

Use of technology will bring about quality control in Ayurveda.

The holistic science of "Ayur" (life) and "Ved" (knowledge) is believed to be the knowledge of complete balance of body, mind and spirit. It is also the oldest form of traditional medicine.

"Ayurveda definitely has new ideas for health promotion and prevention of diseases," says Kazuo Uebaba, associate superintendent of the International Traditional Medicine Research Center of Toyama prefecture (Ayurveda and other traditional systems of medicine such as Unani, Chinese medicine and Janu of Indonesia). He was in Coimbatore recently to visit Avtar, the AVT Institute for Advanced Research, a division of The Arya Vaidya Pharmacy.

He tells K. Jeshi about his new study titled 'Usage of Modern Technology for the Scientific Study of Ayurveda' on Shirodhara (oil dripping treatment on the forehead).

SHIRODHARA IS one of the characteristic healing techniques in Ayurveda that originated in India. (Shiro means head and dhara means dripping in Sanskrit). It has long been prescribed for headache, insomnia, anxiety, neurosis, hypertension and several kinds of psychosis.

Dr. Kazuo and his team have developed a healing robot to conduct Shirodhara in a standardised manner.

"Use of technology will bring about quality control in Ayurveda. The study is also an attempt to popularise the traditional medicine among medical practitioners in the West," he says.

"The healing robot will conduct Shirodhara in a computerised reproducible manner. This helps in studying the mechanism of the treatment. It was found that physiological changes during Shirodhara were related to psychological experiences such as anxiety and Altered State of Consciousness (ASC) or anxiolysis. This was assessed by a psychometric method," Dr. Kazuo says.

The study also discussed the clinical utility and validity of Shirodhara. Factors such as oil flow rate, oil temperature, dripping speed, dripping pattern and kind of oil and its effect on the treatment of stress, headache, insomnia, eye disease and facial wrinkle were also studied. "The treatment with plain sesame oil induced ASC (trance, momentariness) while medicated sesame oil (with 0.3 per cent Lavender essence) induced more profound ASC (passiveness, space perception) than the plain sesame oil. ASC reduces anxiety,"

he explains.