

WBG 24 Jan 24 A brief and shallow dip into Ayurvedic Medicine, etc

The Classification of Complementary Medicine Science & Technology, House of Lords Paper 123 (2000). What therapies are safe to practice alongside medicine?

Group 1: compatible with medicine, evidence of effectiveness, educational standards & regulation. e.g. osteopathy, chiropractic, acupuncture, herbal medicine and homeopathy.

Group 2: therapies for wellbeing. e.g. massage, aromatherapy, reflexology.

Group 3: not compatible, own system of diagnosis and treatment, poor evidence base (Alternative) e.g. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Ayurveda, naturopathy.

Disclaimer: please do not interpret anything in this document as medical advice. Experiment at your own risk.

Know your tridosha

Until a few days ago I knew almost nothing about Ayurvedic medicine. I hope that now I know more than my audience, so I can share my new knowledge while admitting my lack of depth of knowledge in this huge area of traditional medicine.

Background: Originated in India (texts from 1500 BC). Based on five element theory (similar to TCM)

The Principles of Ayurveda:

Doshas represent different combinations of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether) and are believed to govern various physiological and psychological functions in the body. Each person typically has a unique blend of these doshas, known as their Prakriti, which influences their physical and mental characteristics, as well as

their susceptibilities to imbalances and diseases. Think of it as similar to your astrological birth chart.

Prakriti and Tridosha are related concepts in Ayurveda. Prakriti is your essential nature: the combination of your three doshas that you were born with. It is fixed. It can be diagnosed by pulses, tongue, nails, face, eyes, lips, urine, stool and astrology.

Your tridosha is how you are now. It will be influenced by your environment and biography. It is mutable. It can be changed by herbal medicine, dietary therapy, fasting, nasal administration (Neti), surgery, enemas, purgatives, bloodletting, therapeutic vomiting, massage, exercises.

If you get sick, the assumption is that your tridosha is out of balance with your prakriti.

I invited everyone do a self-assessment questionnaire before coming here. There is a good reason for this. AM is tailored to your tridosha. There is no “one size fits all” in this approach. What you eat, how you exercise even how you should fast, is influenced by your tridosha.

This was my tridosha score VPK 7 – 15 – 31 I am Kapha dominant based on the self assessment.

1. **Vata:**

- **Physical Characteristics:** Vata individuals tend to be thin, with light and cold skin. They may experience variability in weight and have prominent joints.
- **Personality Traits:** Creative, lively, and quick-thinking when in balance. When imbalanced, they may become anxious or fearful.

2. **Pitta:**

- **Physical Characteristics:** Pitta individuals often have a moderate build with fair, sensitive skin that may burn easily. They might have a ruddy complexion.
- **Personality Traits:** Sharp intellect, ambitious, and goal-oriented. When imbalanced, they may become irritable or critical.

3. Kapha:

- **Physical Characteristics:** Kapha individuals tend to have a solid, sturdy build with moist, cool skin. They may gain weight easily.
- **Personality Traits:** Calm, steady, and nurturing when in balance. When imbalanced, they may become lethargic or possessive.

Ayurvedic practitioners believe that maintaining a balance among these doshas is essential for overall health and well-being. Factors such as diet, lifestyle, and herbal remedies are often recommended to bring the doshas back into harmony if imbalances occur.

Let's look at some specific recommendations:

Physical Exercise: Walking is close to an ideal activity, is natural and satisfies all three tridoshas.

Vata: long walks tranquilise / **Pitta:** slows down the driving pace / **Kapha:** stimulated by a brisk walk Recommendation: 30 minutes' walk every day.

Pranayama Breathing:

To calm the mind and balance the mood: for mind body balance but different for each of the types:

Vata- alternate nostril breathing. / Pitta-inhale left nostril, out of right out; / Kapha – inhale right nostril, out of left.

Yoga used to establish & maintain 'body' balance as well as therapeutically:

Asanas for Vata:

Backache – knees to chest, Plough, backward bend.

Insomnia – Corpse, Cobra, backward bend.

Asanas for Pitta:

Migraine – shoulder stand, Fish.

Hyperthyroidism – shoulder stand, ears to knees.

Malabsorption – knees to chest, Fish.

Asanas for Kapha:

Asthma – Bow, Boat, shoulder stand, Fish, Cobra.

Sinus congestion – Fish, Plough, Bow, Breath of fire.

Diabetes – Boat, Fish, Backward bend, Forward bend.

Look on google for images

Diet Chosen to suit the individual's constitution. The seasons of foods in the year are also adhered to. The qualities of foods must be taken into account:

For example, considering legumes, nuts, sweeteners and dairy:

Vata: only tofu, mung beans, black and red lentils / Nuts in small quantities / no white sugar / all dairy is okay.

Pitta: all legumes except lentils / only coconut from the nut menu / sweeteners: avoid molasses and honey / dairy only ghee and milk.

Kapha: all legumes except kidney beans, soy, mung and black lentils / No nuts / No sweeteners except raw honey / No dairy except goat milk and ghee.

Fasting:

Vata: < 3days

Pitta: < 4days

Kapha: as long as you like

The idea of yoga classes where everyone does the same thing, or internet gurus who recommend the same diet or fasting regime for everyone is anathema to Ayurvedic practitioners.

Meanwhile in Europe:

In Europe, 4-3 BC Hippocrates taught that 'illness has natural—not supernatural—causes'.

Until mid 19C disease was believed to be an imbalance between your 4 internal humours, and the 4 external fundamentals, with your lifestyle, habits and environment.

blood was hot and wet like air;

phlegm was cold and wet like water;

yellow bile was hot and dry like fire;

black bile was cold and dry like earth.

Health needed humoral equilibrium. Illness resulted when an excess or a deficiency occurred in one or more of the humours. The disturbance could result from overindulgence in food or drink, too much or too little physical exertion, or changes in the weather.

For example:

Phlegm increased during the winter, bringing with it bronchitis and pneumonia

In a warm, wet spring, hot, wet blood increased, causing dysentery and nose bleeds.

The physician's task was to diagnose which humour was out of balance; treatment was then focused on restoring equilibrium.

Other common systems that use Individual Analysis:

Astrology: birth chart and life chart. Superstition or is there more to it? There were royal astrologers who advised on auspicious dates for important events.

In the commercial world successful sales staff create rapport with customers using NLP.

NLP uses a constitutional analysis based on VAK (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) as favoured representational system:

I see what you mean...

I hear what you are saying...

I feel comfortable with that...

Something to ponder:

Have we pinched the best bits from traditional medicine, and taking it out of its original context have we corrupted it and made it dangerous or less effective... yoga from Ayurveda, acupuncture from TCM, otc homoeopathic remedies. Or have we cherry picked the best bits and dumped the mumbo-jumbo?