

systems of medicine. AYUSH graduates are trained in distinct systems and authorized to practise only the systems that they are trained in. It is unlikely that anyone is qualified in all the systems under the AYUSH umbrella, and thus authorized to prescribe all the medications and therapeutic procedures in AYUSH. Penalties related to cross-practice should apply to a practitioner trained in one system of AYUSH prescribing another system of AYUSH too.

REFERENCE

- 1 3 years jail, ₹20 000 fine if AYUSH practioners practice Allopathy. *Medical dialogues: Voice of the medical profession*. Available at <http://medicaldialogues.in/3-years-jail-rs-20000-fine-if-ayush-practioners-practise-allopathy/> (accessed on 20 Apr 2016).

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Delhi Medical Council ruling on cross-system practice by practitioners of AYUSH

The recent Delhi Medical Council ruling¹ regarding penalties, specifically rigorous imprisonment for up to 3 years and/or fine up to ₹20 000 for cross-practice by AYUSH practitioners, highlights the dangers of prescription of medication by unqualified persons. This is based on the belief that prescribing a drug without an understanding of the background, concepts and philosophy of the particular system of medicine and essential details of the therapeutic techniques increases the risk of harm to the patient. Cross-practice also has the effect of encroachment by (cross-)practitioners into the professional turf of practitioners of other systems of medicine. Two important facts to keep in mind related to this ruling are:

1. Allopathic practitioners should also be discouraged from prescribing medications and therapeutic procedures in AYUSH systems. Cross-practice by them is no less dangerous to patients and other practitioners than is cross-practice by non-allopaths.
2. AYUSH is not one system of medicine. It includes six (or seven, if yoga and naturopathy are to be counted as two distinct systems)