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CTMR conducts workshop for practising Sidha doctors, traditional healers in Coimbatore

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With the support of Ayush department, the Chennai based traditional research institute, Centre for Traditional Medicines and Research (CTMR), conducted a two day workshop for the practising Siddha doctors and traditional healers of Tamil Nadu at Coimbatore recently.

More than 60 Siddha practitioners attended the workshop. The theme of the program was 'Traditional Healers of Tamil Nadu -Traditional Healing Practices and Ethno Botanical Collection'.

According to sources from the CTMR, they have chosen a remote area as venue for the workshop as it has a wide area of medicinal plants garden, medicinal plants value addition unit, organic farming of medicinal plants and conservation of endangered medicinal trees including saraca asoka apart from the well maintained hospital in the remote tribal area.

The secretary of CTMR, Dr T Thirunarayanan said that the key objective of the workshop was to bring together expert traditional healers from different regions of the state to a common platform and exchange their knowledge and health practice experiences. Major themes included were 'Varma chikitsa', 'Visha vaidyam', bone setting, treatment to women and children, and ethno-botanical resources and practices of different tribal groups.

The participants were selected from a list of one thousand traditional healers from all the districts of the state. Besides the sixty-plus delegates, 30 traditional healers and institutionally trained physicians of Siddha and Ayurveda took part as non-residential delegates. Members of NGOs like Isha Yoga Trust, Coimbatore Tree Growers Association also took part in the seminar. The participants had a pre-conference informal interaction at the Nilgiri Bio-sphere Park.

The resident Acharya of the centre for higher learning at Nilgiris, Swami Shakshatkarananda Swamiji inaugurated the workshop. He explained the importance of traditional healing system and its contribution to Indian society. Swamiji released a souvenir brought out by CTMR on the occasion.

While addressing the audience, Dr T Thirunarayanan said documentation of traditional knowledge was necessary for the revival of the ancient system. He made a long speech on the efficacy of siddha medicine, its importance, the folklore associated with it and its affordability in the primary health care. Dr D. Narasimhan, Professor in Madras Christian College and a renowned ethno botanist delivered the key note address and explained the richness of the Indian tradition and the need to protect community-based

intellectual property.

The Session on Varma had lecture demonstration by Vaidya .Mohanraj of Munchirai College, Coimbatore and Vaidya .Ramaswamy of Ragavendra Varma Hospital for Spinal Disorders, Chennai. Training on locating varma points of the head region and simple healing techniques was given. Vaidyas Murugesan and Kanagaraj took part in the discussion followed.

The Session on Ethno-botanical resources was chaired by Vaidya. S.Usman Ali, the president of CTMR. He presented Ethno-botanical resources used by different ethnic groups of Tamil Nadu and explained the scientific research carried out on plants more frequently used by the healers in poison treatment, bone setting and varma.

Five traditional healers from Tirupur, Theni, Thanjavur, Dharmapuri and Tenkasi shared their experiences on treating common ailments, skin diseases, renal stones, respiratory illness and gynaecological disorders. Vaidya G. Swami of Kabilarmali in Namakkal district spoke about medical ethics and Vaidya Kandasamy spoke about the effectiveness of plant derived salts.

In the second day seminar, Dr S Rajkumar made a presentation on the various treatment procedures adopted in treating poison bites and also other types of poisons. In the Session on 'Visha vaidyam', Vaidya Kuppuswamy and Vaidya Vellakamu exhibited the plants used for the treatment and the rigorous discipline adopted by the healers and the restrictions suggested to the victims.

They said the scorpion sting, bee sting, wasp sting were readily treatable and in snake bite their nasal and ophthalmic application could provide critical time required for the victim to reach hospitals. There was lecture demonstration on treating simple fractures and dislocations.

The plenary session was chaired by Dr T Apparanandam of Siddha Health Foundation. He said the time has come for traditional healers and institutionally trained to enrich their knowledge to provide better healthcare for the people. Later the healers were taken to the medicinal plant demonstration garden of 'AIM for SEVA' in which over 200 plants were grown.