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## *Statement from the Association*



### **Vision Statement of IASTAM as a Transdisciplinary Forum**

The International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine (IASTAM) is the world's foremost international organization of scholars and practitioners devoted to understanding the history and contemporary practice of Asian medicines in their various forms and contexts. IASTAM commenced activities in 1979 and since that time has staged a series of nine major International Congresses on Traditional Asian Medicine (ICTAM) in Australia, Europe, Asia, and North America. IASTAM has also organized and supported a wide range of other workshops and events related to Asian medicine in various countries around the world.

The most recent international conference, ICTAM IX, was hosted in Kiel, Germany, in 2017 (<https://www.ictam2017.unikiel.de/en>). This European location of ICTAM IX, in proximity to European regulators and to the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, facilitated the consideration of Asian medicines not just as manifestations of local medical knowledge but as transnational phenomena. It also allowed us to take stock of the current state of Asian medicine and to shift our attention to encompass the global flows of medical knowledge, practice, and materials, including a broader set of actors and research approaches than in the past. At the conference we also invited engagement with representatives from the political sphere, at both national and European levels, as well as international organizations such as the WHO. These included research funding institutions, such as Horizon 2020, the German Research Foundation, and the Wellcome Trust, as well as representatives of key practitioner bodies throughout the European Union (EU), such as the heads of councils of Chinese, Ayurvedic, Unani, Siddha, and Tibetan (Sowa Rigpa) medicines in the various EU countries. As we host conferences, workshops,

and other events moving forward, we plan to continue this strong engagement with the research and policy world.

IASTAM aims at achieving a fuller understanding of Asian medicines in historical and contemporary contexts by integrating diverse forms of knowledge and ways of practice. It provides an epistemological framework for scholarly exchanges between medical anthropologists, practitioners of Asian medical traditions, specialists in life sciences, ethnobotanists, ethnopharmacologists, ethnopharmacognosists, herbalists, historians, economists, political scientists, conservationists, translators, and more. IASTAM includes the major scholarly medical traditions and various vernacular healing traditions of East Asia (China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam), South Asia (Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Yoga, Homeopathy, and others), Central Asia and the Himalayas (Tibet, Mongolia, etc.), along with Greco-Arabic traditions (as practiced in West and Central Asia, as well as North Africa). In light of this diversity, the ICTAMS provide opportunities to develop new networks of collaboration and exchange and to consider how both our association and the field as a whole can move forward.

IASTAM is unique in encompassing diverse national and international organizations related to Asian medical traditions. The association has the ability to speak on behalf of these different traditions and to provide a vibrant space for inter- and transdisciplinary exchange and for discussing points of intersection and tension between our various approaches and perspectives. We intend for the society and its future conferences, as well as its publications, to create a transnational forum within which practitioner bodies can work together in a supportive and collaborative way. This will allow IASTAM members to represent Asian medicines within the EU, North America, Australia, and elsewhere, to coordinate research, and to provide expert advice as required.

Traditional Asian medicines play a significant role in improving the well-being of people worldwide, both as health care systems in their own right and as resources for biodiscovery projects. As a multibillion-dollar industry, Asian medicines involve complex global networks of actors: conservators who monitor the changing supplies of wild plants in Asian mountains, medical botanists who study the substitution practices of collectors and marketers in Asia, policy-makers who restrict or prohibit the entry of drugs into European countries, corporations that seek to exploit drugs based on Asian medical knowledge, and professional associations that seek to regulate Asian medical practice. The types of agents and institutions involved in the production, distribution, and application of Asian medical therapies will only increase, and in this environment of industrialization, scientific validation will play a major role in the movement of such medicines across transnational regulatory frameworks.