

Global Partners Commit to Advance Evidence-Based Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine

People seek traditional, complementary and integrative medicine for treatment, prevention, palliative care and rehabilitation.

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The first-ever [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023](#) closed on 18 August, with a strong commitment from the diverse and unique groups of partners and stakeholders to harness the potential of the evidence-based traditional, complementary and integrative medicine (TCIM) to improve progress towards universal health coverage and Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 for the health and well-being of people and the planet.

Health ministers from G20 and other countries, scientists, practitioners of traditional medicine, health workers and members of civil society from 88 countries participated in the Summit that took place in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India on 17 and 18 August 2023.

The Summit provided a platform for all stakeholders to share their unique experiences, best practices and ideas for collaboration. It included a diverse group of Indigenous Peoples from different regions of the world (e.g. Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Guatemala and New Zealand, among others) for whom many TCIM approaches play a fundamental role in not just health care, but also culture and livelihoods.

Building evidence and innovations

Preliminary findings from the WHO Global Survey on Traditional Medicine 2023 shared at the Summit indicate that around 100 countries have TCIM related national policies and strategies. In many WHO Member States, TCIM treatments are part of the essential medicine lists, essential health service packages, and are covered by national health insurance schemes. A large majority of people seek traditional, complementary and integrative medicine interventions for treatment, prevention and management of noncommunicable diseases, palliative care and rehabilitation.

Dr Bruce Aylward, Assistant Director-General, Universal Health Coverage, Life Course at WHO,

highlighted the need for a “stronger evidence base—a WHO priority—to enable countries to develop appropriate regulations and policies around traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine.”

The Summit also highlighted the important role that artificial intelligence can play to mine complex data available on traditional medicine and identify practices that show promise for further scientific evaluation. Eventually, and with ethical and equity safeguards, this evidence can translate into policies that accelerate the safe and effective use of traditional medicine into health systems.

Fostering collective action for healthier planet for healthier people

In closing the Summit, Dr Hans Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe said, “Together, we have gently shaken up the status quo that has, for far too long, separated different approaches to medicine and health. By taking aim at silos, we are saying we will collaborate all the more to find optimal ways to bring traditional, complementary and integrative medicine well under the umbrella of primary health care and universal health coverage.” He further added, “We have reiterated how crucial it is to get better evidence on the effectiveness, safety and quality of traditional and complementary medicine. That means innovative methodologies for assessing and evaluating outcomes.”

Dr Shyama Kuruvilla, Senior Strategic Adviser and lead for the WHO Traditional Medicine Global Centre, who also led the organization of the Summit said, “We learnt much about the existing policies, tools and practices. But it is clear we have a long journey ahead in using science to further understand, develop and deliver the full potential of TCIM approaches to improve people’s health and well-being in harmony with the planet that sustains us.”

The Summit’s summary document included conclusions and commitments from participants on wide-ranging issues, from global policy, leadership, innovation, health workforce, data, evidence, monitoring, regulation, legal frameworks and protecting biodiversity and sustainable development.

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