

Jai Ganesh
Salutations to Sri Dhanvantari
Geriatric Care According to Ayurveda
Addressing the Ayurveda Association of Canada Conference

© Jaisri M. Lambert, Ayurveda Doctor (NAMA)

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We are here in Toronto, on the traditional territory of the Anishnabe people and the Ojibway nation. This is the site of displacement of indigenous populations who had for thousands of years cared for this abundant, fertile territory, characterized by lakes and rivers. Noteworthy is the rich relationship with indigenous medicinal plants of this region. Thanks to our native welcomers in this time of reconciliation.

How great is it to be here together, celebrating the universal wisdom that is Ayurveda! Sincere thanks and acknowledgements to dear Ismat Nathani and all the supporters, volunteers and participants in this historic gathering, bringing us together to learn and share our beloved Ayurveda. The Ayur-vidya has touched all and is healing each of us, to the extent that we can imbibe her goodness.

Quelques mots en français pour inclure nos frères et sœurs francophones, et encourager le développement de l'Ayurveda dans ce pays bilingue.

Thanks to my teachers, especially beloved Vaidya Vasant D. Lad, who has provided most of the knowledge presented here today. Please forgive my errors, omissions and shortcomings in advance.

Let me introduce myself. I was born in Scotland and emigrated to Canada with my parents and 3 sisters at the age of 3 years old. My education was typical of our baby boomer generation. At the age of 17, I departed to the University of Paris, la Sorbonne, for Classic Studies, emphasizing the history of the French language.

Later, I returned home to Canada and started a young family of one son and one daughter. My young adulthood was characterized by migraine headaches, which dominated my consciousness until my mid-thirties when after searching, Ayurveda came into my life, as an answer to desperate prayers.

Destiny or good fortune evidently made me meet my great teachers: Dr, Robert Svoboda, Dr. Thricovil Sukumaran, and the incomparable Vaidya Vasant D. Lad. Pure grace has blessed my path and looking back, each encounter of life increased my passion for learning and sharing opportunities for service through Ayurveda. Now in my 70th year on this planet, spirit has inspired me to create the Canada Ayurveda Research and Education Foundation (C.A.R.E. Foundation) going forward.

Introduction

Elder care traditionally has been done at home by relatives. Still today, many families prefer to keep their grandparents and parents at home as they age and experience the involution phase of life, rather than place them in care. However, the burden of increasing medical needs can

bring burn out to family members and there comes a time when trained, skilled home-care support is needed.

Ayurveda views the human life as first dominated by kapha dosha from birth until puberty, pitta dosha until menopause and then vata dosha increasingly until the end. Dry, light, dispersing, subtle, cold, porous and catabolic qualities prevail as the senior period unfolds, calling for mostly vata management measures. Secondary management and management of 'bheda' or complications of diseases can be supported by specialized Ayurveda home-care providers. This proposes a new profession in Canada: Ayurveda home care aide.

Ayurveda wisdom conveys that the lifespan is measured in the number of breaths and that quality of life depends upon our accumulated daily choices. Charaka Samhita begins by introducing the treatise on longevity and how to avoid imbalances before they become diseases, in order to fulfill life's spiritual purpose of Self-realization and liberation from all delusion and suffering.

Concerns of the aging population

Physically, seniors develop more bone and joint concerns, cardio-vascular disturbances including stroke, slow metabolism, diseases of hormonal imbalances, skin disturbances, respiratory weakness, sensory impairment and central nervous system disorders such as MS, Alzheimer's disease, dementia, insomnia and ALS. Constipation and stiffness are also common.

Psychologically, individuals may develop isolation, hopelessness, acting out and unresolved grief over losing near and dear ones. Spiritually, elders may suffer from lack of faith and a variety of misunderstandings of unconditional love. Each lifespan is limited, though the soul's progress continues, according to the theory of transmigration of the soul.

Goals of Ayurveda Geriatric Care

Case management addresses anti-aging and rejuvenation as compared to cure, though when metabolism is strong, immune power can heal and rejuvenate the tissues to a remarkable extent. Virilisation of tissue metabolism is unique to Ayurveda science, and therefore has a great role in the Canadian health care culture, I feel.

Reduction of suffering and preparation for the transition to the next plane of existence presumes compassion, understanding and dedication to the comfort of another. The main point of end-of-life care is to support individual quality of life while observing nature's changing cycles through time and the law of cause and effect.

Ayurveda Home Care Aide Program Development

A professional Ayurveda home-care aide can bridge family-based support with professional supervision throughout the aging process. Ancient, proven, non-invasive techniques such as 'abhyanga', 'reflexology', 'marma' (Turiya) therapy, abdominal organ massage, and 'shirobhyanga', etc. can bring nourishment, relaxation, circulatory and lymphatic stimulation, inner quiet and more through sparsha (touch). Oil is called 'sneha' in Sanskrit, meaning 'love, satisfaction, contentment'.

As digestive changes occur with aging, adaptations for optimizing 'agni' or metabolism and assimilation, can be gradually implemented as needed. Mobility maintenance techniques,

sensory strengthening measures and simple breathing techniques, etc. can become part of the individual's holistic health care program.

Knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of digestion, assimilation, nutrition, and nourishment is needed to help ensure a balance of fluid pressures, organ functions and eliminations. Knowledge of any drug interactions is also needed in support of integrated care. Integrated record-keeping of patient progress is in the best interest of the patient, I feel.

Knowledge of the properties and suitability of simple Ayurveda perhaps 20 herbs and preparations such as brahmi, jatamansi, shankpushpi, dashmoola compound, bala, triphala compound, fenugreek, chyvanprash and others, is sufficient to help monitor day to day concerns and to professionally identify when the patient needs referral.

The skill of designing and supporting an individualized daily routine, especially morning practices, brings a support to the entire family, especially where a yoga lifestyle may have been absent. Knowledge of suitable pranayama practices, meditation, satvic pastimes and spot-relaxation can help to support individual comfort and enjoyment. A good understanding of the Prakriti-Vikriti paradigm, ojas, tejas, prana, pulse assessment, food science, virilisation and rejuvenation can contribute valuable skills in the aging process.

Listening is an all-important counseling tool in support of resolving incomplete emotional traumas or experiences. Ayurveda views the body as one of the five 'coverings' (koshas) of the soul, which has woven its unique manifested, crystallized material from spirit through electro-magnetism. This is a time to prepare for a transition from one form of life to another, regardless of one's spiritual beliefs.

To engage with active listening can help serve as a bridge between this life and the next. Care givers report that listening can bring as much spiritual benefit to them as to the patient. Listening honours, recognizes and values the unique, accumulated experience of each human journey along the path of life, through both the grievous tears of worldly 'loss' and the giddy gratitudes of spiritual gain, through observing the simple transformations of nature's cycles.

Inner listening or meditation naturally increases as time unfolds and the soul gradually withdraws, first from the extremities and later from the core, spine and crown. Preparation for ascension is a spiritual passage towards developing pure, unconditional love, fulfilling life's purpose of Self-realization. Knowledge of counseling according to Sankhya can serve diverse populations due to its inclusivity and relevance to Ayurveda.

Conclusion

In Canada at present, home-care workers typically undergo 6 months or 100 hrs. of classroom training in a provincially approved or accredited school. Workers are now needed in every region of Canada going forward, predictably for the upcoming twenty foreseeable years. The economics of home-care are clearly in the best interest of the family and of society as a whole.

I feel that much talent exists currently in Canada, and that we can draw on our already available candidates, in favour of importation. Elder care as a part of fulfillment of dharma can be accomplished by supporting professional skilled holistic home-care training. As innovations of Ayurveda education increase in Canada, a continuing education mentorship structure and higher

standards can be attained here, I feel, as part of an adaptation of Ayurveda into Canadian society. Ayurveda Elder Care Ade is proposed as a recognized profession, not only in Canada, but also globally.

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Announcements

Our Ayurveda community now has the golden opportunity to become inclusive with membership in our new Ayurveda Association of Canada, a fresh slate for developing our professional organization, with satvic goals and ideals. Sincere thanks to all those volunteers who have created this foundation, providing an opening for coming together in all aspects of Ayurveda. Bravo! Please join, one and all, and show our unifying actions. Any community has a common purpose shared by many individuals of unique and varied skills.

Update

Now in September 2022, program development has begun on the Ayurveda Elder Home-Care Aide Program in British Columbia. It is an all-volunteer program being developed under the umbrella of the federally registered Canada Ayurveda Research & Education Foundation (www.carefoundation.net). Please be in touch to volunteer your related expertise and funding support.