

ASEAN+3 FRAMEWORK OF COOPERATION ON INTEGRATION* OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE/ COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE INTO NATIONAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

Introduction:

The theme for the 7th ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting, *Health Without Frontiers*, emphasises the imperative that addressing health issues and concerns should take into consideration the global situation and not just confined to national or regional scenarios. Thus ASEAN+3 cooperation in health, particularly traditional medicine/complementary and alternative medicine, will be an integral part of international cooperation in this important area. ASEAN+3 countries are blessed with an abundance of untapped variety of medicinal plants, newly discovered medicinal plants and other natural products, and a similar history of deep-rooted traditional medicine systems. As such, in order for our healthcare systems of today to reach beyond the frontiers, the existing health programmes and policies of ASEAN+3 countries will need to recognise the role and contribution of traditional medicine/complementary and alternative medicine as widely available and affordable sources of health care, and also as an alternative approach to allopathic health care. This will also require a provision of sharing various scientific evidence of traditional medicine/complementary and alternative medicine as in the case of allopathic medicine.

Aware that the terms “traditional medicine” (TM) is widely used in developing countries and also that “complementary and alternative medicine” (CAM) is increasingly used in many parts of the world, the WHO’s use of “TM/CAM” will be used as a guide in addressing the ASEAN+3 Framework’s priorities to integrate traditional, complementary and alternative medicine into national healthcare systems in the ASEAN+3 countries.

Vision:

We envision a cohesive and caring East Asian community where our peoples enjoy healthy and productive lifestyles, with the creation of optimum health resulting in an enhanced quality of life, and not merely free from diseases and ill-health. Our peoples would also be assured of integrated and supportive healthcare systems, where our rich resources of traditional and complementary medicine benefit our societies, regardless of race, religion, language, social and cultural backgrounds.

Guiding Principles:

To realise the above vision, future ASEAN+3 cooperation in TM/CAM will:

- a. Encourage the development of policies and regulatory framework to promote healthy and sustainable development of TM/CAM.
- b. Ensure safe, effective and rational use of quality TM/CAM in national healthcare systems, for health promotion, maintenance, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, where appropriate.

* Integrated medicine is practicing medicine in a way that selectively incorporates elements of complementary and alternative medicine into comprehensive treatment plans alongside solidly orthodox methods of diagnosis and treatment. *British Medical Journal* 2001; 322:119-20.

- c. Promote the rational use of TM/CAM such as registration and licensing of qualified practitioners and providers; proper use of products of assured quality; provision of scientific information and guidance for the public.¹
- d. Encourage active involvement of practitioners and providers (including TM/CAM), industries, non-profit and professional organisations and the private sector, as well as the communities and civil society organisations, as key partners with governments in the integration of safe, effective and quality TM/CAM into national healthcare systems.
- e. Take into consideration the differing stages of TM/CAM in the integration into healthcare systems of Member Countries, in the implementation of the Framework's priorities.

Mission:

Guided by the above, the mission for ASEAN+3 cooperation in TM/CAM will be to:

- a. Ensure that maximum opportunities are provided to develop proven safe, effective and quality TM/CAM and its rational use.
- b. Strengthen and further intensify ASEAN+3 cooperation around the integration of safe, effective and quality TM/CAM into the national healthcare systems.
- c. Enhance the awareness and knowledge of TM/CAM among the peoples of ASEAN+3 countries so that they are fully aware and can take advantage of the benefits offered by safe, effective and quality TM/CAM.

Strategies:

To realise this mission, the following strategies are proposed for ASEAN+3 cooperation in promoting integration of appropriate TM/CAM practices into national healthcare systems, and the promotion of acceptance by relevant stakeholders:

- a. Secure political commitment;
- b. Promote research and development on TM/CAM to support evidence-based practices;
- c. Negotiate and agree to a common set of priorities in defining a programme of work for ASEAN+3 countries to promote the integration of safe, effective and quality TM/CAM into national health systems;
- d. Strengthen the infrastructure and capacity of governments;
- e. Promote multi-sectoral and multi-level involvement;
- f. Identify priorities for technical assistance and regional cooperation;
- g. Develop ways to leverage and allocate necessary resources, including cost-sharing mechanisms and sustainable financing methods for new initiatives; and
- h. Ensure sustainable biodiversity, including the preservation of natural resources of TM/CAM.

¹ WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2002-2005

Priorities for Cooperation:

- a. Harmonising the TM/CAM terminology and its perception management, in order to establish agreed definitions for terms used for TM/CAM in the ASEAN+3 countries.
- b. Facilitate cross-country exchange of experience in promoting the integration of safe, effective and quality TM/CAM into the national healthcare system, and across other sectors;
- c. Create a programme of work on safe, effective and quality TM/CAM that builds on the priority activities of the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (SOMHD):
 - Develop an ASEAN+3 model for coordination of activities on TM/CAM.
 - Encourage development of integrative national policies on TM/CAM;
 - Support development of best practice approaches to TM/CAM regulation and legislation, training and education methods and research and development and its rational use in TM/CAM;
 - Help build capacity for human resource development, networking, infrastructure development for TM/CAM;
 - Encourage research to support evidence-based practices and research on technical standardisation in TM/CAM in ASEAN+3 countries.
- d. Increase access to appropriate technical assistance directly or in association with other international organisations, especially the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- e. Facilitate cost-sharing mechanisms and help to formulate sustainable financing methods for new initiatives.
- f. Develop policies and implement programmes. Initial priorities could include:
 - Registration of the qualified practitioners and quality products;
 - Training and accreditation of TM/CAM practitioners;
 - Regulation and legislation of TM/CAM;
 - Research and development to support evidence-based practices, and on technical standardisation; and
 - Information sharing and protection of intellectual property rights.
- g. Foster partnerships with international organisations (such as the WHO), other ASEAN Dialogue Partners (apart from China, Japan and the ROK), trans-national entities (such as the European Union), and other relevant stakeholders, to address specific issues that affect the integration of safe, effective and quality TM/CAM into national healthcare systems.

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