TOTALISTIC AND INTEGRATED APPROACH TO HEALTH - A PROPOSAL

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ABSTRACT: In an earlier article the authors had traced the defects in medical practice to the flaws in the medical knowledge. In the present paper they propose a plan for the rectification of these defects.

As the current medical research is unsuited for this purpose there is a need to adopt an alternative method of research, consisting of three phases viz.

a) Formulation of hypothesis
b) Development of tools of assessment and
c) Experimental verification of the hypothesis using the instruments of assessment.

This method must be used to revise the concepts of human being, illness, etiology and treatment. The first topic that must be taken up for such consideration is the concept of human being. An outline of the various constituents of human being is given. Also the factors that account for individual differences among human beings, are enumerated. Subsequent research aimed at revision of concepts of illness, etiology and treatment should be based upon such a totalistic and integrated concept of human being.

Introduction

First, let us review the present trend of medical research to understand its inadequacy in making any further progress in improving the available medical care. This will help us to identify the existing pitfalls so that we may steer clear of them.

Current medical research

The present day medical research tries to improve the existing standards of medical care taking for granted that its theoretical foundations are sound. It fails to recognize the existent defects in medical knowledge (what ails for present medical care?, ancient science of life Vol.III,No.4) thereby perpetuating these very defects.

Past achievements of medical research

Over the last two centuries medical scientists have discovered facts by painstaking and meticulous research. They have documented a detailed account of

1. The structure and functioning of the human body.
2. The manifestations of illnesses classifying them into various disease entities on the basis of their manifestations, course and outcome.
3. The cause of the diseases in terms of the pathogens and the pathological changes produced by them.

4. The therapeutic effects of various treatments methods that were tried out and found to be effective. The greatest attention was on drugs and surgical procedures.

As a result of these efforts there was a great advancement in the understanding and management of illness. Consequently, it is widely believed that further progress in improving with these research activities in the hope that would help to perfect the available knowledge by filling in the gaps present in it. And this can be achieved by further exploration and discovery of more and more facts.

**Current trend in medical research**

This inspired by the achievements of medical research in the past, the present day medical researchers are busily engaged in-

1. Discovering new facts even of the minutest detail. About the human body using highly sophisticated equipments,
2. Discovering the histopathological and biochemical changes in trying to account for the manifestations of the diseases,
3. Discovering new pathogens responsible for causing diseases,
4. Discovering new techniques of investigation for detecting the syndromes pathogens or pathological changes, and
5. Discovering new drugs surgical procedures for management of diseases.

But contrary to expectations this research trend has generated more confusion rather than providing clarity. The current medical research keeps on contributing new data to the already confusing mass of accumulated facts. We do not need any further detailed information –for data we have immense; in fact far more than can be handled. What we rather need is organization of this data into a comprehensive, systematic body of knowledge which will allow meaningful interpretation of the data gathered so far.

**Organization of medical data**

The present attempts at organization of the accumulated data are inadequate for they seek to understand and explain the occurrence of phenomena taking into consideration only directly observable facts and are therefore restricted to the physical plane only. Some theories do take into account mental factors as well but hardly any of the theories pays attention to the spiritual factors. Therefore the explanation provide by them are bound to be incomplete.

Also, the available theories differ widely among themselves for each of them accepts and adopts as its basis a particular aspect of the phenomena.

Thus, not only are the existing theoretical explanations for the occurrence of various phenomena restricted to the physical plane (or at the most the mental plane) the are also limited in their viewpoint. As a consequence there is a plethora of opinions so varied and
at times even contradictory reminding us of the story of the elephant and the six blind men. This as made the confusion worse confounded. To clear this confusion we need to developed only if we shift our view point and consider human being, illness etiology and treatment from a wider perspective taking into account all aspects of human existence viz, physical, mental and spiritual.

**Research methodology**

In order to achieve the above goal we shall need a suitable research methodology. The present day empirical and inductive approach is incapable of meeting the requirement. today the emphasis is on experimentation. An observation pertaining to clinical entity, etiology, pathology or treatment is subjected to experimental verification. On the basic of the results obtained a tentative conclusion is reached. Along with it’s recommendations for further research are offered. At a later date, other investigators attempt to replicate the study. They may concur with the previous investigators or refute their findings. Thus two or more camps are set up. The perpetual swinging of consensus from one camp to another is regarded as progress.

The root cause of the controversies is the undue generalization resorted to. The documentation of disease entities and drug trials do not take into account the individual differences- what holds true with respect to a certain individual is not necessarily applicable to all other individuals. This important factor of individual differences is ignored in the present day medical research.

**Proposed Plan of Medical Research**

We have seen that present medical practice is based upon erroneous theoretical consideration and that the present day medical research serves to further perpetuate this error. The existing research methodology has served us well in the past but now seems to have outlived its utility. Having potential and now seems to have reached its limits of usefulness. In order to make any further progress what is required approach.

**Goal of medical research:**

We must cry halt to the basic and applied research of today, the former engaging in discovery of new facts about illness, physical and mental etiological factors, and pathology predicted, while the latter attempting to test the efficacy of various physical and psychological tools of management. What we rather need is fundamental research aimed at a through revision of the theoretical foundations. We must revise our concepts of human being, illness, etiology and treatment, and consider them from a wider perspective taking into account besides the physical and mental aspects, the spiritual aspect of existence as well.

The research must also aim at the integration of the various medical sciences for each of them have a worthwhile contribution to make. Therefore during the revision of the basic concepts, information pertaining to them which is contained in the various life sciences must be taken into account. Such a research will bring about and thereby enable us to manage them in a better manner by institution of appropriate therapeutic measures.
**Research methodology:**

In order to achieve the above goal we shall have to adopt a suitable research methodology. We have already seen that the existing research method is not suited for this purpose. The following method must be adopted for the development of ever wider concepts of human being, illness, etiology and treatment.

1. **Formulation of hypothesis.** This is the first step in the revision of concepts. This is to be achieved by extensive review of relevant literature available in the various life sciences. The information regarding the subject matter under consideration in the authoritative texts of the various life sciences must be pooled together. From the data so gathered we must formulated a hypothesis giving a detailed account of the subject matter. For instance the hypothesis about the composition of human being so derived should describe the structure and functioning of the human body, mind and spirit. It must also identify those factors in the composition of human being, variations which are responsible for the differences among individuals.

2. **Development of instruments of assessment.** This is an important step required for testing the hypothesis formulated in the first stage. Various methods of investigation and measurement would be required to test the veracity and magnitude of the factors identified in the hypothesis. For instance anthropometric and psychometric tests will be required to help identify the personality types postulated in the first step. For this purpose either the available tests should be adopted if found suitable, or new tests should be adopted if found suitable, or new tests should be developed.

3. **Experimental verification of the hypothesis.**

This is the final step leading to development of a total integrated concept of the topic under consideration. The various methods of assessment adopted or developed in the second step would be utilized to clinically test out the hypothesis formulated in the first step. This experimentation would be carried out on human volunteers or on patients as required. It would help to validate or invalidate or modify the hypothesis till a sound theoretical concept is established.

**Research proposal:**

The above research methodology should be applied to develop totalistic and integrated ideas about composition of human being, nature of illnesses, causation of illness and the modes of managing them.

The theoretical concepts so derived would serve as the basis of clinical practice.

The first topic that must be taken up for such revision is the composition of human being. Using the method described above, we should try to define what constitutes a human being in all aspects of his existence—physical, mental and spiritual. We would arrive at a concept which includes a detailed description of the structure and functioning
of the human body, mind and spirit as well as the inter-relationship among them. Such a unitary idea about human being would enable us to have a clear understanding of the complex structure and functioning of human being.

For is purpose we shall have to take into account such

1. Anatomical and physiological considerations as-
   a. The various tissues (dhatu) which constitute the human body.
   b. The various systems (srotas that perform the vegetative functions for the sustenance of the body.
   c. The sensorimotor system (sensory and motor organs of the body) which serves as the gross instrument for the psychological activities of the ego.
   d. The role of human body in life as vehicle for the soul.

2. Psychological considerations as-
   a. The nature of the ego (Ahankara) intellect (Buddhi) mind (Manas) and senses (Indriyas)
   b. The mental faculties which determine the ability of the subject (like perceptual faculty, aesthetic faculty, retentive faculty, rational faculty, volition etc.)
   c. The mental processes (of perception, recognition, thinking, judgement, creativity etc) which are brought about by deployment of the mental faculties either singly or in combination.
   d. The temperament, propensity and inclination of the ego which constitute the personality of the individual.
   e. The aptitudes, values and ideals of the ego which reflect the evolutionary status of the soul(jiva)
   f. The sensitivity, emotional reactivity and attitudes (dictated by the ideal of the ego) which determine his susceptibility to environmental changes.

3. Philosophical considerations as-
   a. The nature of the spirit (atman), soul (jiva), nescience (ajnana), wisdom (samskara) inner urge (vasana) deeds (karma) etc.
   b. The purpose and goal of life which includes duty (swadharma), agency (nimitta), evolutionary progress (sreyas), pleasures (preyas), etc.
   c. The causes of experiences in life which destiny (experiences chalker out for evolutionary progress) fate (fortune and misfortune befalling the individual as retribution of his past deeds-prarabdha karma)

In order to achieved the above objective we should, following the research methodology outline above, first formulate a hypothesis about the composition of human being. This is to be achieved by extensive review of relevant literature of the various standard texts on anatomy, physiology, psychology and philosophy.

The hypothesis so formulated must also define the various factors responsible for individual differences at the physical, mental and spiritual levels of existence. This should include
1. At the physical level
   a. Differential strengths of the body tissues which will determine organ inferiority and hence the site of localization of a disease process.
   b. Variations in physical constitution which determine the differential reactions to physical environmental stimuli (e.g., temperature) as well as the modality of symptoms the subject is prone to develop in disease.

2. At the mental level
   a. Differential strengths of the mental faculties which will determine the mental ability of the subject.
   b. Variations in the modalities of the operation of the mental faculties.
   c. Variations in the temperament, propensity and inclination of the ego which determine his affectivity and interpersonal conduct.

3. At the spiritual level
   a. The different levels of evolutionary progress which determines the differences in values and aptitudes of the subject;
   b. The different destinies assigned to the souls in accordance with their evolutionary status which accounts for the differences in life goals ordained to the individual.
   c. The difference in fate which the subject has to undergo on the basis of his past deeds.
   d. The differences in social responsibilities assigned to the individuals according to their evolutionary status.

In the second phase of the study, method of assessment which measure the above factors must be developed. These must be used in the third phase to test the veracity of the hypothesis using human volunteers. The results obtained from this clinical study would help to modify the hypothesis till a sound theory about composition of human being is reached.

Once such a totalistic concept of human being is available, it will form the basis of further medical research aimed at revision of ideas about the nature of illness and its etiology. This newer understood in a new light. This newer understanding of illness and its causation would influence our idea about management of illness. This would not only enable us to judiciously use the available means of treatment but also open up. New avenues of healing the diseased person.

**Recommendation**

The execution of this ambitious research programme demands service of devoted medical scientists dedicated to the cause of helping to relieve the suffering of
mankind. These efforts are not likely to fructify easily and quickly. But if we persevere with patience and hope, and god-willing, the efforts are likely to pay rich dividends in the long run. As the above research programme is not in conformity with the existent medical care or medical research it is not likely to be acceptable to the existing medical institutions. Therefore it will have to be carried out by an independent institute which will cater solely to the research activity as outlined above. It would be the centre for the planning, organization and execution of the various research projects under the proposed plan, for the evaluation of the results that will be obtained and for the publication of reports. Through initially it would engage exclusively in these research activities, later its scope can be expanded to include service to the people for cure of ill-health and for promotion of health. Thereafter it can serve as the centre for training medical personnel’s in the total integrated system of health, while continuing the medical service and research.

Note: the authors invite comments, recommendations or proposals regarding the proposed research plan.