

# A Review of "WHO Global Report on Traditional and Complementary Medicine 2019": Section 1: National Framework for Traditional and Complementary Medicine

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The World Health Organization (WHO) is halfway through implementing the *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023*, and as a result published the *WHO Global Report on Traditional and Complementary Medicine 2019*. The report focuses on "developing norms, standards and technical documents based on reliable information and data, to support Member States in providing safe, qualified and effective T&CM services and their appropriate integration into health systems for achieving universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals."<sup>1</sup>

I believe this report provides valuable information for policy-makers, health professionals and the public. I have hope that the contribution of T&CM (Traditional & Complementary Medicine) will be recognized as a fundamental aspect to maintaining our health and well-being.

The first section of this lengthy document, broken into eight parts, discusses national policy; national and state-level laws, or regulations; national programs; the national office for T&CM; the national expert committee; the national research institute; government and public research funding; and the national plan for integrating T&CM into health services. Although I will only discuss the first section in this month's issue, it is our goal to review the other sections in the future. To access the full report please visit:

<https://www.who.int/traditional-complementary-integrative-medicine/en/>.

## National Policy for T&CM

First, let's understand the definition of a national policy. The report states, "national policy should include a definition of the role of the government in the development of T&CM in the health care delivery system. Safety and efficacy may be stated as guiding principles, and the policy may also include vision and mission statements, as well as goals and objectives."<sup>1</sup>

The first milestone in this area happened between 1999 and 2005, when the number of *Member States* having a national policy doubled. The next time frame, 2005-2018, the number doubled again. The result—by 2018 a total of 98 countries, more than 50 percent of the 194 *Member States*, had adopted a national policy. Here is the current data captured during the most recent surveys conducted by WHO:

- South-East Asia region 91 percent
- African region 72 percent
- Eastern Mediterranean region 52 percent
- Western Pacific region 41 percent
- Region of the Americas 34 percent

- European region 28 percent

## Laws & Regs

Gradually increasing since 1999, 109 *Member States* report having national laws or regulations for T&CM. For many *Member States*, national laws and regulations have been integrated into the national drug or medicine laws. However, for the U.S. the T&CM legal framework is the responsibility of each state.

## National Programs for T&CM

Although many *Member States* reported having an exclusive program for T&CM, some have integrated their programs into long-term health plans. As of 2018, 79 out of the 194 *Member States*, or 40 percent, reported having a national program for T&CM. By region, South-East Asia reported the highest percentage of countries at 91 percent; the WHO African Region reported 72 percent; the Western Pacific Region 41 percent; the Region of the Americas 37 percent; the Eastern Mediterranean Region 19 percent; and the European Region 13 percent.

## National Offices for T&CM

"Any government-sponsored office that is officially mandated and in charge of issues related to T&CM,"<sup>1</sup> is defined as a national office for T&CM. Here is a breakdown of *Member States* (by region) with a national office:

- South-East Asia Region, 91 percent
- African Region, 83 percent
- Eastern Mediterranean Region, 62 percent
- Region of the Americas, 49 percent
- Western Pacific Region, 48 percent
- European Region, 28 percent

## An "Expert" Committee

An expert committee is defined as "a group of experts convened by the national government for the purpose of reviewing and making policy and technical recommendations."<sup>1</sup> As a percentage, the *Member States* in each WHO region that have an expert committee are as follows: South-East Asia Region, 91 percent; the African Region, 72 percent; the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 52 percent; the Western Pacific Region, 41 percent; the Region of the Americas, 34 percent; and the European Region, 28 percent.

## National Research Institutes

This section states, "Many of the Member States reported that they did not have a national research institute for T&CM but that they had research policies relevant to T&CM research."<sup>1</sup> Percentages for each WHO region who have national research institutes are as follows: South-East Asia Region, 64 percent; African Region, 62 percent; Eastern Mediterranean Region, 48 percent; Western Pacific Region, 33 percent; Region of the Americas, 26 percent; and the European Region, 21 percent.

## Government & Public Research Funding

A new question, introduced in WHO's most recent survey/study, asked *Member States* "whether they had government or public research funding for T&CM and, if so, what was the yearly

allocation from 2010 to 2016."<sup>1</sup> Only 61 *Member States*, across six WHO regions, provided a voluntary reply to the update survey.

Of the 61 that responded, only 12 *Member States* – Benin, Brazil, Chile, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Mali, Oman, Peru, Thailand and the U.S. confirmed government funding. In the U.S., the National Institutes of Health (NIH) shared that \$366 million was designated in 2016 to "Complementary and Alternative Medicine."

### Integrating T&CM Into Healthcare Policy

Another new question asked in the update survey, "whether Member States had an existing national plan for integrating T&CM into their national health service delivery." Again, only 61 *Member States*, across six WHO regions, provided a voluntary reply to the update survey. Of the 61 respondent *Member States*, 13 (Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Mali, Mexico, Nicaragua and Thailand) confirmed a national plan for integration.

On another note, if you have comments or ideas please communicate them, so we can create a strong and unified profession.

### Reference

1. WHO Global Report on Traditional and Complementary 2019. Geneva: *World Health Organization*, 2019.

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