

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.



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## Parallel session 2.B

### Research methodologies and applications

Plenary 2 and associated parallel sessions will focus on how advancing research, innovation and investment in Traditional Medicine can bring balance for both people and planet, as aligned with the Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034 and global declarations.

This parallel session will examine methodological frameworks and innovative research approaches that are paradigmatically aligned with Traditional Medicine systems of knowledge and practice. It will cover conventional and innovative methods and strategies across a range of research paradigms. This encompasses rigorous and real-world focused clinical trials (including multimodal and whole systems designs with dual Traditional Medicine and biomedical diagnoses); transdisciplinary preclinical designs focused on complexity and synergy; social science and implementation studies using a range of theoretical approaches; and groundbreaking decolonial Indigenous methodologies. Discussions will address barriers and enablers for research production and application, as well as ethical considerations and strategies to combat misinformation. The session aims to equip researchers, practitioners, decision-makers and other interest-holders with robust, culturally appropriate and scientifically credible inquiry methods, as well as effective modes of translating evidence in policy and practice. This session aligns with Strategic Objective 1 of the Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034.

### Rationale

Decades-long UN and WHO mandates have advocated for the evidence-informed integration of Traditional Medicine into national health systems. The Astana Declaration (2018) recognized the importance of including traditional as well as scientific knowledge to strengthen primary health care, and the Gujarat Declaration (2023) called for appropriate use of existing and new research, evidence syntheses, knowledge translation principles and capacity strengthening to generate and use Traditional Medicine and Indigenous knowledge (1,2). Existing WHO guidance for evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) emphasizes “that research evidence is often but one of several factors influencing policy-making processes”, along with the “values” of citizens and “needs” of diverse interest-holders (3). However, EIDM frameworks, rooted in the legacy of evidence-based medicine, have historically prioritized biomedical epistemologies (4). A range of challenges thus limit adequate integration of Traditional Medicine into health systems, including a lack of attention to knowledge diversity and epistemic justice (4,5). A key challenge is that research methods must be relevant to what is being studied, and Traditional Medicine approaches take many forms and are rooted in paradigms that differ from biomedical knowledge (6). Though Traditional Medicine knowledge translation frameworks have been developed, such as the CITE Framework (7), they have focused on textually codified rather than on orally transmitted Indigenous knowledge systems (5). WHO has commissioned a comprehensive study to map the range of Traditional Medicine research approaches globally, with reference to paradigmatic considerations that have been under-documented to date (6). Another recent WHO-commissioned study has explored barriers and enablers for research production and application, highlighting the need for credible inquiry methods that exemplify paradigmatic alignment with Traditional Medicine knowledge systems (8). To advance decision-making in equitable ways that support health for all, in the real-world contexts of knowledge diversity, it is critical that existing EIDM methodologies be adapted to respectfully account for Traditional Medicine principles and knowledge, guided by evidential pluralism and epistemic justice (4,9,10).

## Objectives

- Map the spectrum of research paradigms, methodological and theoretical frameworks, designs and strategies used in Traditional Medicine across the globe.
- Examine barriers to and enablers for the production of Traditional Medicine research and its application into policy and practice.
- Discuss the importance and implications of aligning Traditional Medicine knowledge paradigms with appropriate research approaches.
- Advance methodological innovations and appropriate evidence-informed decision-making parameters for policy and practice.

## Guiding questions

1. **Rigour and relevance:** How can methodological frameworks and study designs be strengthened to ensure scientific rigour while remaining true to the principles and practices of Traditional Medicine?
2. **Innovation across paradigms:** How can innovations in Traditional Medicine research across paradigms ensure compatibility with Traditional Medicine knowledge systems and practice characteristics, health system needs and cultural diversity?
3. **Barriers, enablers and ethics:** What are the key barriers to and enablers for the production of rigorous Traditional Medicine research and its application into policy and practice, including ethics, data access and community engagement?
4. **Knowledge translation and decision-making:** Which theories, frameworks, models and tools most effectively bridge the gap between evidence generation and evidence-informed decision-making in Traditional Medicine research and policy?
5. **Science communication and misinformation:** How can science communication strategies promote informed health choices and counter misinformation or misrepresentation of Traditional Medicine research evidence?
6. **Monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement:** How can monitoring and evaluation strategies be innovatively developed and ensure continuous improvement of paradigmatically aligned research approaches, including indicators?

## Session format

The proposed session format begins with a brief welcome, followed by a keynote presentation summarizing the results of the WHO-commissioned scoping review of Traditional Medicine research methods and mixed-methods systematic review of enablers and barriers. This will be followed by a series of expert presentations on Indigenous research methodologies, approaches for evaluating intervention complexity and combating misinformation, paradigmatically aligned research designs, enablers of and barriers to Traditional Medicine research, and advancing epistemic justice through a trifocal model of evidence. The session will conclude with a discussion panel and audience Q&A, engaging in-person and online participants, with rapporteurs synthesizing insights to support an inclusive and action-oriented dialogue on Traditional Medicine research methodologies and applications. Panellists will close the session by outlining key action points to equip researchers, practitioners, decision-makers and other interest-holders with robust, culturally appropriate and scientifically credible inquiry methods, and to strengthen the translation of Traditional Medicine evidence into policy and practice.

## References

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