

Letter to the Editor

A PHARMACOLOGIST IN INDIA

Sir,

I had read the editorial entitled "A Pharmacologist in India" (1) with great interest. I do agree with most of points mentioned by Professor A. Jindal on the scope and future of the medical and non-medical pharmacologists in India. What I don't agree is his views on the research being done at present on the indigenous medicines. Although Prof. Jindal had rightly mentioned that this research is time consuming, laborious and frustrating but he has failed to analyse the cause of it. Our applied research has to be oriented to fulfil the need of the common man. India is represented by 80% people living in the villages for whom modern medical facilities are scarce. Under these circumstances, I ask one simple question. What is the practical solution of this problem? The plan to produce more medical graduates and to send them to villages has not been achieved and I do not see any hope that it will be achieved in our time. The reasons for this are numerous and controversial. It is true that the claims made by the exponents of the indigenous system are not 100% true but this does not mean that the system should be rejected outright without subjecting it to scientific evaluation. Indigenous systems of medicine are based on polypharmacy according to which the activity and toxicity of drugs is modified according to the need. Has anybody ever cared to investigate an indigenous preparation in the form it is prescribed in the indigenous system? For example, I have not come across any reference where a simple and effective preparation like "Karha" or "Joshanda" has been tested as such for its anti-tussive, expectorant, analgesic and antipyretic effect, though we know that such preparations are very effective, cheap and easily available in the villages. What most of us are trying in the way of research is to isolate the active principles like reserpine and that is where we are getting all frustration in addition to the waste of time and money, although reserpine and peruvoside were ultimately introduced by a Foreign Drug Company.

So the time has come to change our approach to these problems instead of rejecting the system of medicine. There is a lot that can be done in the proper evaluation of these medicines. Let us not stick to the traditional approach and modify it according to our needs.

Physiological pharmacology made the foundation of the present pharmacology but is being rapidly over-run by biochemical pharmacology because of the tremendous increase in knowledge of biochemical actions of the drugs. Therefore, it is not a rival to the indigenous system of medicine and I see no reason why research on indigenous system should be replaced by biochemical pharmacology. Both the disciplines have their rights to get equal attention.

H. H. SIDDIQUI,

Department of Pharmacology,
All India Institute of Medical Sciences,
Ansari Nagar, New Delhi-16

REFERENCE

1. Jindal, M. N. A Pharmacologist in India, *Ind. J. Physiol. Pharmacol.* 13, (i), 1969.