

Key facts

In the Western Pacific Region, **traditional and complementary medicine is used extensively for various health conditions**, but its practice varies widely across different countries.

Evidence over the years has shown the important role of traditional and complementary medicine in **improving quality of life**. Traditional medicine can play a particularly important role in the **health and well-being of ageing populations** and individuals with chronic conditions.

However, the **availability of and access to traditional and complementary medicine vary** across countries in the Region, and their evidence-based use is not fully optimized.

Traditional and complementary medicine has been used extensively in the Western Pacific Region to treat a variety of conditions, from minor ailments to life-threatening diseases. However, **its practice varies widely**, in keeping with the societal and cultural heritages of different countries, and it mostly **remains outside the health system**.

Traditional and complementary medicine services that are evidence-based, safe and of assured quality are valuable in contributing to a **holistic patient-centred approach** to achieve health and well-being. In the context of the rapidly ageing population and an increase in noncommunicable diseases in the Region, the promotion and development of traditional and complementary medicine can help bring **a shift from disease-oriented to person- and community-oriented approach to health**.

Research is also currently ongoing on the **role of traditional and complementary medicine in the management of infectious diseases** including COVID-19. Moreover, while the pandemic has resulted in the interruption of health services, it also represents an opportunity to introduce safe and evidence-based traditional and complementary medicine interventions to address the behavioural and psychosocial dimensions of poor health. These measures could improve the quality of life to overcome stress, fear, anxiety and depression among individuals and societies during the pandemic.

Therefore, health-care systems need to draw upon local resources and traditional practices that are close to the population and trusted and valued by communities, especially in those settings where health services are not readily available.

WHO response

WHO plays an important role in supporting Member States to harness the role of traditional and complementary medicine for health and well-being.

To help improve the access to safe, effective and culturally accepted services, especially for populations that are hard to reach, WHO developed the **Regional Framework for Harnessing the Role of Traditional and Complementary Medicine for Achieving Health and Well-being in the Western Pacific**.

The Regional Framework, developed in close collaboration with Member States, stakeholders, partners and experts, identifies **four strategic actions and key action areas** to achieve this vision, namely:

- promoting the role of traditional and complementary medicine for health and well-being in national policies;
- strengthening context-specific mechanisms to ensure safety, quality and effectiveness of traditional and complementary medicine services;
- improving coverage and equitable access to traditional and complementary medicine services; and
- supporting documentation, research and innovation for traditional and complementary medicine services.

As part of the Regional Framework, WHO will provide technical support to Member States to develop national policies and increase long-term investments in traditional and complementary medicine, as well as strengthen public and consumer education to help them make informed choices about their care.

