

Editorial

**Concluding Remarks of the Second International
Congress on
Traditional Medicine & Materia Medica,
4-7 oct. 2004, tehran, iran**

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Plants are one of the great resources of the world, and as humankind has evolved, socially, spiritually, and economically, we have found, collectively, a myriad uses for the plants around us. One of those uses is for the prevention, treatment, and cure of various disease states. Documented knowledge about such use dates back at least 4000 years, and several of the plant mentioned in the ancient texts remain important drug agents today.

Globally, there is now a tremendous interest in examining, scientifically, the basis for the use of various plants in health care systems, and in rationalizing their application through standardized preparations. As a consequence of this heightened interest, the *First International Congress on Traditional Medicine and Materia Medica* was held in Nov. 2000 in Tehran. It brought together a wide range of participants and offered numerous interesting presentations on the importance of traditional medicine and its evaluation. Following this success, the *Second International Congress on Traditional Medicine and Materia Medica* was held from 4 Oct. to 7 Oct. 2004 in Tehran. The organizers were the Traditional Medicine and Materia Medica Research Center (TMRC), Shaheed Beheshti University of Medical Sciences (SBMU), the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (IOMS) from Kuwait, World Health Organization (WHO), Herbal Medicine Research Center (HMRC) from Malaysia and the Iranian Association of Pharmacognosy (IAP).

The Congress program was developed to cover recent research advances and achievements, and future thinking in traditional medicine and materia medica. The Congress was an excellent opportunity to share innovative ideas and latest research findings. The result, as offered in the Abstracts from the meeting, was a meaningful intellectual exchange of ideas and concepts of contemporary research programs in many different countries around the world as each studies their medicinal plants to assure their safety and efficacy. Our deepest and most sincere thanks go out to the organizers of this meeting for the wonderful work that they have done to make this Congress possible, and for the generous gift of their unbridled hospitality so that all present felt welcome and appreciated. The following concluding remarks will inform you the future plans of the organizers.

Concluding Remarks:

Dear Colleagues, for the past three days we have joined here at the 2nd International Congress on Traditional Medicine and Materia Medica. Participants from 22 countries have gathered to listen, to understand, and to exchange ideas regarding the successes, the failures, and the visions for traditional medicine that we have respectively experienced. Unfortunately, representatives from four countries Algeria, Kuwait, Emirates, and Spain were unable to join us.

We have gathered for science and for social interaction. In the process we have reached new levels of understanding and respect for the diversity of our disparate, rich cultural heritages.

We have seen the importance of examining the very oldest texts of the ancient medical practitioners in order to generate new ideas for traditional medicine. We have seen and heard reports on the diversity and effectiveness of the many practices used in various cultures under the broad term Complementary and Alternative Medicine. The techniques of CAM are having a significant impact

on health care in many parts of the world, as this knowledge becomes more broadly available, and the effectiveness of the techniques and practices is being scientifically studied. We have heard of the importance of establishing relationships with local healers and health practitioners to access and accumulate knowledge and validate contemporary ethnomedical information.

We have seen the importance of and need for enhanced quality control of the plant materials used in Traditional Medicine and how this goal is being approached in different countries through the use of biomarker compounds or the identification of active principles.

We have heard of efforts to develop comprehensive centers of excellence to address the challenges of local health issues through the detailed investigation of the local flora and ethnomedical traditions.

We have heard about the variability of a given species of plant, the biological evaluation of plants to investigate their effectiveness, and the studies of their active constituents. There have been presentations on the efforts to take specifically active compounds and optimize their activity and reduce their toxicity.

Various participants have reported on the impact of new technologies, new bioassays, and new biologically active compounds. Many speakers have emphasized how important it is to reach across the disciplines and develop multidisciplinary collaborative research programs in order to address important social and health issues.

We have been enormously enriched by these presentations and will leave with much to think about. Collectively, I believe that each of us can agree that natural products, whether as single or multiple component traditional medicines, or as isolated or chemically modified active principles, must continue to be thoroughly investigated in order for them to play an important and sustainable role in global health care now and in the future.

It is important to indicate that there will be a 3rd International Congress on Traditional Medicine and Materia Medica. The site will be in Malaysia and it will be held about three years from now. By the time of that Congress, there will have been advances in all aspects of the sciences that impact on Traditional Medicine. We hope that each of us will be able to participate in that Congress and contribute our experiences with those new advances so that we can all benefit from them and integrate them as necessary into our research efforts.

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