Meeting Report

Traditional Arabic and Islamic Medicine (TAIM) now joins TCM CAM, Kampo and Ayurveda

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The Galilee Society Regional Research and Development Center, in cooperation with the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature (APN) and the Antaki Center for Herbal Medicine Ltd, and sponsored by Sprunk-Jansen Wellbeing, Denmark; Delass Co and the World Health Organization (WHO) organized a three day conference in the field of ‘Traditional Arabic and Islamic Medicine’ (TAIM). The conference was held from August 8 to 10, 2007 in Amman and discussed issues related to Arab and Islamic medicine, highlighting traditional uses of herbs, agricultural research, pharmaceutical compounds and remedies of human diseases as well as medicinal products and marketing. The organizing committee included: Ms Razan Zuayter, Dr Hassan Azaizeh, Prof. Ghassan Abu-Hijleh, Prof. Rachid Chemli, Dr Omar Said, Dr Adnan Badwan, Prof. Rachid Soulimestone, Dr Isam Sabbah, Mr Adel Shoubaki, Eng. Mohamad Qasim, Dr Hashem Taha and Dr Rasheed Al Najab. The scientific committee included: Prof. Bashar Saad, Prof. Edwin Cooper, Dr Hassan Azaizeh, Prof. Mohammad Ali-Shtayeh, Prof. Rachid Chemli, Dr Adnan Badwan, Dr Omar Said and Prof. Rachid Soulimestone. The conference consisted of seven scientific sessions chaired by: Dr Hassan Azaizeh, Dr Asem Shehabi, Prof. Mohammad Ali-Shtayeh, Prof. Rachid Soulimestone, Prof. Ghassan Abu-Hijleh, Ms Razan Zuayter and Dr Adnan Badwan. Four poster sessions chaired by: Dr Najat Saliba, Dr Mohamed Al-Sagher, Prof. Zohra Kaid-Omar Mesri and Prof. Aouni Mahjoub. Four posters were selected as the best presentations and gifts were presented to the Authors. The poster titled: ‘The anti-psoriatic effects of Hypericum triquetrifolium and Peganum harmale derived factors are mediated by inflammatory and anti-inflammatory cytokines’, presented by the students Bernadette Soudah-Abo Atta, Abed Salam Kmeel and other Authors from the Galilee Society R&D Center, Shefa-Amr 20200 and the Faculty of Allied Medical Sciences, Arab American University, Jenin, Palestine, respectively, was selected as a best poster. In addition, the poster titled: ‘Compound X purified from the Lebanese endemic plant TF blocks the invasive potential of adult T-Cell leukemia cells through the endothelium’, presented by the students Mira Chaar, Myriam Khoury and other Authors from the American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon was selected as another best poster.

During the conference, more than 35 presentations were given by speakers and more than 65 papers were presented as posters during the conference. The submitted Abstracts were from 15 countries including: Algeria, Denmark, Egypt, France, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Switzerland, Tunisia, Uganda and the USA. More than 12 presentations were selected as the best lectures and full articles will be published in eCAM Journal and a French review Journal. The next conference will be within 2 years, in a location yet to be decided.

The conference accomplished most of the objectives including: (i) establishing a network and website for the scientists and all stakeholders that have an interest in TAIM, in order to revive the heritage of traditional Arabic and Islamic medicine; (ii) revive the heritage of...
TAIM, in order to present it in a location (Amman, Jordan), whereby as many Arab and Muslim scientists could participate. The conference was held in an Arab country, in order to release it from the political restrictions of the Middle East; (iii) revitalize this heritage as a scientific discipline and raise awareness of TAIM through the participation of more than 150 scientists, ethnopharmacologists and stakeholders; (iv) explore the economic and sustainability aspects of this heritage and encourage investment, in order to develop pharmaceutical products based on this culture. This was achieved through the attendance of stakeholders and company representatives from the Middle East and Europe and (v) Increase the number of practitioners and quality of the practice of TAIM by training new and existing practitioners. This will be accomplished through meetings and cooperation among the different groups based on the official and unofficial discussions held during the conference.

Ethnopharmacology of Medicinal Plants

The Ethnopharmacology of Medicinal Plants sessions began with four opening lectures during which ethnopharmacology data from northern Africa and eastern Mediterranean region were presented. According to these presentations, historical and current studies indicate that the Eastern region of the Mediterranean has been distinguished from other regions by a rich inventory of complementary alternative medicine (CAM), in particular herbal medicine. Data collected from several surveys and studies indicate that there is a flourishing and well-developed trade of herbs. In addition, some of these herbs are rare or even endangered species. Unfortunately, with regards to the status of the knowledge of herbalists, herbal medicine in our region is mostly prescribed symptomatically by ethnopharmacologists—based on signs and symptoms alone, rather than of a full understanding of the underlying disease. In some cases, herbs used today may not even correspond to the plants described originally in the old literature, as the former are cultivated from herbs that went through different breeding procedures throughout several centuries.

Professor Edwin L. Cooper, vividly and scientifically, illustrated the main aims of *Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* (*eCAM*) journal, and encouraged everyone attending to contribute to the publishing of scientific-based evidence on homeopathy and other complementary/alternative medical approaches. He described how the journal was born in the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) sustained by important collaboration in Kanazawa, Japan and published by Oxford University Press. All stages of the publications were indicated and the scientific rigor used in reviewing was described. Professor Cooper illustrated the electronic submission of all contribution types and hastened peer reviewing that results in free access to electronic publication before the appearance of a hard copy issue. The *eCAM* journal exists in all main scientific databases.

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