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Problems associated with research in Ayurveda and indigenous system of medicine in Sri Lanka

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Indigenous medical system, generally known as Ayurveda, is an integral part of the medical system in Sri Lanka. Since the Ayurvedic medicine has an emerging demand in the world and to cater for these needs, the system should be improved and modernized in such a way that it attracts customers. Therefore, the R&D system in the Ayurveda sector has an important role to play for product and process development similar to the western medicine. This study was focused on the researchers and scientists working directly in the Ayurvedic sector as well as those who are involved in work related to Ayurveda, to find out their views on the present Research and Development (R&D) system and problems they faced when involving in research activities. The questionnaire survey method and the direct interview method were employed to collect the data. The sample contained 275 scientists who were fully or partly involved in research related to Ayurveda sector in the government and private sector institutes. Out of 275 scientists, there were 65% female and 34% male scientists. The study revealed nine main problems associated with Ayurvedic research. The respondents were asked to rank these problems from 1-9 according to the degree of the effect. The rank given and the weight of the response for each were as follows: lack of correct guidance or direction (Rank 1, 65.9%), lack of encouragement or recognition to conduct research (Rank 2, 68.1%), funding problems (Rank 3, 77.2%), inadequate laboratory facilities (Rank 4, 72.2%), administrative problems (Rank 5, 78.3%), inadequate infrastructure facilities such as computers, internet, library (Rank 6, 81%), shortage of trained technical and supporting staff (Rank 7, 93.4%), ethical regulations and restrictions (Rank 8, 90.1%), and personal problems (Rank 9, 99.6%). The reasons such as lack of funds or funding sources devoted for Ayurvedic research and not having proper guidance or training for writing project proposals had a significant link to funding problems ($p < 0.05$). The ethics related problems such as inadequacy of policies and regulations to use new techniques or diagnostic tools; lack of facilities to use animal models etc. were the other constraints for conducting research in Ayurveda. The study also investigated the problems associated with human resource development, popularizing and commercializing Ayurveda research results etc. Based on the findings, a few policy initiatives necessary for improving the system were highlighted.

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