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Integration of Herbal Medicine in the National Health System in Solomon Islands

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Solomon Islands (SI) is known for its rich biological diversity. There are an estimated 1000 individual species of vascular plants in Solomon Islands (SI), most of these are endemic. A rich tradition of medicinal plants use exists in the country with well over 50% population relying exclusively on traditional herbal medicine for health care. In view of the growing importance and contribution of indigenous systems of health care practices worldwide and consistent with various international resolutions which call for promotion and development of Traditional Herbal Medicines (THM), a formal program on THM is proposed to be developed in Solomon Islands. The recent WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy (2014-2023) seeks to support member states in harnessing the potential contribution of THM to health and to promote its safe and effective use. In the Solomon Islands, a national policy on traditional and complementary medicine (TM/CAM) was issued in 1994. However, national program on traditional herbal medicine has not been developed and no herbal medicines are included on the national essential drug list. Despite gradual loss of traditional knowledge, reports suggest that many communities in Solomon Islands (SI) maintain rich tradition of medicinal plants uses to treat various sicknesses. With the objective of incorporating THM in the primary health care system some of the activities that could start immediately include systematic survey and documentation of medicinal plants and traditional medicine practices, establishment of herbal medicine database, training of herbalists and traditional medicine practitioners (TMPs) in primary care and awareness and promotion of safe and effective THMs in communities. This presentation will highlight the need and layout mechanism to develop indigenous herbal medicines for broader coverage of health needs especially in rural communities.

Biography:

Professor Prem Prakash Rai, PhD works at Solomon Islands National University, School of Natural Resources & Applied Sciences. He has previously worked in University of Papua, New Guinea, PNG and headed the traditional medicine program in the National Department of Health. His speciality includes Pharmacognosy and quality control of herbal medicine. Dr. Rai is an active researcher and has published over 98 papers and authored number of technical books including one on Medicinal Plants in Papua New Guinea, published by the World Health Organization. Dr. Rai serves as an advisor and member on editorial board of number of local and international scientific journals.