

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

10th Report of the JSC on Social Services and Public Administration on an Inquiry into the Potential benefits of Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the treatment of Non-Communicable diseases affecting the Trinidad and Tobago Population

Request for Written Response on the Findings and Recommendations of the subject at caption

Objective 1: To examine the views of medical professionals on the potential benefits of non-traditional forms of treatments such as acupuncture and Ayurveda treatments in the treatment of non-communicable diseases

A. That the MoH, in collaboration with the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago (MBTT) survey the registered members of the Board, working in the private and public sector, on their attitudes towards non-conventional medical treatments. The survey should probe:

- i. Practitioners' actual experience with prescribing Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) treatments;**
- ii. Qualifications and/or continuing education in CAM;**
- iii. Reasons for prescribing CAM or abstaining from prescribing CAM to treat NCDs;**
- iv. The courses of treatment utilized when prescribing CAM to treat NCDs. This should include the techniques utilizing locally developed substances/products and seek to identify said substances/products;**
- v. Credible and documented evidence of the benefits and/or drawbacks of such treatments for patients. This data is expected to expand the existing knowledge**

base on the attitudes of practitioners towards the potential benefits of CAM in treating NCDs (Bahall and Legal 2011).

The Ministry of Health will collaborate with the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago to design, plan and execute an appropriate survey to its members on the above concerns.

Objective 2: To determine whether research has been conducted by the Faculty of Medical Sciences, UWI on the benefits of traditional treatments such as aloes, green pawpaw, orange peel, ginger and turmeric.

A. In line with the recommendations of the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy, 2014-2023, that the MoH collaborate with the UWI Faculty of Medical Sciences, Faculty of Science and Tenth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration 14 Technology and Faculty of Food and Agriculture to develop a long-term research strategy for:

- i. Expanding the existing descriptive research on the prevalence of CAM use to treat NCDs throughout the country;**
- ii. Giving specific emphasis to researching CAM use in Tobago;**
- iii. Collecting scientific evidence on the risks and benefits of these forms of CAM, including cost-effectiveness.**

The Ministry of Health will collaborate with the UWI, in particular, the Caribbean Centre for Health Systems Research and Development under the Faculty of Medical Sciences and other relevant faculties to develop and execute a research agenda for the key areas as identified above.

B. That the MoH give consideration to partnering with regional and/or international funding agencies for conducting evaluative studies to measure the effectiveness of local medicinal plants and herbs for treating NCDs. One of the terms of reference should involve investigating potential and feasible options for commercializing and monetizing herbal remedies that are indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago and or

herbal remedies which may have the highest potential health benefits to the population.

The Ministry of Health will collaborate with the relevant international agencies to determine the key research projects and suitable funding arrangements to effect the above assessment on local medicinal plants and its feasibility for commercialization.

Objective 3: To determine whether organic medications based on bacteria, enzymes and plants can contribute to improving the health status of the population.

A. That the MoH and the UWI seek to compile all relevant international research supporting the efficacy of organic medications currently approved by the Drugs Advisory Committee of the MoH.

The Ministry of Health will collaborate with the UWI, in particular, the Caribbean Centre for Health Systems Research and Development under the Faculty of Medical Sciences and other relevant faculties to compile all the relevant international research supporting the efficacy of organic medications currently approved by its National Drugs Advisory Committee.

B. That the MoH provide the UWI with technical or financial assistance to support basic scientific research into the pharmaceutical properties of plants, enzymes and bacteria which are confirmed to be indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago.

The Ministry of Health will provide the UWI with technical assistance to support basic scientific research into the pharmaceutical properties of plants, enzymes and bacteria which are confirmed to be indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago.

C. That the MoH consult with the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and relevant stakeholders to consider whether there is a need to amend existing legislation to commence the following, notwithstanding the illegal status of cannabis:

- i. to facilitate the scientific testing of marijuana based medicines by local tertiary level institutions and their affiliates and medical and pharmaceutical agencies; and**
- ii. to allow the sale of marijuana based substances which have been scientifically proven to have medicinal properties and have been subjected to the necessary clinical trials.**

On October 2018, the Ministry of Health conducted a technical consultation with the key stakeholders involving the use of marijuana and the impact on health. The report was submitted to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs for its consideration.

Objective 4: To examine existing and possible arrangements for regulating the use of alternative medical treatments in Trinidad and Tobago.

A. That the MoH place a higher priority on the implementation of the Regulations for Herbal Medicinal Products following the completion of the review consultations. An implementation plan for achieving this objective inclusive of specified timeframes may assist with advancing this process that has been significantly delayed.

There were significant delays in the review and finalisation of the Regulations for Herbal Medicinal Products due to the unavailability of Herbal Medical Practitioners to serve on its Committee. It should be noted that these members volunteer their services to the Committee.

As a result, the National Drugs Advisory Committee will undertake the mandate in developing an implementation plan for the regulation by end of 2019.

- B. That the MoH seek to partner with relevant stakeholders to create a technical working group for the creation of a comprehensive, national policy on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) practices and practitioners. The policy should be aligned with those provided by the WHO and Commonwealth member states.**

The required research will be conducted using best practice and the technical working group will be developed to consider the drafting of a National Policy on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) practices and practitioners.

- C. That in its draft national policy, the MoH give consideration to:**

- i. The creation of a national register of CAM practitioners;**
- ii. The creation of a regulatory board, similar to that of the MBTT or a sub-board of the MBTT to regulate CAM practitioners;**
- iii. The creation of educational standards for CAM practitioners, requiring qualifications from accredited international and/or regional institutions in the respective field(s).**

The above items for consideration will be included in the drafting of the National Policy on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) practices and practitioners.

- D. That the MoH consider partnering with the Ministry of Education, UWI, UTT etc. to explore the feasibility of introducing accredited training programmes in CAM.**

The Ministry of Health will explore the feasibility of introducing accredited training programmes in CAM with the relevant tertiary educational schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

E. Subject to the conduct of the necessary feasibility studies, the legislative framework should be modified with a view to facilitating greater commercialization and monetization of CAM remedies.

Once the policy is approved, consideration will be given to any legislative changes as required.