

WORLD HEALTH
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RESEARCH IN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

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Research in the field of traditional medicine has been included as a priority subject, in view of the 29th Regional Committee Meeting Resolution No.SEA/RC29/R11.

The Research Study Group that met in March 1978 identified broad areas of research and specific tasks which the Regional Office may consider. These were focused on primary health care.

As the Study Group had recommended that, as a first step, possible remedies that fall within primary health care be inventorized, the Regional Office utilized services of consultants to prepare these lists, among their other duties.

Regarding the suggestion made by the Research Study Group and ACMR the studies on "the utilization of traditional healers in primary health care" be promoted, the Regional Office has taken steps to keep Member Countries informed. Presently one research proposal in this particular field is under consideration.

In order to stimulate further development of collaborative research in traditional medicine, keeping in view the objective of Health for All by the Year 2 000, using primary health care as the key approach, a Consultative Meeting for "Development of Research Protocols on Priority Areas in Traditional Medicine" is scheduled to be held in New Delhi from 29 April to 1 May 1980. This meeting has the following two specific objectives:

1. to consider the current status of the development of research in traditional medicine as outlined by the Research Study Group on Traditional Medicine and South-East Asia Advisory Committee on Medical Research, and identify specific priority areas which would have an immediate utilization in the context of Health For All by the Year 2 000; and
2. to develop specific research protocols on the identified specific researchable priority areas for promotion of mission-oriented research.

Once the detail protocols are available, the Regional Office will, in consultation with the Governments, identify suitable institutions and scientists in Member Countries and promote the implementation of the studies.

In order to utilize the expertise available in this Region to the maximum in WHO's collaborative programmes in traditional medicine, the Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar, India, has been designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Traditional System of Medicine (Ayurveda) in 1979 for a period of three years. A token grant of US \$ 2 000 per year for a period of three years will be provided by the Regional Office to the University under Inter-country Research Programme. The terms of reference of the Centre are given below:

- (i) Listing those remedies that fall within the context of Primary Health Care;
- (ii) Assessing the efficacy, side effects and toxic effects of traditional remedies that could be used in primary health care, with their standardization and cost-effectiveness, using scientific parameters, in order that they could be recommended for widespread use;
- (iii) Identifying the essential properties and mode of action of efficacious remedies for possible synthesis of their active principles;
- (iv) Identifying those traditional remedies which are claimed and observed to be efficacious in the management of conditions for which modern medicine has still no definite answer, in order to evaluate the efficacy of such remedies, identify their active principles, toxic and side-effects, and incorporate these in the armamentarium of health care with international recognition, and carrying out studies on the utilization of traditional healers in primary health care.

The research project entitled "Research on Efficacy of Ayurvedic Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis" is continuing at the Ayurvedic Trust and Research Institute in Coimbatore, India.

At the recently held meeting of the "Directors of Medical Research Councils and Analogous Bodies and concerned research foci in Relevant Ministries", it had been emphatically stated that traditional medicine should be a most important area for WHO to promote technical cooperation among concerned countries of this Region. The Regional Office has already been supporting certain TCDC activities in this area and proposes to strengthen them.

The Regional Director recently visited Banaras Hindu University, Ayurvedic Departments, under the Institute of Medical Sciences and was much impressed by the quality and relevance of ongoing research projects in various fields of Ayurveda with particular emphasis on their application to primary health care. The Regional Office also proposes to collaborate with this institute in certain specific areas - relevant to Health for All Objectives.