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## **Ayurveda Australia: Scope & Practice**

### **Current status of Ayurveda in Australia, a complete analysis**

Among the various countries where Ayurveda has developed a presence, its status varies widely. Outside India and Sri Lanka, the trade, practice and education of Ayurveda are growing in many countries, but it has yet to gain full legal recognition as a medical system. Nonetheless, even without formal legal status, it has been established globally as a unique system of healthcare.

In Australia like other developed countries such as America, Europe and Australia, Ayurveda is widely practiced as wellness therapy, under complementary general health stream or under Naturopathy with no separate recognition or regulation. The medicines are sold more often as food/herbal supplements and cosmetics, without the intervention of any Ayurveda practitioner, as OTC products. Many Educational institutions offering various Ayurveda courses run in Australia, are registered. 70-80% Ayurveda herbs are not allowed in Australia which restricts the practice of Ayurveda in its full form. Illegal imports and Internet marketing which risks endangering public health increased whilst negatively impacting the reputation of the system and public health simultaneously.

The practice and education of Ayurveda is flourishing in many states like Victoria, NSW, Queensland, Adelaide and Perth and have successfully propagated Ayurveda in Australia. There are no of established centers of Ayurveda clinics all over the country. Training in Ayurveda consists of non-practitioner courses, home-study programs and practitioner programs. Couple of Associations register Ayurveda Practitioners

trained overseas and local in Australia now. The Association's most important accomplishment to date has been the establishment of minimum practitioner standards.

I am practicing in Melbourne Victoria since more than 20yrs, being one of the earliest one training the local students and overseas qualified freshers campaigning, focusing on a close relationship with India and the recognition of India-trained Ayurvedic physicians and accreditation for Ayurveda by representing as Deputy Chair for complementary health industry through SkillsIQ and Department of Education Skills and Employment Australia. Most recently we signed up a MoU and bilateral agreement in Nov 2019 between Western Sydney University & Ayurveda University in New Delhi by getting immense support from Indian High Commission Canberra by personally taking the University delegates to High Commission and by organizing bilateral arrangement which was further led by Prof Dilip and he flew to India with VC to conclude that, which was a massive accomplishment.

There is no significant regulation of Ayurvedic practice or education in Australia. Schools in Australia do need license or State approval to provide education. The practice of Ayurveda is not formally regulated either. None of the states require a license to practice Ayurvedic health care. Ayurvedic massage is regulated through the massage laws of most states. In Australia specific laws, were passed protecting the practice of a complementary health and the practitioners who provide those services. The practice of Ayurveda is protected within these laws so long as the practice falls within the limitations of the law and does not impinge on the scope of practice of other licensed health care professions.

Having no formal scope of practice defined through legislation, the practice of Ayurveda is defined more by what cannot be done than by what can be legally practiced. While the laws in each state vary, there are many commonalities to these laws that restrict the practice of Ayurveda, the medical practice acts established in each state being the most significant. The following is a list of actions that are generally considered illegal in the Australia.

- Practitioners can call themselves a Ayurveda Doctor, if possessing a degree from

- India or a PhD degree in Australia. The use of the title “Doctor” although is restricted to licensed physicians of Medicine, Osteopaths, Chiropractors. While this is true in a clinical setting, those possessing a doctorate degree of any kind may be referred to as “Doctors” in an academic setting and may also place the title doctor in front of their name on books and published papers.
- Practitioners may not diagnose medical disease. A practitioner cannot act in the capacity of a licensed health care physician and provide a diagnosis of a disease using common Western medical terminology. This does not mean, however, that a practitioner cannot use their Classical Ayurvedic understanding of disease to come to an understanding of a patient’s condition. Hence, a practitioner of Ayurveda may declare that a patient is suffering from a vitiation of pachaka pitta in the rasa dhatu of the annavaha srota but may not declare that the patient is suffering from hyperacidity or an ulcer, or the Sanskrit equivalents: Urdvarga Amlapitta and Grahani.
- Practitioners cannot interfere with the prescriptions or recommendations made by a licensed physician. A practitioner who tells a patient not to take their medications is considered practicing medicine without a license.
- Practitioners cannot invade the body or perform any other procedure that penetrates the skin or any orifice of the body. Even simple surgical procedures may not be performed nor may acupuncture unless you are locally qualified.

### **Australia and New Zealand**

Many qualified Ayurveda practitioners from India have been practicing Ayurveda in Australia for many years. The recognition and legal status as a medical system is yet far from reality. Presently, drugs are imported subjected to TGA. Most of the Ayurvedic products cannot follow this route due to a lack of required data. Still a large number of products are imported mainly from India and Sri Lanka in avoidance of the law.

An International Congress of Traditional Asian medicine (ICTAM) was held in 1979 at Canberra. After this congress, Australian School of

Ayurveda was founded in Adelaide with the help of experts from Indian Universities.

Later in 1994, this Institution developed into the Australasian Academy of Natural Medicine. This institution with recognized Ayurveda faculty was to gain full accreditation in Australia. It offered Diploma (either Ayurveda or Naturopathy) after four years of training plus clinical practice. Its competency based standard training comes under the vocational Education and training Authorities.

In New Zealand, the situation is more or less the same. Dr. Phillip Cottingham established the Wellpark College of Natural Therapies in 1990 in Auckland. This college conducts various courses in Ayurveda, Natural Therapies and Yoga. They conduct a Certificate course in Ayurvedic Life style counselling, extending to total 840 hours. Another course of 3-year Diploma in Ayurveda Medicine is also being conducted. New Zealand Government recognizes this college. An Ayurveda faculty including Dr. Ajit from India supports this college.

The herbs trade and dispensing is still heavily restricted in these two countries and currently, circumventing the local rules and regulations does the trade and practice.

### **Trading of Ayurveda products outside India**

In most of the countries, where Ayurveda is practiced, the practitioners get their medicines from private sources in India, with an 'unofficial' import arrangement, circumventing the law. The small-scale practitioners bring medicines traveling to India. Official export from India is only a very small percentage compared to the trade and consumption figures. The controversial Ayurveda medicines reported to have heavy metal contents are not officially exported from India. It is food for thought for the authorities as to how these medicines are reaching consumers when the country of origin is not exporting it, the country of sale does not allow the sale of the same for medicinal purpose, and the fact that drugs with Ayurvedic metal and mineral contents are not to be sold as OTC products and are always recommended to be sold with the recommendation of a qualified Ayurveda practitioner.

Since the Trade of Ayurveda medicines in most of these countries is carried out by circumventing the local law, and mostly the drugs are not

declared to have medicinal functions and sold through Indian stores and general markets, it is very difficult to accurately estimate the exact figures for the usage of Indian Ayurvedic Medicines in these countries.

Govt. of India is trying to revive the Ayurveda with its available resources. Since 1956 onwards, institutionalized researches started and till date more than 10,000 PG & Ph.D. theses in Ayurveda have been submitted at various Universities. These thesis and other research's conducted by the institutions like CCRAS explain and validate the Ayurveda fundamental principles, procedures and safety of herbo-mineral metallic preparations.

Further, all the major scientific & medical laboratories and research wings of Govt. of India, e.g. ICMR, CSIR and its laboratories like ITRC, CDRI, etc. are working for revalidation, confirmation and certification regarding toxicity (if at all any) of these drugs, Data of these researches are being published in various scientific journals of medicine, biology, botany and Ayurveda. Many books have also been published collecting the summary of researches done on the various Ayurveda drug preparations. These publications list the efficacy and safety aspects of Ayurveda medicines. The Ayurveda texts list the possible unwanted side effects of minerals-metallic preparation. Commonly known toxic drugs are being subjected for their possible toxicological studies. These are reported in scientific journals and personal communication during seminars.

Hence, in saying so there is an utter need for International Recognition of Ayurveda as a System of Medicine with an independent status.

### **Main Points to be considered**

1. International Recognition of Ayurveda & Panchakarma & Yoga (AYUSH sciences) especially in Australia by APHRA Board.
2. Zero duty on Ayurvedic products in Australia
3. Mutual recognition of Ayurvedic/Panchakarma qualification in Australia & India.
4. TGA/GMP Approval for Ayurvedic herbal products.
5. Ayurveda Chair established
6. Regulate & Raise Standards of Ayurveda In Australia as Chinese Medicine

**Recent establishment of Ayurveda Chair in Western Sydney University increases the feasibility of lot of openings.**

Dr Vanita Sharma

IABCA2018 Winner Business Women of the Year

(Awarded by Hon Foreign Minister Marise Payne)

Founder Vibe Ayurveda/ Urja Ayurvedics

Co – Chairwoman, Yoga and Alternative medicines Committee

Asian African Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Deputy Chair, Complementary Health IRC, SkillsIQ P/L

Department of Education, Skills & Employment

Former Vice President AAA