

An overview of traditional and complementary medicine initiatives and strategies

Geleneksel / tamamlayıcı tıp girişimlerine ve stratejilerine yönelik genel bir bakış

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ABSTRACT

The use of traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) in different societies around the world is increasing significantly. The World Health Organization (WHO) has presented reports on the revival of traditional medicine in different parts of the world. World Health Organization discusses the policies of countries regarding traditional and complementary medicine practices in the "Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023" which highlights the need to develop strategies for safe, respectful and effective delivery of traditional and complementary medicine practices. Homeopathy, yoga, osteopathy, cupping therapy, and leech therapy are examples of traditional and complementary medicine used in various countries. This study aims to give information about the traditional and complementary medicine practices in Turkey and some selected countries and to examine the policies related to these practices. Various recommendations have been made by researching training strategies, certification and insurance coverage for the traditional and complementary medicine practices of these countries.

ÖZ

Dünyada farklı toplumlarda geleneksel ve tamamlayıcı tıbbın (GETAT) kullanımı önemli ölçüde artış göstermektedir. Dünya Sağlık Örgütü, dünyanın farklı bölgelerinde geleneksel tıbbın canlanmasına yönelik raporları sunmuştur. DSÖ geleneksel ve tamamlayıcı tıp uygulamalarının, güvenli, saygılı ve etkili bir biçimde verilmesine yönelik stratejiler geliştirilmesi gerekliliğini vurgulayan, 2014-2023 "Geleneksel Tıp Stratejileri" raporu içerisinde ülkelerin geleneksel ve tamamlayıcı tıp uygulamalarına yönelik politikalara yer vermiştir. Homeopati, yoga, osteopati, kupa tedavisi, sütlük tedavisi gibi uygulamalar çeşitli ülkelerin kullandığı geleneksel ve tamamlayıcı tıba örnek teşkil etmektedir. Bu çalışma derleme Türkiye ve seçilmiş bazı ülkelerin geleneksel ve tamamlayıcı tıp uygulamaları hakkında bilgi vermek ve bu uygulamalara yönelik izlenen politikaları incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ülkelerin geleneksel ve tamamlayıcı tıp uygulamalarına yönelik eğitim stratejileri, sertifikalandırmaları ve sigorta kapsamını araştırarak çeşitli önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Key Words:
Traditional and Complementary
Medicine, Health Policy

Anahtar Kelimeler:
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, traditional medicine is either the mainstay of health service provision or serves the community as a complement to it. T&CM, which is used to describe indigenous health traditions in the world, has been increasingly involved in the work of medical researchers and increased public awareness

lately. Studies have documented that nearly half of the population of many industrialized countries use traditional/complementary medicine and this ratio increases up to 80% in many developing countries (1). T&CM is a part of healthcare services that are usually underestimated. It is applied almost everywhere in the world, and there is a heavy demand for these services. The quality, safety and effectiveness of these services have

been proven over time by country practices. It also helps individuals access healthcare. WHO reports that many countries use these services and in this sense, it would be beneficial for countries to develop a global strategy to promote appropriate integration, regulation and supervision (2). In its Traditional Medicine Strategy (2), WHO recommends that countries take steps to regulate T&CM practices and practitioners.

The aim of this review is to examine T&CM implementation policies of countries for traditional and complementary medicine treatments as well as examples of these practices by scanning the information in accessible studies.

TRADITIONAL AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

The terms “complementary medicine” and “traditional medicine” are interchangeably used in countries under the name “traditional medicine”. T&CM mostly refers to traditional medicine used by a country although it is not used in the traditions of the country (3). T&CM practices were inspired by ancient Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine practices. Herbal treatment methods were used by healers and shamans in old times and it appears to be a part of ancient medicine. Traditional and complementary medicine practices were developed thanks to practices such as homeopathy and osteopathy in the 19th century (4). The responsibilities of the “Office of Alternative Medicine” established by the U.S. government in 1993 have been increased and the office has been re-opened as the “National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine” in order to make up the lack of knowledge in the ever-increasing T&CM practices and literature. The purpose of establishing this unit is to examine the reliability and effectiveness of T&CM practices and to ensure that scientifically approved applications support traditional treatments (5).

TRADITIONAL AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE INITIATIVES

Traditional and complementary medicine plays an important role in meeting global healthcare needs (6). It is a known fact that traditional pharmaceutical systems have always played an important role in meeting global healthcare needs. Traditional medicine is the sum of knowledge, skills and practices that consist of theories, beliefs and experiences specific to various cultures that are used to prevent, diagnose, improve, and treat health in addition to maintaining it. It includes practices such as traditional Malay medicine, traditional Chinese

medicine, traditional Indian medicine, homeopathy and complementary therapies (7). Methods such as Ayurveda, acupuncture, phytotherapy, cupping therapy, osteopathy, homeopathy, larval practice, music therapy, reflexology and apitherapy are examples of T&CM (8).

Botanical drugs, which are one of the examples of T&CM and used in traditional medicine in China and India, have a long history in therapeutic administration. Traditional Chinese medicine and Avuryeda are considered to be two of the oldest medical systems. Medicinal plants are used as medical supplies in both systems (9). Acupuncture therapy is also of Chinese origin and it has been documented to be effective in cases such as musculoskeletal pain. Osteopathy is a manual therapy for the musculoskeletal system, which was found in Midwest, USA in the 19th century (10). Another method of T&CM is cupping therapy which is administered by vacuuming or incision on certain parts of the body to speed up blood circulation in the body (11). Homeopathy refers to treatment of a disease by giving light doses of substances that can reveal the symptoms of the disease in a healthy person (11). Traditional Medicine Strategies (2014-2023) published by the World Health Organization encourage countries to improve T&CM practices and strengthen modern health practices with T&CM (2).

Based on Turkish law, the Ministry of Health has put into effect the strategic plan prepared to ensure the integration of T&CM methods with the health system in an evidence-based manner. The legal basis has been established with the regulation “Traditional and Complementary Medicine Practices” and T&CM centers in about 20 universities have started to provide research, development and education services. Furthermore, approximately 500 T&CM units have been opened, 14 practices have been certified and an average of 5000 certificates have been issued (12).

The T&CM Initiatives and Policies in Turkey

The Traditional and Complementary Medicine Department was established by the Ministry of Health in 2012. The Ministry of Health is the main regulator of the T&CM practices. The Directorate General for Health Services is responsible for certification, authorization and supervision. The Turkish Medical and Medical Devices Agency under the Ministry of Health is responsible for the certification and supervision of all medical devices and products (13).

The Law on Organization and Duties of the Ministry of Health and Its Affiliates was published in the official gazette on 2 November 2011 and Clause (ğ) of Article 8 in this law includes the statement “making regulations

regarding traditional, complementary and alternative medicine practices and stopping unauthorized activities and promotions” which indicates that the job definition of the Directorate General for Health Services includes preparing and supervising legal regulations about T&CM practices (14).

The Draft Regulation on Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Medicine Practices was prepared by the Ministry of Health in 2014. Opinions of the relevant institutions on this draft were obtained by 28 February 2014 and the Regulation on Traditional and Complementary Medicine Practices came into force on 27 October 2014 (14). Practices such as leech treatment, cupping treatment, and maggot treatment were included in this regulation although they drew criticism (14).

Turkish Ministry of Health has called attention to the T&CM 2014-2023 strategy of the World Health Organization and focused on integration of traditional medicine with modern medicine. The aim of integration with the regulations is to provide practices whose safety and effectiveness have been proven for the society with the help of science (15, Date of Access: 29.12.2019). For this purpose, the “Regulation on Clinical Research of Traditional and Complementary Medicine Practices” was published in the official gazette on 09 March 2019 by the Ministry of Health (16, Date of Access: 29.12.2019). This regulation also provides supervision as a regulation covering the clinical research and locations of T&CM practices as well as the persons who will carry out the research. The main aim of Turkish Institute of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM Institute) under TUSEB (Turkish Directorate of Health Institutes) is to ensure that traditional and complementary medicine services are offered in integration with modern medicine in an evidence-based manner. For this purpose, the T&CM Institute carries out and supports interdisciplinary research and development activities with the support of many stakeholders. The basic philosophy of the T&CM Institute is based on the statement “traditional is as valuable as modern”. It aims to serve and contribute to the development of “Anatolian Medicine” in the light of science (17). T&CM application centers in the public and private sectors have been established with their own resources. Many research areas including T&CM practices are financed by private and public sector grants and funds (13).

The population in Turkey uses traditional and complementary medicine practices, but their percentages are not available. T&CM practices have been regulated under the new legal framework by the Ministry of Health since the adoption of the relevant legislation in 2014. This legal framework covers 14 practices: acupuncture, apitherapy, hypnosis, leech therapy, phytotherapy,

osteopathy, cupping therapy, reflexology, maggot therapy, ozone therapy, chiropractic, music therapy, homeopathy and prolotherapy (13).

The T&CM Initiatives and Policies in the World

Japan and China are two of the countries where traditional and complementary medicine is most commonly used. While Cuba uses T&CM practices within the socialist healthcare system, the United States uses them within the liberal healthcare system. Ethiopia, which is one of the poor countries, also sets an example (14). In China, valuable experiences have accumulated from different regions in traditional medical practices. Medicinal plants and their processed products are widely used in clinical applications under the guidance of the T&CM theory. The Chinese Pharmacopoeia (2015 edition) recorded a total of 644 medicinal plant species. According to available statistical data, drugs used by 44 minority ethnic groups are made from more than 5500 medicinal substances including herbs, animal products and some drugs with minerals. About 90% of the drugs are of plant origin (9). Moreover, around 95% of hospitals use modern medicine in combination with traditional medicine, and about 2500 hospitals are interested in traditional medicine. Both traditional medicine practices and modern medicine practices are covered by insurance in China (14).

In Japan, traditional drugs are divided into two groups: Kampo medicine and traditional medicine specific to Japan. Traditional medicine practices commonly used in Japan are acupuncture, judo therapy, cauterization and traditional Japanese massage (3). When we look at the regulations about T&CM in Japan, we see that allopathic physicians can administer traditional medicine including Kampo medicine according to the Medical Practitioners’ Act dated 1948. However, no restrictions have been found on the medical procedures that allopathic physicians can use in their practice. According to the Pharmacists Act No 146 dated 1960, a person must be qualified as a pharmacist in order to offer services related to traditional medicines. The Pharmaceutical Affairs Law in Japan does not distinguish between traditional and allopathic drugs. Both types of preparation are subject to the same regulation (3). In Japan, 84% of Japanese physicians use Kampo in daily practices. As of April 2000, the National Health Insurance payment list includes 147 prescribed Kampo formulas and 192 herbal ingredients used in prescribed kampo formulas (2).

Cuba uses a successful integrated system to incorporate existing traditional medicine and its practitioners into the biomedical system. It uses traditional and complementary practices as a drug and places them

in the World Health Organization category. Cuba has fully integrated T&CM drugs and services into its teaching and clinical practices within the framework of a strong regulation (18). Complementary treatments have been included in the national curriculum taught at medical schools in 16 provinces of Cuba since 1994, and each medical student makes a rotation in natural medicine including acupuncture, homeopathy and herbal medicine. A certificate of specialization in complementary medicine has been established and training is provided for hypnosis, meditation, massage, bio-energetic medicine etc. in order to specialize (18).

The United States is making progress in terms of national policies on traditional and complementary medicine. It was observed that national policies, laws and a regulatory system for T&CM were developed in the period between 2005 and 2018. The number of national programs and offices established for T&CM has increased (13). T&CM practices and providers are regulated at the state level. Regulations for T&CM providers have been assigned to 50 states. Consumer education projects and personal healthcare programs using T&CM are part of the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. T&CM services are paid through private health insurance determined by private insurance providers that are determined by individual insurance providers in some cases (13).

The vast majority of Ethiopia's population lives in rural areas where health services coverage is low and available public sector resources are stretched to the limits. In Ethiopia, due to the relatively low cost of traditional medicine and difficult access to modern health facilities, approximately 80% of the population uses traditional medicine (19). It has an integrated policy called the National Drug Policy of Ethiopia, which covers both herbal drugs and traditional drugs. Food, Medicine and Health Care Administration and Control Authority of Ethiopia under the Ministry of Health that is located in Addis Ababa is the national T&CM office. Draft regulations have been available at the national and provincial level for T&CM providers since 2009. There are regulations regarding herbal medicine suppliers and T&CM that are enforced at national and state level. T&CM providers work only in private sector clinics. A certificate issued by the national or state government is required for practice (13).

CONCLUSION

The use of traditional and complementary medicine has caused countries to recognize the role of T&CM practices in societies and adjust their health policies (20). Timmerman notes that policy choices are veiled by a lack of clarity in some cases, and uncertainty

of targets to be pursued and potential strategies can be contradictory (21). Despite such uncertainty and challenges, a strategy must be pursued for T&CM practices to improve patient safety among biomedical, political, and patient communities. Associations and new health policies should reflect the health system entirely in accordance with WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023. As T&CM policies develop further, countries all over the world face challenges while developing appropriate healthcare regulations that reflect contemporary practices or implementing existing laws (20). It is estimated that patients will benefit more from these services with T&CM practices covered by insurance. Therefore, governments should regulate state policies and legal infrastructure for these practices. The existence of regulations will ensure that T&CM practices are carried out within the framework of more reliable and evidence-based medicine (22). Furthermore, it may be recommended to provide training for physicians who will serve in the field of traditional and complementary health services, to certify the trainings in a manner that ensures international integrity, and to prevent unsupervised practices (22).

In conclusion, health policy challenges to T&CM practices affect existing health practices not only in Turkey but also in developed and developing countries. As this is a worldwide problem, it is thought that it may be beneficial for countries to work together to create appropriate health policies. Leach et al. (2018) states that T&CM practices should be included in the evidence-based medicine framework (23). It is envisaged that the services will be used more effectively if these practices are produced by reliable people. It is also thought that countries will contribute positively to health tourism if reliable and effective T&CM practices can be provided.

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