

## TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN EGYPT

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## SUMMARY

Traditional medicine is defined as “the sum total of knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures that are used to maintain health, as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve or treat physical and mental illnesses”. Some examples of traditional medicine include Chinese Medicine, Ayurvedic medicine homeopathy, Kampo medicine and Naturopathy. “Alternative medicine” refers to medical treatments that are neither part of a country’s traditions nor its primary healthcare system. Others refer to alternative medicine as an “integrative” or “complementary” system since some countries use traditional and alternative medicine interchangeably. We have many examples of alternative medicine; including Acupuncture, Chiropractic medicine, herbal Medicine and Energy therapies. Ancient Egyptian medicine included medicinal plants, therapeutic nutrition, surgical and dental interference. Education of traditional Medicine includes health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being. Emphasis is placed on the need for traditional medicine to be evaluated, given due recognition and developed so as to improve its efficacy, safety, availability, and wider application at low cost. Research must continue worldwide to identify and improve the efficacy of the active principals of herbs both singly and in combination – from active ingredients, active fractions, and active herbal formulations. The use and practice of traditional, complementary and/or integrative medicine (TCIM) raises significant questions, poses many challenges and holds much potential for the broad fields of public health and health services research.

**KEYWORDS:** Traditional Medicine –Research –development -Services – Education.

Traditional medicine (TM) is defined as “the sum total of knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures that are used to maintain health, as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve or treat physical and mental illnesses”.<sup>[1]</sup>

Some traditional medicine systems are supported by huge volumes of literature and records of the theoretical concepts and practical skills; others pass down from generation to generation through verbal teaching. To date, in some parts of the world, the majority of the population continue to rely on their own traditional medicine to meet their primary health care needs. When adopted outside of its traditional culture, traditional medicine is often referred as “complementary and alternative medicine.” Among others, the most widely used traditional medicine systems today include those of China, India, and Africa.<sup>[2]</sup>

**Folk medicine:** Many countries have practices described as folk medicine which may coexist with formalized, science-based, and institutionalized systems of medical practice represented by conventional medicine.<sup>[3]</sup> Examples of folk medicine traditions are traditional Chinese medicine, traditional Korean medicine, Arabic indigenous medicine, Uyghur traditional medicine, Japanese Kampō medicine, traditional Aboriginal bush medicine, Native Hawaiian Lā‘au lapa‘au, and Georgian folk medicine, among others.<sup>[4]</sup>

**We have many examples of traditional Medicine. These include**

**1. Chinese medicine**

This system of healing, which dates back to 200 B.C., proposes that the body should balance two opposing yet inseparable forces: *yin* and *yang*. When the two forces are not balanced, the condition may lead to a disease because the vital energy known as *qi* does not flow freely

in the body. To restore balance and wellness, the Chinese medicine system uses a combination of natural products, massages, diet changes, or exercise to facilitate healing. Acupuncture and moxibustion—or the application of heat on acupuncture points—are also vital components in Chinese medicine.

## 2. Ayurvedic medicine

Ayurveda is considered as one of the oldest of the traditional systems of medicine (TSMs) accepted worldwide.<sup>[5]</sup> In India, where this healing system came from, *ayurveda* means “science of life.” Ayurvedic medicine is a natural treatment method that considers the body, mind, and spirit as having equal importance to one’s health. There is also a belief that yoga is one of the foundations of Ayurvedic medicine. Under the Ayurvedic medical system, primary treatment methods focus on a person’s diet and exercise, as well as the use of herbs, massage, meditation, and controlled breathing.

## 3. Homeopathy

The founder of homeopathy, Samuel Christian Hahnemann, was a German physician who developed the so-called principle of similars. Just like in human pathogenic trials, where if sick people receive drug treatments depending on their symptoms, the core framework of homeopathy involves matching the drug to the symptoms of the disease.

## 4. Kampo medicine

Kampo medicine refers to Japanese traditional herbal medicine. It is similar to Chinese medicine, with the Japanese symbol *Kam* means China, and *po* means medicine. As such, Kampo medicine involves the preparation of herbal medicines like licorice and ginseng to treat a wide range of health conditions, from allergies to high cholesterol levels and chronic hepatitis.

Kampo medicine also emphasizes identifying patterns of whole-body symptoms rather than thinking of diseases in terms of specific organs.

## 5. Naturopathy

Naturopathy, which translates to “nature disease,” originated from Europe, focusing on disease treatment and health restoration. This healing system also considers disease as a way for the body to show that its natural healing processes are changing. Aside from Europe, naturopathic medicine is also common in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. Methods of treatment center on modifying the diet, using nutritional supplements, herbal medicine, Chinese medicine, acupuncture, and hydrotherapy.

About Alternative Medicine; the term “alternative medicine” refers to medical treatments that are neither part of a country’s traditions nor its primary healthcare system. Others refer to alternative medicine as an “integrative” or “complementary” system since some countries use traditional and alternative medicine

interchangeably. We have many examples of alternative medicine; including the following

### 1. Acupuncture

Acupuncture is the technique of using needles on specific body points. An acupuncturist sticks thin, sterile needles into the skin to stimulate the body’s natural ability to heal itself.

Studies from the National Institutes of Health confirm that acupuncture is an effective treatment either on its own or in combination with conventional therapies in fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, and asthma, as well as stroke rehabilitation.

### 2. Chiropractic medicine

Chiropractic medicine is the technique of manipulating the spine to improve health without resorting to medication or surgery. This is due to the belief that, given the proper support or alignment of body parts, the human body can heal itself naturally. The term chiropractic came from Greek words, where *cheir* means “hands” and *praxis* means “practice.” Chiropractors use their hands and elbows to realign the spine for pain reduction and improved body function. Chiropractic medicine helps treat lower back pain, neck pain, and dizziness, among other related ailments.

### 3. Herbal medicine

Herbal medicine refers to the practice of using plant-based products to treat diseases and maintain overall health. Unlike prescription or over-the-counter drugs that may contain purified ingredients from plants, herbal medicines contain entire plants or plant parts. Some studies have shown the efficacy of certain herbs as treatment for allergies, chronic fatigue, and premenstrual syndrome. However, since herbal supplements fall under the category of foods instead of drugs, they may not be subject to testing, manufacturing, and labeling regulations.

### 4. Energy therapies

Energy therapies describe the focus on manipulating energy fields within the body. This type of health care taps into external energy sources like electromagnetics and human hands to deliver healing to the body. However, magnetic field therapies are not advisable for pregnant women and patients with cardiac device implants.

The healing method one chooses may be different from that of another person—it ultimately depends on the individual’s health perspective. Both traditional and alternative medicine are key aspects of the overall healthcare system, with the same goal of helping people to feel well.

However, it is best to consult a board-certified general medicine doctor to discuss medical conditions and their

symptoms in determining the most suitable treatment option for the patient.<sup>[6]</sup>

Orthodox Medicine is a system in which medical doctors and other healthcare professionals (such as nurses, pharmacists, and therapists) treat symptoms and diseases using drugs, radiation, or surgery.<sup>[7]</sup>

Ancient Egyptian medicine: The medicine of the ancient Egyptians is some of the oldest documented. From the beginnings of the civilization in the late fourth millennium BC until the Persian invasion of 525 BC, Egyptian medical practice went largely unchanged and included simple non-invasive surgery, setting of bones, dentistry, and an extensive set of pharmacopoeia. Ancient Egyptian Medicine used Honey and other 800 remedies. Egyptian medical thought influenced later traditions, including the Greeks. The ancient Egyptians were known to use honey as medicine, and the juices of pomegranates served as both an astringent and a delicacy." In the Ebers Papyrus, there are over 800 remedies; some were topical-like ointments and wrappings, others were oral medication such as pills and mouth rinses; still others were taken.<sup>[8]</sup> Female Doctors were recorded 2400 Years BC,<sup>[9]</sup> Institutions called (Houses of life) and many ranks and specialisations in medicine ; including Ophthalmologists, Gastroenterologists and dentists were discovered BC in ancient Egyptian Medicine.<sup>[10]</sup>



The Edwin Smith Papyrus documents ancient Egyptian medicine, including the diagnosis and treatment of injuries. Treatments consisted of ointments made from animal, vegetable or fruit substances or minerals.<sup>[11]</sup> There is evidence of oral surgery being performed as early as the 4th Dynasty (2900–2750 BC).<sup>[12]</sup>



This wood and leather prosthetic toe was used by an amputee to facilitate walking.<sup>[12]</sup>

Many shops in Egypt are licensed for dispensing herbal therapy since hundreds of years. Healers and now physicians are managing diseases which failed with Orthodox treatment; with good results. Department of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) was added to Medical and Clinical Research Institute of the National Research Centre, Cairo, Egypt; for evaluation and management of diseases using CAM modalities. Some clinics were initiated in National research Centre Hospital including Acupuncture, Herbal treatment and Therapeutic Nutrition clinics; since more than 25 years with good results.

Education of traditional Medicine includes health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being.<sup>[13]</sup> The traditional medicine practitioner, also called traditional healer, plays a pivotal role in the health care system.<sup>[14]</sup>

Presents practical guidelines support the need for a radical promotion and development of traditional medicine as one of the surest ways to achieve total health care coverage of the world population. Emphasis is placed on the need for traditional medicine to be evaluated, given due recognition and developed so as to improve its efficacy, safety, availability, and wider application at low cost. The WHO report, which records the views of experts representing all major systems of traditional medicine, first endorses the intrinsic value of this holistic approach to health care. The experts also note the need to make the wisdom of traditional healers, particularly concerning the use of medicinal plants, more generally available. The most extensive section of WHO report presents guidelines, supported by case studies from four countries, for integrating traditional medicine into national health care systems. It is to be noticed that a number of fundamental constraints to integration, including the need for preservation of the cultural heritage and the impossibility of reconciling such practices as exorcism with the principles of medical science. The report concludes with examples of current research designed to evaluate the efficacy of traditional medicines.<sup>[15]</sup>

Research must continue worldwide to identify and improve the efficacy of the active principals of herbs both singly and in combination – from active ingredients, active fractions, and active herbal formulations. While Western medicine currently employs pure, single compounds, either natural or synthetic, Complementary Medicine (CM) has long used multiple combinations of compounds in the form of processed natural products, primarily medicinal herbs, to treat and relieve the symptoms of many different human diseases. CM may have fewer and less severe side effects than single pure drugs, making CM especially attractive to the consumer. In effect, CM's focus on combination therapy does serve both ancient and modern theories. However, research using modern analytical and chemical techniques is needed to ensure efficacy and safety, to provide qualitative and quantitative analyses for dietary supplements, and to develop new, effective and safe world-class drugs. Drug design is an iterative process. Bioactivity-directed fractionation and isolation identify active natural compounds from single herbs or formulations. These lead structures can be chemically modified and improved through knowledge of structure–activity relationship, mechanism of action, drug metabolism, molecular modelling and combinatorial chemistry studies. Finally, efficacy and toxicity determination as well as clinical trials can contribute to the generation of new drugs from CM. To continue the legacy of CM, as well as the worldwide uses of other medicinal herbs, continued investigation of active formulations, bioactive fractions, and isolated compounds is critical to drug development in the 21st century.<sup>[16]</sup>

The use and practice of traditional, complementary and/or integrative medicine (TCIM) raises significant questions, poses many challenges and holds much potential for the broad fields of public health and health services research. Adams (2019) brings together leading international researchers with backgrounds and expertise across broad multi-disciplinary sub-fields including health social science, biostatistics, clinical pharmacology, implementation science, health geography and health economics. Contributors draw upon their research and experience to explain and review core research and practice issues on TCIM and its future development. Moreover, He offered a rounded understanding of the current and future possibilities associated with the TCIM-public health and health services research interface and provides an essential overview of the broad evidence-base emerging in this area of research, policy and practice. Proceeding further, He employed specific case studies, featuring particular medicines/therapies, and focusing upon a number of health care settings and environments including general practice, community pharmacy, hospital specialisms as well as community-based private practice and self-care.<sup>[17]</sup>

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