

For Immediate Release

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Recent Report Bridges Understanding Between Western Medicine and Ancestral Practices

Report underscores the importance of complementary dialogue between two medical systems to best support the health of Indigenous populations.

Barcelona — In its mission to transform global healthcare, the International Center for Ethnobotanical Education, Research, and Service (ICEERS) has released a pioneering report titled "InterCultural Health: From Theory to Practice." This document delves into the integration of Western medicine with Indigenous traditional healing practices, aiming for a more holistic and respectful approach to healthcare.

According to the World Health Organization, [between 65% and 80%](#) of healthcare practices globally incorporate traditional medicine in some way. The World Health Organization's [Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023](#) highlights the ongoing demand for traditional and complementary medicine products, practices, and professionals. This reflects not only the prevalence of these practices in various cultural and geographical contexts but also their fundamental importance in maintaining the health and well-being of communities.

The recently published report provides an overview of intercultural health initiatives that have gained momentum in recent decades. In the words of Cristina Sánchez, Project Coordinator at ICEERS, "This transformative approach allows us to move towards more inclusive and equitable approaches to the healing process, with special attention towards the health needs in Indigenous communities, who have been historically marginalized and misunderstood by conventional healthcare systems."

Examples of Success

The report highlights successful examples of countries where traditional medicine has effectively been integrated into healthcare systems. It also presents practical cases and implementation strategies in Latin America, Africa, and Oceania, where initiatives to include Indigenous and traditional medical practices in official healthcare systems have been enacted.

ICEERS' guide not only focuses on analyzing these intercultural health proposals but also identifies obstacles and suggests strategies to improve health for Indigenous communities. "Our goal is to create enriching dialogue that enables a more holistic understanding of health and well-being," says Jerónimo Mazarrasa, Director of Social Innovation at ICEERS.

Intercultural health is defined in the report as "the dialogue and integration of Western and traditional medical systems in a respectful and complementary manner." Mazarrasa emphasizes the importance of this integration, acknowledging that it is an essential challenge in addressing the health needs of Indigenous communities.

Less Invasive Practices

"This report examines a series of intercultural health proposals implemented worldwide to understand why some succeed while others fail," said the study's author, Carlos Suárez Álvarez. "The report serves as a tool for all initiatives aiming to integrate holistic and less invasive practices of traditional medicine into official healthcare systems, many of which have already demonstrated their effectiveness and are supported by Western science," he adds, referring to examples such as ayahuasca for treating depression.

The report also highlights how emancipatory and decolonial movements of the 20th century have contributed to a reevaluation of Indigenous medical practices, challenging the previous paradigm that considered them to be backward or superstitious.

The report's primary goal is to analyze the intercultural health proposals implemented in different countries, identify common obstacles, and suggest effective strategies to improve the health of Indigenous populations, who consistently have poorer health indicators when compared to the rest of the population.

More information:

- [InterCultural Health: Integrating Traditional and Western Medicine](#)
- [Executive Summary](#)
- [Full Report \(in Spanish\)](#)

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