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National database on indigenous traditional medicine: A valuable resource for research on medicinal plants in Papua New Guinea**Prem Prakash Rai**

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The Traditional Medicine Database (TMD) was established in 2000 to document, preserve and encourage the use of safe and effective traditional medicine practices and ethno-botanical tradition in Papua New Guinea (PNG). One of the early challenges that restricted incorporation of traditional medicine in primary health care program was insufficient documentation about medicinal plants usage as traditional medicine. This has now been addressed by carrying out systematic documentation and maintaining a comprehensive inventory and record of information on local uses of medicinal plants and traditional medicine practices and by collecting and storing information from the practitioners nationwide to ensure that local knowledge is preserved, researched and properly promoted to community at large. The TMD is extensive, fully referenced and provides historical use fields and published research information. Specifically, the electronic database contains taxonomical, ethno-botanical, phytochemical and biological activity data including medicinal uses of herbs with methods of preparation, administration, dosage, frequency, etc. An interesting feature is the plants image file containing pictures of plants taken in their natural habitat. Over the years the TMD has emerged not only as the repository of indigenous knowledge in traditional medicine but has become an important resource for scientific researches on host of medicinal plants. It has also proven to be a useful tool for identifying safe and effective herbs. Many herbs such as *Alstonia scholaris* (severe fevers), *Evodia elleryana* (anti-TB, cough and fever), PNG lichen, *Parmotrema saccatilobum* (analgesic and anti-inflammatory), *Ageratum conyzoides* (diarrhea and dysentery), *Voacanga papuana* (antibacterial), anti-HIV herbs such as *Derris elliptica* and many others have been investigated and traditional uses and claimed therapeutic properties substantiated. A well-developed TMD can be an excellent resource in selection of herbs for scientific researches and to provide rationale for host of traditional medicines.

Biography

Prem Prakash Rai is currently the Dean of the School of Natural Resources & Applied Sciences at Solomon Islands National University. His specialty includes pharmacognosy and quality control aspects of herbal medicine. He is an active Researcher and has published more than 98 papers and authored number of technical books.

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