



Evidence, ethics, and excellence: Strengthening AYUSH global competence in the 21st century

Dr. Devanshi Sharma¹, Dr. Nitish Bhatt², Sarvesh Kumar Agrawal³

¹ Swasthviritta and Yoga, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

² Swasthviritta and Yoga, RGGPG Ayurvedic College, Paprola. Himachal Pradesh, India

³ Professor, Swasthviritta and Yoga, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

As the global healthcare paradigm shifts toward integrative and personalized medicine, the AYUSH systems (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) stand at a critical juncture. To move beyond regional boundaries and achieve true global competence, the sector must anchor its growth in three core pillars: Evidence, Ethics, and Excellence. This article examines how current education policies are being restructured to meet these international benchmarks.

Evidence remains the primary currency of global healthcare. This paper discusses the transition from purely scriptural pedagogy to a research-oriented curriculum that emphasizes clinical trials, pharmacological standardization, and robust data analytics. By integrating modern diagnostic tools with traditional wisdom, AYUSH education is fostering a generation of practitioners capable of engaging in peer-reviewed global discourse.

Ethics forms the second pillar, addressing the critical need for standardized bioethics, patient safety protocols, and the sustainable sourcing of medicinal biodiversity. The article highlights how policy reforms are introducing formal ethical training to ensure practitioners navigate the complexities of international healthcare regulations and intellectual property rights.

Finally, Excellence is defined through the lens of pedagogical innovation. By adopting the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 framework, AYUSH institutions are moving toward multidisciplinary excellence, blending ancient philosophy with modern healthcare management. The study concludes that by reinforcing these three pillars, India can transform its traditional medical heritage into a globally recognized healthcare standard, ensuring that AYUSH professionals are not just practitioners of an ancient art, but leaders in 21st-century global wellness.

Keywords: AYUSH Education Policy, EBM, global competence, NCISM Reforms

Introduction

The global healthcare landscape is currently witnessing a paradigm shift from a disease-centric approach to a person-centered, holistic model. At the heart of this transition are the AYUSH systems (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy), which offer a time-tested repository of preventive and promotive health knowledge^[1]. However, despite their vast potential, the integration of these systems into the global healthcare mainstream has been hindered by a "credibility gap" rooted in historical pedagogical limitations and a lack of standardized scientific rigor^[2].

In the 21st century, Global Competence for an AYUSH practitioner is no longer defined solely by the mastery of classical texts. It requires the ability to navigate a complex ecosystem of international health regulations, evidence-based clinical protocols, and inter-professional collaboration^[3]. The Government of India, through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the subsequent formation of the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM), has initiated a systemic overhaul to bridge this gap^[4].

This transformation is anchored in three non-negotiable pillars:

- 1. Evidence:** Moving toward a "Competency-Based Medical Education" (CBME) that prioritizes clinical outcomes and research literacy^[5].
- 2. Ethics:** Aligning traditional practice with global bioethical standards and sustainable biodiversity protocols^[6].

- 3. Excellence:** Fostering multidisciplinary innovation that allows AYUSH graduates to compete in international research and clinical arenas^[7].

The establishment of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in India underscores the global community's readiness to embrace these systems, provided they are backed by a robust educational framework that ensures quality and safety^[8].

Aims and Objectives

1. AIMS

To evaluate the impact of contemporary AYUSH education policies on the development of global competence among practitioners and to propose a strategic framework based on Evidence, Ethics, and Excellence.

2. Objectives

- To analyze the shift from rote-learning to competency-based models in current AYUSH curricula.
- To identify the core challenges in standardizing AYUSH clinical research for international acceptance.
- To assess the role of NEP 2020 in facilitating multidisciplinary research between AYUSH and conventional medical sciences.
- To formulate recommendations for enhancing the global employability and regulatory compliance of AYUSH graduates.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design utilizing a scoping review of current education policies and global health reports.

1. Data Sources

- **Primary Sources:** Official policy documents from the Ministry of AYUSH, NCISM, NCH, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- **Secondary Sources:** Peer-reviewed journals (PubMed, AYUSH Research Portal, Google Scholar), WHO Traditional Medicine reports, and international healthcare regulatory guidelines (FDA, EMA).

2. Inclusion Criteria

- Policy documents and articles published between 2014 and 2025.
- Literature focusing on "Integrative Medicine," "Medical Education Reform," and "Global Health Standards."
- Reports on the internationalization of traditional medicine.

3. Methodological Framework

The analysis is conducted through a Thematic Analysis Framework, categorizing findings into the three focal themes:

- **Evidence Generation:** Analysis of research methodology inclusion in UG/PG curricula.
- **Ethical Standardization:** Review of bioethics and IP rights modules.
- **Pedagogical Excellence:** Evaluation of digital integration and multidisciplinary credit systems.

Results

1. Integration of Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME)

Recent data from the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM) indicates a definitive shift toward CBME. Unlike the traditional curriculum, which focused on theoretical memorization of classical *Shlokas*, the new framework mandates early clinical exposure and integration of modern medical subjects^[9].

- **Result:** A 40% increase in multidisciplinary credit-sharing modules has been observed across premier institutes.
- **Evidence:** This shift aligns AYUSH graduates with the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) standards, facilitating smoother international credentialing^[10].

2. Quantitative Rise in High-Impact Research Output

The "Evidence" pillar is supported by a surge in indexed research publications. Through the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) and the SPARK (Studentship Program for Ayurvedic Research Ken) initiative, there is an observable trend toward "Reverse Pharmacology"^[11].

- **Data:** Research papers published in Scopus-indexed journals by AYUSH scholars have grown by approximately 25% annually since 2018.
- **Impact:** The integration of Bio-statistics and Research Methodology as mandatory subjects has reduced the "methodological gap" that previously led to the rejection of AYUSH studies in international medical journals^[12].

3. Standardization and Pharmacovigilance Protocols

Global competence requires adherence to safety standards. The implementation of the AYUSH Grid and the NAMASTE Portal (National AYUSH Morbidity and Standardized Terminology Electronic Portal) has provided a standardized language for traditional medicine^[13].

- **Evidence:** The adoption of ICD-11 (International Classification of Diseases) terminology for traditional medicine by the WHO, supported heavily by Indian policy data, marks a milestone in global clinical interoperability^[14].
- **Ethics:** New educational mandates now include compulsory modules on Good Clinical Practice (GCP) and Bioethics, ensuring that AYUSH research meets the Helsinki Declaration standards^[15].

4. Infrastructure for Global Health Diplomacy

The establishment of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) in India serves as the ultimate evidence of global recognition. This center acts as a hub for standardizing "evidence-based traditional medicine" (EBTM)^[16].

- **Observation:** There is an increased trend in Global AYUSH Chairs established in universities across Europe and North America, fostering cross-continental academic exchange and dual-degree programs^[17].

5. Comparative Analysis of Competency Shifts

Feature	Pre-Policy Framework (Traditional)	Post-Policy Framework (Global Competence)
Pedagogy	Rote-learning of classical texts	Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME)
Research	Observational/Anecdotal	Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) & AI-driven Meta-analysis
Technology	Minimal digital integration	AYUSH Grid, Telemedicine, and Digital Health Records
Ethics	Informal/Guru-Shishya tradition	Formalized Bioethics and Regulatory Compliance (GCP)
Global Reach	Localized practice	International licensing & WHO-standardized terminology

Discussion

The results underscore a significant shift in the AYUSH pedagogical landscape, moving from an interpretative tradition to a translational science. The integration of Evidence-based Medicine (EBM) within AYUSH education is not merely an academic exercise; it is a prerequisite for international regulatory acceptance^[18]. However, the discussion must address the inherent tension between

"standardization" and the "individualized" nature of traditional medicine.

The "Evidence" Paradox and Innovation

While Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) are the "gold standard" in conventional medicine, AYUSH education is increasingly advocating for Whole Systems Research (WSR). This approach acknowledges that the efficacy of

Yoga or Ayurveda often stems from a complex interplay of diet, lifestyle, and multi-herb formulations rather than a single molecule ^[19]. By teaching AYUSH graduates to design research that respects traditional logic while meeting modern statistical rigor, the policy is creating a unique breed of "Clinician-Scientists."

Ethics as a Global Entry Requirement

The emphasis on ethics within the new curriculum addresses historical criticisms regarding patient safety and product quality. As AYUSH products enter the European and North American markets, practitioners must be versed in the Nagoya Protocol on biodiversity and international intellectual property (IP) laws ^[20]. Ethical excellence ensures that the "soft power" of Indian traditional medicine is not undermined by issues of biopiracy or safety concerns.

The Role of Technology and Interoperability

The "Excellence" pillar is increasingly driven by digital health. The discussion highlights that global competence is now synonymous with digital literacy. The implementation of the AYUSH Grid allows for the creation of vast clinical datasets that can be analyzed using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to predict treatment outcomes, thereby providing the high-level evidence required by global health insurers ^[21].

Conclusion

The 21st century demands a healthcare professional who is both specialized in their discipline and versatile in a multidisciplinary environment. The AYUSH Education Policy, through its recent reforms, has successfully laid the groundwork for this transition. By institutionalizing Evidence, Ethics, and Excellence, the policy ensures that AYUSH graduates are no longer viewed as "alternative" practitioners but as "global healthcare leaders."

The success of this transition by 2030 will depend on three critical factors:

- 1. Sustained Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Breaking the silos between AYUSH and conventional medical colleges.
- 2. Global Regulatory Harmony:** Working with the WHO to ensure that AYUSH qualifications are recognized across borders.
- 3. Continuous Quality Assurance:** Moving beyond curriculum design to the rigorous implementation of clinical standards in training hospitals.

In conclusion, the path to global competence for AYUSH lies in its ability to remain rooted in tradition yet contemporary in application. As India leads the global traditional medicine agenda through the WHO-GCTM, the strengthening of its educational core will be the decisive factor in achieving a truly integrative global healthcare system.

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