

The **second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine**, held in New Delhi, India, on 17–19 December 2025, has the theme of “Restoring balance: The science and practice of health and well-being”. The Summit aligns with the [Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034](#), which recognizes Traditional Medicine as a living science that contributes to universal health coverage, health equity and sustainability. The Summit serves as a global platform to accelerate implementation of the new strategy, foster partnerships, and translate pledges and commitments into concrete action.



For more information, contact: [tmcentre@who.int](mailto:tmcentre@who.int)

### Parallel session 1.A

## Traditional Medicine in the continuum of knowledge in health

Plenary 1 and associated parallel sessions will serve to anchor the Summit’s vision of balance across body, mind, community and the planet, as aligned with the Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034 and global declarations.

This parallel session explores the role of Traditional Medicine within the broader continuum of health knowledge – examining how such knowledge has evolved and continues to evolve over time and how equitable, non-exploitative access to it might be strengthened. The session will look at Traditional Medicine as a diverse, living system that continues to adapt in relation to biomedicine. The session will explore the barriers and enablers to recognizing plural evidence models, consider what traditional health knowledge might mean when viewed through both ancestral and contemporary lenses, and trace how certain knowledge systems came to dominate global health while others were marginalized. As importantly, the session will consider how technology and innovation can be used to restore and expand access to diverse knowledge systems and reflect on how digitization and other tools can support the acknowledgement and encouragement of Traditional Medicine knowledge without promoting its assimilation or appropriation.

### Rationale

Traditional Medicine systems – including Indigenous and local health knowledge – represent a living continuum of understanding about health, balance and interdependence (1). These systems integrate experiential learning, oral traditions, cultural practices and scientific reasoning to sustain well-being within communities and ecosystems (2–4). The concept of a continuum of knowledge in health recognizes that knowledge is collective, relational and adaptive, continuously shaped by social interaction, observation and reflection (2). A recognition of a continuum of knowledge invites humility and pluralism, acknowledging that no single epistemology holds exclusivity over truth or evidence. Health knowledge evolves through sociotechnical adaptation and is co-produced within dynamic cultural contexts (3,4). However, historical and structural forces – including colonization, scientific hierarchies and institutional exclusion – have disrupted this balance, marginalizing many ancestral and community-based systems (5,6). Restoring this equilibrium requires not only recognition but collaboration and co-creation among diverse knowledge holders. Aligned with the Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034, this session explores pathways to renew epistemic balance, foster intercultural dialogue and integrate ancestral wisdom into contemporary paradigms for human and planetary health and well-being.

### Objectives

- Understand how the continuum of knowledge originated, evolved and adapted, and why some strands were preserved while others were marginalized or erased.
- Identify what is needed to ensure diverse knowledge traditions are recognized and valued today.
- Highlight opportunities for integrating diverse ways of knowing into contemporary health frameworks via platforms for knowledge sharing, such as those enabled by digitization.

## Guiding questions

1. What is the continuum of knowledge on health? What does it encompass, where did it originate, and why has certain knowledge been valued and institutionalized while other knowledge has been marginalized or erased?
2. What challenges and opportunities does technology – such as digitization – bring to both the continued evolution of and improved access to Traditional Medicine within the continuum of knowledge?

## Session format

The proposed session format begins with opening remarks on the role of Traditional Medicine in the continuum of knowledge, followed by a keynote speech on what is “knowledge on health” and introducing the Traditional Medicine Global Library. The remainder of the session will involve a panel discussion designed around two questions: (1) What constitutes “knowledge on health” across civilizations, how has this evolved, and why has certain knowledge been valued and institutionalized, while other knowledge has been marginalized or erased? (2) How can knowledge on Traditional Medicine – and plural evidence models more generally – be made more accessible to people without leading to assimilation or appropriation? The panel discussion will be followed by a Q&A with the audience. Panellists will conclude the session by proposing one or two actionable strategies to recognize and value diverse knowledge traditions and to ensure their integration into contemporary health frameworks.

## References

---

1. AERAS. A rhizomatic review of traditional medicine: Evidence across four realms. Geneva: World Health Organization. Forthcoming.
2. Caspi Y. A continuum theory for social work knowledge. *J Sociol Soc Welf.* 1992;19. doi:10.15453/0191-5096.2034.
3. Sittig DF, Singh H. A new sociotechnical model for studying health information technology in complex adaptive healthcare systems. *Qual Saf Health Care.* 2010;19:i68–i74. doi:10.1136/qshc.2010.042085.
4. Thomas E, Engesser MN. Socialização de Conhecimentos para a Inovação: O Nível de Compartilhamento com Empresas Parceiras. Encontro de ANPAD. 2012 ([https://arquivo.anpad.org.br/diversos/download\\_zips/63/2012\\_EOR959.pdf](https://arquivo.anpad.org.br/diversos/download_zips/63/2012_EOR959.pdf)).
5. Waldman SA, Terzic A. Clinical and translational science: From bench-bedsite to global village. *Clin Transl Sci.* 2010;3:254–257. doi:10.1111/j.1752-8062.2010.00227.x.
6. Global traditional medicine strategy 2025–2034. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2025 (Health Systems Performance Assessment (HSPA) toolkit for universal health coverage).