



Crosspathy

For Prelims: [Homeopathy](#), [Indian Medical Association](#), [Medical Council of India](#), [Supreme Court of India](#), [World Health Organization](#), [eSanjeevani](#)

For Mains: Crosspathy, Regulation of Healthcare Professions, Healthcare Access in Rural Areas, Medical Negligence and Liability

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

In December 2024, the **Maharashtra Food and Drugs Administration (FDA)** issued a directive allowing **homeopathic practitioners** with a pharmacology certificate to prescribe **allopathic medicines**.

- The decision has faced criticism from the [Indian Medical Association \(IMA\)](#), which warns it could lead to "**crosspathy**" and harm patients.

What is Crosspathy?

- **About:** Crosspathy refers to the practice of healthcare professionals prescribing or **practicing medicine outside their recognized scope of expertise**.
 - Specifically, it involves practitioners of alternative medicine systems (**like Ayurveda, Yoga, and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (Ayush)**) prescribing or performing treatments typically reserved for **allopathic (modern) medicine**.
- **Concerns:** This practice is often criticized because it can lead to **misdiagnosis, inappropriate treatments**, and risks to patient safety, as these practitioners are not fully trained in the methods and practices of modern medicine.
- **Regulations and Legal Precedents:**
 - **MCI Code of Ethics 2002:** The [Medical Council of India \(MCI\)](#) established the **Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette, and Ethics) Regulations, 2002**, under the **Indian Medical Council Act, 1956**, which restricts unqualified individuals from conducting medical procedures such as abortions or issuing medical competence certificates.
 - It also mandates that qualified doctors cannot assign non-qualified personnel for medical tasks.
 - **Supreme Court Judgments:** In a landmark 1996 case, **Poonam Verma Vs. Ashwin Patel**, the [Supreme Court of India](#) held a **homeopath liable for negligence after prescribing allopathic medicines**, which led to the patient's death.
 - The Court ruled that cross-system practice constitutes medical negligence.
 - This has been upheld in subsequent rulings, stating that **crosspathy is only permissible if explicitly authorized by the concerned State Government**.

What are Reasons for Promoting Crosspathy?

- **Shortage of Specialists:** A report on Health Dynamics of India 2022-23 highlights an **80% shortage of specialist doctors in [Community Health Centres \(CHCs\)](#)** in rural areas, with only 4,413 specialist doctors available, while **21,964 are needed**.
 - The government has been promoting AYUSH doctors to help alleviate the **shortage of medical professionals**, particularly in rural areas.
- **Expanding Healthcare Access:** As of June 2022, there were over **13 lakh allopathic doctors** and over 5.5 lakh AYUSH practitioners in India.
 - India's doctor-population ratio is **1:836**, surpassing the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) **standard of 1:1000**, but most doctors are concentrated in **urban areas, limiting rural healthcare access**.
 - Crosspathy improves healthcare access in remote areas with **fewer allopathic doctors**, offering an affordable alternative for rural patients who cannot access specialists or urban facilities.
 - Poor **working conditions and low remuneration deter MBBS** doctors from taking up rural posts.

What are the Concerns Regarding Crosspathy in India?

- **IMA's Concerns:** The IMA criticizes the Maharashtra FDA's latest directive, arguing that the [National Medical Commission \(NMC\) Act, 2019](#) does not authorize AYUSH doctors to practice allopathy.
 - Maharashtra's decision contradicts national policies, as even the Central Council for Homeopathy does not permit homeopaths to practice allopathy.
 - The IMA insists that such practices would be **detrimental to patient safety** and could potentially lead to negligence or **malpractice**.
 - IMA argues that it promotes "crosspathy," undermining the integrity of medical qualifications and specializations.
- **Quality of Care:** Compromises the standard of healthcare, as AYUSH practitioners lack formal training in modern medicine.
- **Hospital Practices:** The directive encourages appointment of AYUSH doctors in allopathic roles, violating medical ethics and contributing to **reduced employment opportunities for Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS)** or Modern medicine doctors.

Indian Medical Association (IMA)

- Founded in 1928, the IMA is India's largest voluntary organization for doctors, focused on improving public health, medical education, and safeguarding the dignity of the medical profession.
- IMA headquartered in **New Delhi**, plays a pivotal role in shaping health policies and organizing national health programs.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen GP System:** Instead of integrating alternative medicine practitioners, efforts should focus on **attracting MBBS doctors** to underserved areas by improving **incentives and working conditions** in rural areas.
 - Strengthen India's general practice (GP) system by **mandating specialist training for mid-level healthcare providers**.
- **Regulation of AYUSH and Allopathy:** The government should create a regulated framework for AYUSH practitioners to work with allopathic doctors, with **clear role definitions**.
 - They must undergo **additional training in modern medicine**, especially pharmacology, to safely prescribe allopathic drugs, under the supervision of **medical regulatory bodies**.
- **Promoting Telemedicine:** The [Telemedicine \(eSanjeevani\)](#) can bridge the gap between rural patients and urban specialists, providing quality healthcare through technology without

compromising safety.

Drishti Mains Question:

Define crossopathy and explain its impact on patient safety. Discuss the legal precedents and regulations governing cross-system medicine in India.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. How is the Government of India protecting traditional knowledge of medicine from patenting by pharmaceutical companies? **(2019)**

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