphasizing the importance of proactive health management and disease prevention.
Ayurvedic Therapies for Mental Health

The three main Ayurvedic therapeutic modes that are described for various diseases are Daivavyapshrya, Yuktivyapshrya, and Satavavayja.

1. Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa (Spiritual Therapy):

This approach involves utilizing spiritual practices and interventions to treat diseases. It emphasizes the connection between the mind, body, and spirit, recognizing that imbalances in one can affect the others. Examples of Daivavyapshrya Chikitsa include:

- Prayers, meditation, and chanting for mental peace and spiritual well-being.
- Rituals and ceremonies aimed at invoking divine blessings and protection.
- Seeking guidance from spiritual teachers or gurus for moral and ethical support.

This modality focuses on addressing the root causes of diseases at a spiritual level, aiming to restore balance and harmony within the individual.

2. Yuktivyapshrya Chikitsa (Rational Therapy):

Yuktivyapshrya Chikitsa involves the use of rational and systematic therapeutic interventions based on Ayurvedic principles. It utilizes herbs, diet, lifestyle modifications, and other natural remedies to restore health and balance. Key components of Yuktivyapshrya Chikitsa include herbal formulations (such as decoctions, powders, and pills) tailored to the individual's constitution and specific health condition. Dietary recommendations aimed at pacifying imbalances and supporting healing. Lifestyle modifications, including exercise, yoga, and stress management techniques. External therapies such as massage (Abhyanga), steam therapy (Swedana), and nasal cleansing (Nasya). This modality emphasizes the importance of addressing imbalances in the body's doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) and dhatus (tissues) through natural means, promoting holistic healing.

3. Satavavayja: Therapy is a holistic healing approach rooted in Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine. It emphasizes the balance of the mind, body, and spirit to achieve overall wellness. This therapy incorporates various techniques such as meditation, yoga, dietary changes, herbal remedies, lifestyle adjustments, and counselling to promote healing and harmony within the individual. The philosophy behind Satavavayja therapy is that the root cause of many illnesses lies in imbalances within the individual's consciousness and lifestyle. By addressing these imbalances and promoting purity and truthfulness in one's thoughts, actions, and environment, Satavavayja therapy aims to restore health and well-being.

Integration with Modern Mental Health Practices

While modern psychiatry and Ayurveda differ in their approaches, integrating Ayurvedic principles can enhance contemporary mental health practices. For instance, the emphasis on preventive care, ethical living, and holistic treatments in Ayurveda can complement conventional therapies, offering a more comprehensive approach to mental well-being.

Recent studies support the effectiveness of such integrative approaches. The emphasis on lifestyle modifications and natural remedies in Ayurveda aligns with growing evidence suggesting the impact of lifestyle on brain health. By incorporating Ayurvedic practices, individuals can benefit from a holistic approach that addresses both the mental and physical aspects of health.

DISCUSSION:

Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka and Susrutha emphasize the importance of maintaining superior health, which is often expressed through the concept of "Swastha," or wellness. Swastha, in Ayurveda, goes beyond mere absence of disease; it encompasses a state of equilibrium and harmony within the body, mind, and spirit. Each individual has a specific Prakriti, which is a combination of the three fundamental energies, or Doshas: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. These Doshas govern various physiological and psychological functions in the body, and their balance is essential for maintaining health. Sadvritta is a foundational concept in Ayurveda that emphasizes preventive measures for maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Sadvritta comprises a set of lifestyle practices and behaviors that promote personal
cleanliness and mental discipline. This includes reducing tendencies towards negative emotions such as anger, greed, sorrow, jealousy, fear, and excessive attachment, which can undermine mental health and overall well-being.

**Conclusion:** Health as a resource for participating fully in society underscores the idea that it's not just about being free from illness. Daivavyapshrya chikitsa had shown a significant improvement in mental health. Meditation has been found to be effective in mental. Mantra meditation can improve mental health and negative affectivity. Using a sound or mantra in meditation can indeed serve as a focal point to redirect and calm the mind. By repeating a specific sound or phrase, practitioners aim to quiet the chatter of the mind and enter a state of deep relaxation or heightened awareness. This practice can help override the stream of automatic thoughts. Rational therapy aims to empower individuals to take control of their thoughts and emotions, leading to greater emotional resilience and improved mental health. Satavajaya chikitsa was found effective in promoting holistic well-being by addressing mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of health. Rasyana can be particularly beneficial by supporting overall health, promoting resilience to stress, and enhancing the body's natural defenses. Rasyana may help individuals maintain a healthy body and mind in the face of various environmental and lifestyle factors. Ayurveda offers a profound understanding of human behavior, which proves beneficial in both treating and preventing mental and emotional imbalances. This advice stresses the value of courteous, truthful, and situationally appropriate communication. People can build healthy relationships, preserve trust, and follow moral norms in their interactions with others by abstaining from harsh or harmful communication, avoiding betrayal or deception, and speaking genuinely and at the appropriate moment. Ayurveda offers a holistic and individualized approach to managing stress-related disorders and psychogenic illnesses, addressing root causes while promoting overall health and well-being. A literature review exploring the concept of health in Ayurveda reveals its alignment with modern perspectives on health, particularly in understanding human behavior and addressing mental and emotional imbalances. By integrating Ayurvedic principles and practices with modern healthcare approaches, it is possible to develop more comprehensive and effective strategies for promoting health and well-being.

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