

European Forum for Complementary and Alternative Medicine

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Position paper of the European Forum for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (EFCAM) on the consultation launched by the Commission on the communication ' Science and Technology, the key to Europe's future – Guidelines for future European Union Policy to support research'

EFCAM has been formed in response to the EU Commission's call for single umbrella bodies to represent the various stakeholders sharing broad areas of interest and concern in the EU. EFCAM is therefore established to represent the collective views of practitioners and patient-users of CAM.

As part of its contribution to the debate on the future of research policy in the EU and in order to raise awareness of the importance of research on complementary and alternative approaches to healthcare EFCAM wishes to state that:

- The EU Research agenda should reflect the needs, interests and trends of the EU's people.
- One of the major trends that has taken place across the EU is for citizens to increasingly use complementary and alternative approaches to their health care that are not currently delivered as part of most member states' health care services. The fact that CAM approaches are not delivered by MS healthcare services means their benefits are not accessible to the socially deprived and excluded - a potential factor in explaining the gap in health status between the well-to-do and the deprived in the EU.
- The reasons citizens are using these treatments are numerous. However, rather than abandoning conventional medicine they are adding CAM approaches to supplement conventional care. According to WHO the major burdens of disease are lifestyle related and chronic diseases. The willingness of citizens to tackle responsibility for their health and well-being as demonstrated by the significant uptake of CAM make it an important phenomena for DG Research to address.
- In 1997 European Parliament called on the Commission to
' carry out research into the safety, effectiveness, area of application and the complementary or alternative nature of all non-conventional medicines
.... To encourage the development of research programmes in the field of non-conventional medicines covering the individual and holistic approach, the preventive role and the specific characteristics of the non-conventional medical disciplines ' (*EP Resolution A4 0075/97*)
and in 1999 the Council of Europe also encouraged the Commission
' to develop research programmes on the safety and effectiveness of these medicines' (*Council of Europe Resolution 1206 1999*)
These calls give DG Research the political legitimacy to allocate funding and develop research priorities.
- Part of the Lisbon Process calls for more investment in human capital, in particular health technologies that improve the overall health status of the population. CAM approaches have the potential to contribute to improving and maintaining each individual's health and thereby ensure their optimum productiveness.
- There is a need for a separate budget line to be established for CAM research so that specific research needs of these approaches to health care can be researched and applications do not have to compete with the whole range of applications from conventional medicine.
- There is a need for the application of a range of quantitative and qualitative approaches to researching CAM treatments which take into account the holistic and individualised nature of CAM care and does not rely solely on conventional scientific methods such as RCT'.

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