

GUEST EDITORIAL

SPECIAL ISSUE ON IMPROVED TRADITIONAL MEDICINE RESEARCH.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Editor in Chief of Health Science and Disease for the invitation to do the editorial for this special edition of the journal that has been dedicated to improved traditional medicine research. Traditional medicine refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being. Countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America use traditional medicine (TM) to help meet some of their primary health care needs. In Africa, up to 80% of the population uses traditional medicine for primary health care. In industrialized countries, adaptations of traditional medicine are termed "Complementary" or "Alternative" (CAM).

In the last decade traditional medicine has become very popular in Cameroon, partly due to the long unsustainable economic situation in the country. The high cost of drugs and increase in drug resistance to common diseases like malaria, bacterial infections and other sexually transmitted diseases has caused the approach to alternative traditional medicine as an option for concerted search for new chemical entities (NCE). The World Health Organisation (WHO) in collaboration with the Cameroon Government has put in place a strategic platform for the practice and development of TM in Cameroon. This platform aims at harmonizing the traditional medicine practice in the country, create a synergy between TM and modern medicine and to institutionalize a more harmonized integrated TM practices in Cameroon.

The government of Cameroon saw the need for research in TM and created the schools of pharmacy in some of its State universities. The vision of these schools is focused on research and development of innovative therapeutics of improved traditional medicine and the new chemical entities from the rich cocktail of the Cameroonian flora. These schools also focus on the research and development and the institutionalization of traditional medicine, the identification, classification, conservation and

valorisation of medicinal plants. Lastly the pharmacy schools have as mission to train traditional practioners and the capacity building of young scientist in medical plant research.

The research on improved TM is geared towards the scientific validation of medicinal plants and includes the elucidation of new molecular scaffolds, lead molecule optimization and a system biology approach to new chemical entities and target identification and validation.

The road map for traditional medicine in Cameroon is aimed at promoting a synergy between scientist and herbalist towards the scientific validation of medicinal properties of plants. This calls for the design of experimental protocols aimed at finding scientific evidence efficacy which starts from the method of preparation and administration of medicines used by traditional healers. Extensive interaction with the traditional healers is undertaken to understand the disease being treated and to identify the therapeutic concept. This special edition of HS&D is dedicated to showcase some of the studies within the framework of traditional medicine research and reviews that highlights important medicinal plants and the importance of traditional medicine practice in Cameroon and finally the collaboration Network between scientists of the Ethnopharmacology and Ethnobotany Society of France with Prof Motte Elizabeth as Focal point and the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Traditional Pharmacopoeia of the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, University of Yaoundé 1 . I hope this special edition will add more information to the domain of traditional medicine practice and the strategies or ways towards their improvement.

Charles FOKUNANG (PhD, CBiol, MIBiol)
Toxico-Pharmacogenomist
Clinical Research Consultant
Vice Dean in charge of Programmes and
Academics Affairs
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Bamenda, Cameroon