



RESEARCH GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING THE SAFETY AND EFFICACY OF HERBAL MEDICINES



World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Western Pacific
Manila

The World Health Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations with primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. Through this organization, which was created in 1948, the health professions of some 180 countries exchange their knowledge and experience with the aim of making possible the attainment by all citizens of the world by the year 2000 of a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life.

By means of direct technical cooperation with its Member States, and by stimulating such cooperation among them, WHO promotes the development of comprehensive health services, the prevention and control of diseases, the improvement of environmental conditions, the development of human resources for health, the coordination and development of biomedical and health services research, and the planning and implementation of health programmes.

These broad fields of endeavour encompass a wide variety of activities, such as developing systems of primary health care that reach the whole population of Member countries; promoting the health of mothers and children; combating malnutrition; controlling malaria and other communicable diseases including tuberculosis and leprosy; coordinating the global strategy for the prevention and control of AIDS; having achieved the eradication of smallpox, promoting mass immunization against a number of other preventable diseases; improving mental health; providing safe water supplies; and training health personnel of all categories.

Progress towards better health throughout the world also demands international cooperation in such matters as establishing standards for biological substances, pesticides and pharmaceuticals; formulating environmental health criteria; recommending international nonproprietary names for drugs; administering the International Health Regulations; revising the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems; and collecting and disseminating health statistical information.

Reflecting the concerns and priorities of the Organization and its Member States, WHO publications provide authoritative information and guidance aimed at promoting and protecting health and preventing and controlling disease.

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FOREWORD

Herbal medicines have been used for thousands of years. The practice continues today because of its biomedical benefits and place in cultural beliefs in many parts of the world. The economic reality of the inaccessibility of modern medication for many societies has also played a major role in the broad use of herbal medicines.

The World Health Organization has recognized the contribution and value of the herbal medicines used by a large segment of the world's population. A growing interest in usage has created the need for greater precision in preparation and evaluation and has stimulated research into herbal medicines' various uses and applications.

The Western Pacific Region has a rich tradition of preparation and use of herbal medicines. In 1992, the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific invited a group of experts to develop criteria and general principles to guide research work on evaluating herbal medicines. These guidelines have been prepared for research on different forms of herbal medicines, including those in traditional use. Basic scientific principles as well as any special requirements related to the use of herbal medicines in traditional practice have been incorporated in these guidelines.

These guidelines are published to support the application of evaluation principles by modern science to a tradition of herbal medicine that is still extremely vibrant and of growing interest throughout the world.



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