LETTER

Two roads to one register: The ethics of NCISM's pre-Ayurveda pathway to BAMS

SATYAJIT PANDURANG KULKARNI, PALLAVI SATYAJIT KULKARNI, EKNATH G KULKARNI

The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM) notified the Pre-Ayurveda Programme for Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery Regulations, 2024, on October 25, 2024 [1]. The regulations create an alternative route to the Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) programme. In the conventional pathway, students complete Classes 11 and 12 with physics, chemistry and biology and qualify for the BAMS programme through the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG). Under the new pathway, students may qualify under the NEET for Pre-Ayurveda Programme (NEET-PAP) after Class 10, enter a residential Ayurveda Gurukulam, and then complete a two-year PAP, at the end of which they receive a pre-Ayurveda Certificate that is treated equivalent to a 10+2 certificate [1]. In both cases, students can then proceed to the 4.5-year BAMS course, followed by a compulsory one-year internship [1].

The PAP is presented as a pathway to an education in Ayurveda for students from recognised boards, including Sanskrit boards, who might not otherwise enter Ayurveda through the conventional science-based route. Expanding access to this education is a legitimate educational objective. However, the two pathways provide differently structured preparation leading to the same BAMS degree and registration under the NCISM. The central ethical question is whether their equivalence has been demonstrated.

The PAP combines physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology with language study, Bharatiya Darshana and Shastras (Indian philosophy and knowledge systems), and an introduction to Ayurveda. Its Gurukulam schedule also includes formal and informal educational activities, including Sanskrit recitation, the 64 traditional Kalas (classical arts and crafts), programming, medical instrumentation and life-skills training [1].

Although more than half of the scheduled teaching hours in PAP are allocated to core science subjects, there is nothing in the regulations to show that the depth and coverage of these subjects are comparable to those in the conventional Class 11–12 science curriculum.

This has implications for students, the profession, regulators and the public. PAP students could face difficulties if later assessments of their training reveal gaps in their understanding of foundational science. Students admitted through the conventional route may ask whether PAP students had comparable preparation for the same statutory register. For the profession and regulators, a single register may include graduates whose foundational science preparation, and the way it was assessed, differ. Finally, patients and the wider public have a right to expect that practitioners holding the same registration have met the same educational standards.

We recommend three safeguards. First, NCISM and the Central Sanskrit University should publish the final PAP science syllabus, compare it to the relevant Class 11–12 physics, chemistry and biology syllabus, and state whether the BAMS course examinations and required course outcomes are identical for students admitted through the two routes or differ by route. Second, assuming they are identical, NCISM should publish the details of what each examination tests, how it is set, and performance data for NEET-PAP and for the university examination at the end of the second year of the PAP. Third, once cohorts admitted through the pre-Ayurveda route have graduated, they should be followed and compared with cohorts admitted through NEET-UG on internship performance, licensing-examination performance where applicable, and disciplinary outcomes, and the results should be made public.

Authors: Satyajit Pandurang Kulkarni (corresponding author — satyajitkulkarni2001@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8154-9967), Professor, Department of Panchakarma, Manjushree Research Institute of Ayurvedic Science, Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar; PhD Scholar, Mahatma Gandhi Ayurved College, Hospital and Research Centre, Datta Meghe Institute of Higher Education and Research, Wardha, INDIA; **Pallavi Satyajit Kulkarni** (dr.pallavikulkarni96@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3528-9302), Associate Professor, Agadtantra Avum Vidhivaidyak Department, Manjushree Research Institute of Ayurvedic Science, Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar, INDIA; **Eknath G Kulkarni** (ekulkarni6@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4324-5528), Professor, Kaychikitsa Department, ASS Ayurved College, Panchavati, Nashik, INDIA.

Conflict of Interest: None declared **Funding:** None

Acknowledgments: ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used solely for language refinement, including improving grammar, clarity, and readability. The authors remain responsible for the content, interpretation, and conclusions of the manuscript. No AI tool was used to generate any table or figure.

To cite: Kulkarni SP, Kulkarni PS, Kulkarni EG. Two roads to one register: The ethics of NCISM's pre-Ayurveda pathway to BAMS. *Indian J Med Ethics.* Published online first on November 27, 2026. DOI: 10.20529/IJME.2026.072

Submission received: July 26, 2026

Submission accepted: October 12, 2026

Copyright and license

©*Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* 2026: Open Access and Distributed under the Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0), which permits only non-commercial and non-modified sharing in any medium, provided the original author(s) and source are credited.

References

1. National Commission for Indian System of Medicine. *The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (Pre-Ayurveda Programme for Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery)* Regulations, 2024. Gazette of India Extraordinary, Part III, Sec 4, No. 865; F. No. BOA/3-B/PAP/2024. 2024 Oct 28 [cited 2026 Jul 20]. Available from: https://ncismindia.org/