

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Integrating Soft Skills into Ayurveda Graduates: A Contemporary Imperative

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) curriculum immerses students in Ayurvedic principles, transforming them into stewards of this ancient therapeutic system. Upon graduation, practitioners frequently engage in public healthcare environments, where they encounter problems such as patient animosity, unprofessional conduct, and emotionally sensitive situations. BAMS graduates possess expertise in Ayurvedic principles; yet the lack of structured soft skills training leads to heightened stress and anxiety in their professional endeavors.

**Materials and Methods:** This review study investigates the significance of soft skills – namely effective communication, empathy, adaptability, and teamwork – in improving the professional preparedness of BAMS graduate. Innovative pedagogical tools, such as interactive training modules, role-playing situations, and mindfulness practices, are suggested for incorporation into the curriculum.

**Results:** Incorporating specialized soft skills training in the BAMS program provides practitioners with the necessary tools to manage difficult situations, establish patient trust, and cultivate collaborative professional relationships. These interventions equip graduates to handle stress competently, adapt to evolving situations, and deliver comprehensive, patient-centered care.

**Discussion:** Soft skills are essential for BAMS practitioners operating in varied and challenging public healthcare environments. By incorporating the curriculum to incorporate systematic soft skills training, Ayurveda education can cultivate well-rounded professionals who resonate with the tradition's holistic principles. Subsequent study ought to assess the effects of these curriculum modifications on practitioner well-being and patient satisfaction.

**Conclusion:** By recognizing the importance of soft skills and incorporating focused tactics into the curriculum, educational institutions can enable BAMS students to adeptly navigate the intricacies of healthcare with empathy and professionalism.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Learning is a continuous process and there is always a possibility for progression in every professional curriculum. Learning Ayurveda has gone through many meticulous changes as per era and requirement. From the ancient one-to-one *Gurukul* system to the centrally controlled uniform medical school system, Ayurveda teaching methodology has undergone several transformations.<sup>[1]</sup> The present form of institutional teaching has also been reformed intermittently and the probability

of enrichment is discussed often. One such recent reform was the introduction of an induction program, a transitional curriculum of 90 h at the commencement of Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) classes. Based on the criterion of socializing, associating, governing, and experiencing, this curriculum intends to aware the scholars aware of Ayurveda principles along with inculcation of personality-enhancing soft skills.<sup>[2]</sup>

Soft skills are the non-technical, interpersonal skills, personal traits, behaviors, and qualities that influence how individuals steer their work and personal lives. These skills encompass an assortment of emotional intelligence, social graces, and communication abilities, which are essential for success in diverse environments and roles. In contrast to

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hard and technical skills that are exact in a specific role or industry, soft skill is transferable and highly valued across all professions and contexts.<sup>[3]</sup>

In the dynamic landscape of healthcare, the emphasis on soft skills has gained traction alongside the traditional focus on clinical expertise. BAMS education, rooted in the holistic approach of Ayurveda, necessitates a blend of technical proficiency and interpersonal finesse. Ayurveda, deeply rooted in a patient-centric approach, emphasizes soft skills and their profound impact on patient care, professional relationships, and career advancement becomes fundamental in reshaping the pedagogical approach in BAMS education.<sup>[4]</sup>

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This narrative review aims to assess the importance of incorporating soft skills training into the BAMS curriculum. The research examines current literature, finds educational deficiencies, and suggests solutions to remedy them through focused interventions.

A thorough literature review was performed utilizing electronic databases including PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, Ayush databases, online compendiums, e-books and the keywords that were utilized included “soft skills in utilised education,” “Ayurveda curriculum,” “communication skills in healthcare,” “empathy in emphasizing healthcare,” and “advance to media emphasizing Ayurvedic education” to medical and Ayurvedic education.

We conducted a qualitative analysis of the selected studies to identify common soft skill deficiencies among medical graduates, particularly Ayurvedic practitioners. There are optimal methodologies and efficacious approaches for imparting soft skills in medical education. Based on the review, we created a conceptual framework for incorporating soft skills into the BAMS scholars.

### 2.1. Present Scenario

Being directly coming from an institutional setup and under the guidance of consultants they never face any adverse conditions but once they are in public setups the agony, anger, stress, long working hours, lack of facilities, hostility, unprofessional behaviors by team members, ever demanding patients and their relatives etc. create anxiety and fright among recently engaged physicians.<sup>[5]</sup> Although there is no lack of proficiency the lack of communicative skills, critical thinking, flexibility, etc., the so-called soft skills. These skills in physicians are as important as technical expertise because they help in facing complex situations. The integrative training of soft skills should be the part of the BAMS curriculum along with theoretical and clinical expertise.<sup>[6]</sup>

### 2.2. Soft Skills for Healthcare Professionals and Ayurveda

Soft skills complement the technical expertise of healthcare professionals. At the work front, healthcare professionals need to have a variety of soft skills. A high extent of communication, flexibility and confidence among the team associates is needed to achieve flawless collaboration. It is obligatory to have empathy, sensitivity and good communication with patients and their families to provide the highest level of patient care.<sup>[7]</sup>

Ayurveda, the ancient holistic system of medicine, emphasizes a set of qualities and attributes that are considered essential for medical professionals. These qualities are outlined in Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, along with technical expertise. These qualities are considered essential for a well-rounded

and compassionate medical professional. They form the foundation for providing holistic care and fostering healing in individuals by considering their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.<sup>[8]</sup> The key soft skills and their Ayurvedic counterpart are summarized in Table 1.

## 3. DISCUSSION

Although with the inclusion of a transitional curriculum introductory glimpse of magnitude of role of personality development is paved off. Only theoretical and practical lectures are not going to groom budding physicians into good health professionals. We have to rummage around new horizons beyond conventional training method.<sup>[9]</sup> Teaching soft skills to medical professionals involves incorporating specific strategies and methods into their education, training, and ongoing professional development. Here are some effective ways to impart and enhance soft skills:

- Structured curriculum integration: Incorporate soft skill modules into the medical curriculum. Offer dedicated sessions or courses focused on communication, empathy, cultural competence, teamwork, and ethical decision-making. One or two online modules/MOOCs of soft skills should be mandatorily integrated as electives per professional year. An expert can do periodic evaluation of personality traits.<sup>[10]</sup>
- Role-playing and simulation: Engage students in role-playing scenarios that mimic real-life patient interactions. For a demonstration role-play, the mentor needs to pause the role-play for a debriefing of the observations. This allows them to practice and develop communication, empathy, and critical thinking in a safe learning environment.<sup>[11]</sup>
- Clinical training emphasis: During clinical duties, emphasize the importance of soft skills in patient care. Encourage students to actively engage with patients, listen attentively, and communicate effectively under supervision. As was seen during the pandemic time most of the isolated patients just needed essential meds and a joyful milieu; which was easily done by healthcare professionals with good soft skills.<sup>[12]</sup>
- Interactive workshops, continuing education programs and seminars: Organizing workshops or seminars that focus on specific soft skills. Bring in experienced healthcare professionals to share their expertise and provide hands-on training in areas such as communication, teamwork, or stress management. One study shows the effectual retention of skills and motivation due to the sharing of personal experiences and was also found to be cost-effective.<sup>[13]</sup>
- Interdisciplinary education: Collaborate with other healthcare disciplines to create learning experiences that promote teamwork, collaboration, and understanding of different professional roles in patient care. The coordination with other systems of medicine will not only make them appreciate their principles but also eliminate misapprehensions.<sup>[14]</sup>
- Mentorship: Pair students with experienced mentors who exemplify strong soft skills. Observing and learning from seasoned professionals can be highly beneficial in understanding and imbibing these skills. A study conducted on medical students in Delhi also suggested starting a teacher-student interaction program.<sup>[15]</sup>
- Encourage reflection and discussion: Create opportunities for discussions, case studies, or reflective journals where students and professionals can analyze challenging situations and discuss the application of soft skills. Critical thinking about cases not only enhances understanding but also opens new realms for personality development.<sup>[16]</sup>

#### 4. RESULTS

An amalgamation of said plan can bring out astonishing benefits not only in personal development but also to the Ayurveda healthcare service sector. Ayurveda always advocates compassionate healthcare where physicians are not just treatment experts but also life guides. Some potential expectations after the soft skills enrichment program along with technical proficiency may be superior patient-centered care with a holistic approach, building a rapport with patients and their caretakers, providing personalized care, improved patient compliance, better treatment outcomes, better adaptability, collaborative practice and overall satisfaction with the healing process.<sup>[17]</sup>

#### 5. CONCLUSION

In essence, soft skills are the underpinning elements that complement the technical knowledge acquired in BAMS education. They empower future Ayurvedic practitioners to navigate the complexities of healthcare, form meaningful connections with patients, and uphold the holistic principles of Ayurveda in their practice. Integrating and nurturing these skills within the educational framework ensures that BAMS graduates emerge as not just skilled professionals but also empathetic healers capable of addressing the multifaceted dimensions of human health and wellness. By acknowledging the significance of these skills and implementing targeted strategies in the curriculum, educational institutions can empower BAMS scholars to navigate the complexities of healthcare with adeptness, empathy, and professionalism. Ultimately, this holistic approach will not only enhance patient outcomes but also fortify the credibility and sustainability of Ayurvedic medicine in the modern healthcare landscape.

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**Table 1:** Key soft skills essential for healthcare professional along with Ayurvedic terminology and their significance

Soft skills	Ayurvedic terminology	Their pertinent
Communication Skills	<i>Sambhasha</i>	Strong communication skills enable them to build rapport, explain treatment plans, and address patients' concerns, fostering trust and compliance.
Empathy and compassion	<i>Maitri, Karuna,</i>	Empathy enables healthcare professionals to approach patients more profoundly, recognize their challenges and take care of them with compassion.
Patience	<i>Dhriti</i>	Patience is essential in healthcare, especially when dealing with chronic illnesses or complex cases. Medical professionals should remain composed, persistent, and patient-centric in their approach.
Competence	<i>Dakshyam</i>	A healthcare professional must be culturally competent to respect and integrate various cultural perspectives into their treatment plans, ensuring culturally sensitive.
Active listening	<i>Shruta</i>	Attentive listening allows healthcare professionals to gather comprehensive information about patients' conditions, concerns, and preferences. It helps in making an accurate diagnosis.
Critical Thinking and Problem-solving	<i>Vitarka, Mati</i>	Strong critical thinking skills enable healthcare professionals to analyze complex cases, identify underlying patterns, and devise personalized solutions, enhancing the effectiveness of treatments.
Time management	<i>Tatparta</i>	Balancing patient appointments, paperwork, and other responsibilities requires effective time management skills to ensure quality patient care and maintain a work-life balance.
Adaptability and Open-mindedness	<i>Sahana, Anukulatva</i>	Healthcare professionals need to remain adaptable and open-minded, embracing new research, techniques, and perspectives while staying true to their expertise.
Ethical conduct	<i>Dharma</i>	Practitioners are expected to adhere to moral and ethical codes, ensuring integrity, honesty, and respect for patients' autonomy and confidentiality.
Teamwork	<i>Shasita Yokta</i>	Healthcare professionals need strong teamwork skills to collaborate with other healthcare professionals, fostering a cohesive approach to patient care.