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Congress report

Ayurveda at the IRCIMH 2012, Portland, USA



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The Third International Research Congress on Integrative Medicine and Health (IRCIMH) was held at Portland Marriott, Portland, Oregon, USA from 15th to 18th of May, 2012. The IRCIMH is the highest rated scientific conference for CAM in the world and was attended by around 1,000 delegates from different countries.

Integrative Medicine is centered on the relationship between practitioner and patient, focuses on the whole person by considering the body, mind and self, is informed by evidence, and aims to achieve optimal health and healing by appropriate use of a multitude of health care approaches. The IRCIMH creates a platform to showcase the most effective and evidence based practices in the domain of Complementary and Alternative Medicine that can be incorporated into the practice of Integrative Medicine. Areas of Integrative medicine and health research presented and discussed at the Congress included basic science, clinical trials, lifestyle and prevention, methodology, health services, cost effectiveness, and education.

The IRCIMH was hosted by the Consortium of Academic Health Centers for Integrative Medicine and International Society for Complementary Medicine Research in association with 15 funding organizations and 42 participating organizations.

The IRCIMH consisted of seven Pre-Congress Workshops, Plenary Sessions, 30 concurrent sessions, 65 oral abstract talks and 433 posters.

In spite of the fact that Ayurveda is gaining popularity world over, it has been very poorly represented in the scientific forums, conferences and research initiatives in the field of Complementary and Alternative Medicine as well as Integrative Medicine. In these circumstances, the IRCIMH was a major step forward to provide visibility for Ayurveda.



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The gross representation of Ayurveda at the IRCIMH was negligible and Chinese Medicine dominated the show. However, in comparison to the previous IRCIMH and other CAM conferences, Ayurveda was better represented. In this regard, an exclusive concurrent session for Ayurveda was a highlight of the IRCIMH 2012.

Ayurveda was practically unrepresented in the Pre-Congress Workshops, Plenary Lectures, Experiential Sessions and even the Oral Abstract Sessions. AAPNA was the only participating organization representing Ayurveda. Apart from the sole concurrent session, ten out of 433 posters were on Ayurveda.



Dr. Jennifer Rioux, Dr. Ram Manohar and Dr. Christian Keßler on the stage of the Portland Conference

Ayurveda sessions

The concurrent session on Ayurveda titled “Research Design and Methodology for Ayurveda as a Whole System of Medicine” was conducted by Christian S. Kessler (Charite Medical University, Berlin), Anand Dhruva (University of San Francisco, California), Jennifer Rioux (University of Arizona) and P. Ram Manohar (AVP Research Foundation, Coimbatore, India).

The concurrent session comprised of panel lectures by the four panelists, which was followed by discussion and interaction with the audience. Christian Kessler provided an overview of the scenario by highlighting the research landmarks and milestones in the field of Ayurveda. This was followed by the lecture on a three pronged strategy for whole system research on Ayurveda - Defining whole systems, Internal validation of Ayurveda and external validation using modern research approaches. Anand Dhruva elaborated how the concepts of whole system research can be applied to Ayurveda and Jennifer Rioux deliberated on issues in design and methods for clinical research on Ayurveda as a whole system research.



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The lectures highlighted critical issues and sketched the road map for research on Ayurveda with illustrations and examples of published studies and studies in progress. This was followed by a stimulating round of interactions with the audience.

The evidence accumulated by the tradition of Ayurveda, the important ongoing and completed research studies on Ayurveda, examples of effective research designs in evaluating Ayurveda and the differences with respect to clinical practice and research of Ayurveda in India and western countries were discussed in the session.

Six out of the ten posters, out of a total of 433 posters involved three of the participants of the Concurrent Session on Ayurveda.

Anand Dhruva presented two posters on

1. Mixed Methods Approaches in Whole Systems Research: A Study of Ayurvedic Diagnostics and
2. A Whole Systems Approach to the Study of Ayurveda for Cancer Survivorship: Results from a Qualitative Investigation.

Ram Manohar presented two posters on

1. Online Indexing Service for Research Articles Published on Ayurveda and
2. A Narrative Review of Research on Ayurveda.

Christian Kessler was co author of two posters on

1. Ayurvedic Management of Ulcerative Colitis: A Non-Randomized, Observational Clinical Study and
2. Effect of Ayurvedic Treatment in Diabetic Sensory Polyneuropathya Non-Randomized, Observational Clinical Study.

The other posters were as follows:

- Subjects' Experiences of a Bi-weekly Yoga and Ayurveda-based Weight Loss Protocol in Overweight and Obese Women
T Braun, L Conboy
- Impedance Plethysmographic (IPG) Pulse Signal Analysis based Personalized Diagnostics & Treatment Simulating Ayurvedic Pulse Examination
M Dhurandhar, P Dhumal
- Amalaki Rasayana an Ayurvedic Preparation: To Evaluate its Effect against Experimental Gastric Ulcers in Albino Rats
B Kalsariya, P Prajapati, P Vaishnav, L Singh, S Gupta, B Patgiri



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- Repeatability of Pulse Diagnosis in Traditional Indian Ayurveda Medicine
V Kurande, R Waagepetersen, E Toft

In the sidelines of the Congress, a group of researchers convened a meeting to constitute a global forum for research on Ayurveda.

The IRCIMH reveals the need for stronger representation of Ayurveda in such international scientific conferences. However, it also served to create a critical space for showcasing Ayurveda to an international audience representing mainstream medical disciplines. Steps need to be taken to strengthen the presence of Ayurveda in future global scientific events to stimulate and encourage multidisciplinary research initiatives that can build an evidence base to render credibility for Ayurveda as a globally relevant safe and effective approach to health care.



Audience at the IRCIMH

The abstracts of all selected oral presentations and posters have been published in a supplement issue of BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine, which is open access and available online at <http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmccomplementalternmed/supplements/12/S1/all>

The webcast of the inaugural, plenary and closing sessions can be viewed at <http://imconsortium-congress2012.org/speakers.html>

More details on the IRCIMH can be accessed by logging on to <http://imconsortium-congress2012.org>

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