The Institute of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine (I-AIM) collaborated with the South Asian Cochrane Network to organize a workshop to develop standards for reporting Ayurveda clinical trials, during the South Asian CONSORT meeting held at Christian Medical College, Vellore, India, on 12 January, 2010.

Guidelines for reporting scientific research have enhanced transparency and improved the quality of evidence.[1] In particular, the CONSORT (Consolidated Standards for Reporting Trials) statement has benefited planning and publications of clinical trials.[2] Many different initiatives have attempted to develop standards of reporting research.[3] It is generally agreed that individual standards of a similar nature are needed for all systems of traditional complementary and alternative medicine, including Ayurveda.

The workshop was Chaired by Darshan Shankar, Hon. Adviser for Indian Systems of Medicine to the Member (Health), Planning Commission of India. In his overview, Shankar summarized the background, emphasizing the need to retain comprehensiveness of Ayurveda interventions in research. He requested the gathering to develop standards for reporting Ayurveda research as current standards need modification to incorporate Ayurvedic principles. He discussed the IAIM initiative to do so, and called for united efforts in this endeavor.

Girish Tillu, Ayurveda physician and researcher, explained the poster “Systems Ayurveda.”[4] He elaborated Ayurveda interventions’ comprehensiveness and complexity in light of the overall seminar theme. Bhushan Patwardhan, Director-Designate, Institute of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine, reviewed paradigms of Ayurveda research against the “Systems Ayurveda” background. He added that planning and reporting research should adopt comprehensive approaches, and Ayurveda principles of diagnosis and management.

David Moher, Director of the Chalmers Research Group and CONSORT Scientist, said that more than 75 sets of guidelines for reporting experiments exist, but when analyzed, most of them fail the definition of “good” guidelines. He suggested undertaking a cross-sectional review of Ayurvedic clinical trials to justify the need for developing guidelines. He recommended following principles described in his recent publication on developing guidelines for reporting research.[5] also suggesting that larger stakeholders should become involved early to have a buy-in.

Moher gave more detailed advice. Several years are normally necessary making it an ideal project for a graduate thesis. Guidelines should incorporate Ayurveda-specific interventions and outcomes. The Delphi, peer consultative process is an effective way to set about such a problem where knowledge is incomplete.[6] In response to a plea from Patwardhan, he assured the group of assistance in developing guidelines for Ayurveda.

Doug Altman, Professor in Statistics in Medicine at Oxford University, re-iterated Moher’s points and urged everyone to read revised STRICTA guidelines, which aim at reporting of Chinese Medicine Trials. Revisions were driven by the need to improve quality of reporting acupuncture interventions, emerging from collaboration between STRICTA, CONSORT, and the Chinese Cochrane Centre. He felt that a similar collaboration may be needed to develop Ayurvedic guidelines, involving experts in Ayurveda and guidelines development. Altman shared his experiences about methodological aspects of developing guidelines.

Bian Xiao Zheng, Chinese Medicine expert, laid out the process and achievements of CONSORT-like statements for Traditional Chinese Medicine, resulting in publications standardizing reporting of TCM trials.[7] Emphasis was on the quality of herbal products and associated guidelines, Chinese Government rules on agricultural products helped in their formulation. Trials are classified according to whether they (a) use traditional TCM definitions of disease and cure; (b) use modern definition of disease and cure; or (c) use a combination of modern and traditional definitions. Correspondence between traditional and modern is evaluated.

Senior Statistician Ashwini Mathur gave a short presentation on the need for standardization of Ayurvedic trials, and basic principles to be followed in developing guidelines for them. These followed his previous suggestions.[8]

A possible name was suggested in the form of CONSORT-like standards for reporting Ayurveda clinical trials (STRACT).
The Forum of Culture and Arts of Uzbekistan Foundation along with Women’s Council, “Salus Vita” Diagnostic Centre, Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan, Academy of Traditional Medicine of Uzbekistan, and UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) organized the International Conference on “Traditional Medicine in Modern Society. Its role, implications, perspectives” at Tashkent on 1st February, 2010. Here 300 specialists in the area of Traditional Medicine (TM) and Integrative Medicine, from China, Russia, Austria, Germany, Bulgaria, India, and other countries, state officials and representatives of international organizations, diplomatic corps, nongovernmental organizations, and mass media participated. As the outcome of the conference and postcongress discussions the “National Academy of the traditional medicine of Uzbekistan” was established with its main goals involving development of traditional medicine in Uzbekistan; popularizing the use of traditional medicine in the treatment and prevention of diseases; developing collaboration and partnership with domestic and foreign organizations; facilitating the strengthening and development of traditional medicine schools and specialists training. After the meetings a Protocol of Intent was signed to establish its “International Association of Traditional medicine” with its main office in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The proposed main goals of the association are to revive, preserve, and promote the foundations of traditional medicine, to foster international cooperation in this area, and to represent and protect the legitimate rights and interests of the Association’s members. A Working Group to deal with organizational issues related to the establishment and registration of the International Association of Traditional Medicine, consisting Mukhammad Khamraev – Chairman of the Expert Council of the International Association of Traditional Medicine of Uzbekistan, Gennadiy Malakhov – Nathuropath (Russian Federation), G. Geetha Krishnan – Senior Consultant of Integrative Medicine of Ayurveda (India), Yusuf Nuraliev – Director of the Institute of Ibn Sino and Pharmacology (Republic of Tajikistan), and Arturs Teresko – Herbal therapy practitioner, naturopath, Chinese acupuncture physician (Latvia) is constituted. Gulnara Karimova, Ambassador, and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva will head the working group.

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