



WHO World Traditional Medicine Summit 2023 in Gujarat: A Turning Point for Traditional Medicine Worldwide

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Traditional medicine (TM) has a great attraction between people worldwide and this attraction is going to be more and more during last decades. It is happened because TM is a part of the culture of people who live in the countries they have their own advanced traditional medicines like China, Iran, India, Korea, Thailand, etc. or as a part of ethnopharmacology and culture of indigenous people and ethnic groups, in particular in the continent of America and Australia. Furthermore, TM has its own attraction among other countries as users of different kinds of imported TMs because the people can feel good making connection with these therapeutic approaches. But besides this people interest, there is a big controversy to approve TM as therapeutic methods among national health care systems worldwide, even in the countries that TMs are regulated and supported by the governments like China, India, Thailand and Iran. Although, many recent researches in last decades show that many traditional methods and remedies are effective and safe, this challenge in the medical society exist yet. It is due to the various approaches to the TM. There are many charlatans abuse the popularity of TM among the people with nonscientific, unsafe, and ineffective approaches; and making a big market playing with the peoples' lives and health. But, on another side, scientific approach to TM helps to find health and treatment opportunities of TM methods based on evidenced based medicine suitable for current society; and avoid any unsafe and ineffective ones. Finding Artemisinin

for treatment of Malaria based on Chinese Medicine teachings that lead to getting Noble Prize by Youyou Tu is one of the clear examples of the TM potentials for current medicine. In addition, by making scientific response to peoples' request about TM, non-scientific responses would be restricted and removed [1].

There is about 2 decades that World Health Organization (WHO) by founding the unit of Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine (TCI) and also issuing Strategy for Traditional Medicine has recognized TM and encouraged member countries to regulate TM and use and integrate it in national health systems [2]. But, it was not enough serious to have a good response to the challenge and controversy of applying TM in the medical societies.

Last year, in 2022, by starting to lunch the first WHO Global Center of Traditional Medicine in Gujarat, India, WHO showed that its approach to TM is going to be changed and aimed at paying more attention to TM opportunities, seriously. Also, it showed that the Government of India aims to play a key role in this regard, in alliance with WHO. The Government of India invests 250 million USD for founding this Global Center. April 21, 2022, Narendra Modi, the Prime minister of India and Tedros Adhanom Ghebteyesus, Director General (DG) of WHO attended in the opening ceremony of lunching this Center, in person, to show the importance of this project and also this alliance.

It takes only one year until the first WHO traditional

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medicine summit was held hosting by the Government of India in Gujarat on Aug. 17 and 18, 2023. DG of WHO and all of directors and authorities of this organization in addition to hundreds of guests, including national health care authorities, TM practitioners, professors, and politicians from all over the world participated in this world class event in India. The words of Tedros to country members in the opening ceremony is completely clear; he asks nations unlock power of TM and mentioned that TM is not for the past. Also, declaration of the summit (Gujarat Declaration), in 34 articles, announces to support TM action agenda in 8 subject categories, including:

- Health and well-being of people and the planet
- Global health leadership on traditional, complementary and integrative medicine
- Research and evidence
- Universal health coverage, primary health care and health systems
- Data, and routine information systems
- Digital health frontiers, including artificial intelligence
- Biodiversity and sustainability
- Human rights, equity and ethics [3]

This summit and Gujarat Declaration had a wide reflection in the medical scientific society [4]; The Nature published a report on the impact of this changing turn of TM by WHO [5]. Anyway, this summit in this class by the support of WHO was a turning point for TM and has a clear message to the world: the period of controversy for applying TM services into the health care systems is over. Applying TM is the sole solu-

tion for Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and WHO is completely serious in this regard. WHO seriously tries to encourage member countries to recognize TM services, fund investigations to make evidenced based TM, and support training TM practitioners. Finally, it seems that by this new approach the approved TM services had to be integrated into national health care systems worldwide soon.

Conflict of Interests

None.

Acknowledgments

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