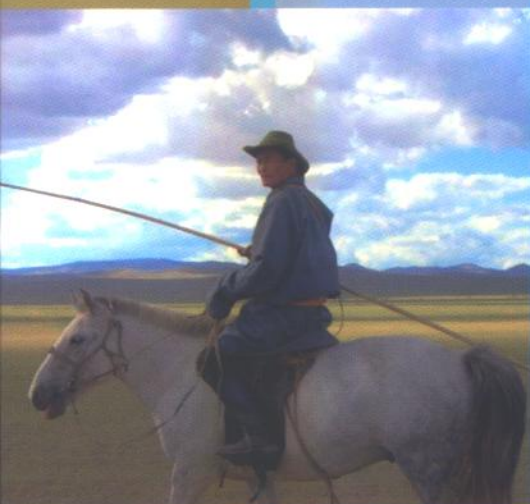


Ulaanbaatar

Mongolia



Report of WHO
interregional workshop
on the use of
traditional medicine
in primary health care

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia,
23 – 26 August 2007



World Health
Organization

Report of the WHO Interregional Workshop on the Use of Traditional Medicine in Primary Health Care

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Introduction

The Declaration of Alma-Ata, which was adopted at the International Conference on Primary Health Care (Alma-Ata, 6-12 September 1978) conceived the goal of “health for all” by the year 2000. The Declaration was particularly significant for traditional medicine practitioners and users since, despite the long history of traditional medicine, it was the first time that countries and governments had been urged to include it as an important component of primary health care in order to achieve the goal. As a result of this new commitment to traditional medicine, the WHO traditional medicine programme was established. The principles set forth in the Declaration continue to be relevant for WHO and its Member States.

Since the Declaration of Alma-Ata was adopted, 30 years ago, the use of traditional medicine has greatly evolved. A major component of this evolution has been the relatively new and growing trend for populations in high-income countries to use traditional medicine and complementary and alternative medicine to supplement existing allopathic health care. However, in many low- and middle-income countries, traditional medicine often represents the only affordable, accessible and available form of care, and therefore represents an essential part of the primary health care system. It has been reported that up to 80% of the population in some developing countries still continue to rely on traditional medicine for their primary health care needs.¹ Widespread use of traditional medicine often stems also from its association with a wider belief system that is culturally accepted and practised.

The year 2008 will be significant for WHO, as it is the 60th anniversary of WHO and the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata. Dr Margaret Chan, the Director-General of WHO, has set up six priorities for the WHO agenda for the next five years: Health and Development; Health and Security; Health Systems; Information and Knowledge; Partnerships; Performance. Increased access to primary health care is an objective that inspires work on health systems. Besides this, it also includes integrated service delivery, including self-care. In order to celebrate the two anniversaries and emphasize primary health care needs, the *World Health Report* in 2008 will focus on primary health care.

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