

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.E

Impact of meditation on health – restoring balance from individual to social and ecological well-being

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 aims to advance global understanding of the scientific and practical value of meditation as a key component of health and well-being. It will synthesize the latest neuroscientific, clinical and public health evidence on meditation; explore its impact on mental, physical and social well-being across the life course; and highlight opportunities to integrate meditation into policy, practice and education. By bringing together researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, the session will identify pathways for institutionalizing meditation within national health systems, community programmes, workplaces and schools. It will promote informed recommendations for policy integration, strengthen cross-sector collaboration and identify research and practice gaps to guide future investment, innovation and partnerships in this evolving field.

Rationale

A recent global study by Ipsos revealed that mental health is now the foremost health concern worldwide (1). WHO estimates that depression and anxiety alone cost the global economy US\$1 trillion per year in lost productivity (2). In an era marked by geopolitical tensions, economic instability and rapid technological change, the need for effective, accessible and sustainable mental health interventions has never been greater (3). Meditation has emerged as a powerful and accessible tool for enhancing mental well-being and resilience (4,5). It fosters awareness that promotes social cohesion and balance with the natural environment (4–6) and is associated with measurable benefits across mental, emotional and physiological domains (4,5,7–10). Studies show that long-term practice can induce structural brain changes, reduce inflammation and improve self-reported health (7,8). Reflecting this evidence, several national health systems have formally integrated meditation or mindfulness into policy and service delivery (11–13). Rooted in ancient traditions and validated by neuroscience and psychology, meditation bridges traditional knowledge and modern science (7,9,10).

Objectives

- Synthesize the latest neuroscientific, clinical and public health research on how meditation affects the brain, body and behaviour, with emphasis on stress reduction, emotional regulation, ageing and cognitive resilience.
- Demonstrate how meditation enhances individual, social and ecological well-being, drawing on real-world examples.
- Share experiences from communities and countries where meditation has been integrated into public policy, health systems, school curricula and workplace wellness, highlighting enablers for institutional adoption.
- Explore how meditation can be scaled as a low-cost, culturally adaptable and globally accessible intervention for mental, physical and social well-being.

- Encourage coordinated investment in science, implementation research and policy frameworks to advance meditation as an integrated component of health systems.

Guiding questions

1. **Scientific understanding:** How can current research reframe meditation from a spiritual tradition to a scientifically validated approach to mental health?
2. **Health impact:** How does meditation contribute to individual, social and ecological well-being, including resilience, prevention and healthy ageing?
3. **Integration into systems:** What factors enable or hinder the integration of meditation into national health systems, Traditional Medicine programmes, public policy, education and workplace wellness?
4. **Equity and access:** How can meditation interventions be made inclusive, culturally relevant and accessible to all populations?
5. **Call to action:** What research priorities, implementation strategies and policy investments are needed to scale meditation as an evidence-based, low-cost strategy for mental health and social cohesion?

Session format

The proposed session format opens with brief remarks from the facilitator followed by a series of short presentations by experts who will explore evidence-based approaches for mental health and resilience; national policy and social innovation models; mindful ageing and health system integration; neuroscientific research using advanced brain imaging methods; mindfulness in daily health promotion; and the institutionalization of meditation and mind–body therapies in academic and workplace settings. The session will conclude with a panel discussion, bringing all speakers into dialogue, connecting insights across science, policy, leadership and practice while inviting questions from the audience. Panellists will close by outlining one or two specific, measurable commitments related to research priorities and collaboration, implementation strategies or policy investments, directly reinforcing the session’s “call to action” objective.

References

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