

EDITORIAL



The right causes and conditions for the *Journal of Traditional Medicine and Sowa Rigpa*

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Traditional medicine is undergoing renewed recognition worldwide. Traditional medicine refers to heterogeneous systems of health care and wellbeing comprising practices, skills, knowledge and philosophies, which are distinct from and pre-date biomedicine [1]. Health systems are increasingly embracing evidence-informed traditional, complementary and integrative medicine, and researchers seek platforms that preserve traditional knowledge while promoting rigorous scientific inquiry. Traditional medicine services are integrated in a range of promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services for populations [2]. From Ayurveda in India and South Asia to Traditional Chinese Medicine in East Asia, Kampo Medicine in Japan, Thai Traditional Medicine in Thailand, African traditional medicine and Indigenous healing practices across the Americas and Oceania, these systems continue to shape how communities understand health and illness, often alongside, rather than in place of, modern biomedicine. It is in this evolving and widening landscape that the *Bhutan Sorig Journal* enters a new chapter.

Bhutan Sorig Journal was established on 17 December 2023 to serve as a platform for academic and scientific discourse on *Sowa Rigpa*. Its vision was to serve as an archive and repository of research in traditional medicine, not only in Bhutan but also in the

South Asian region [3]. Over four issues in 2024 and 2025, we published 25 peer-reviewed articles spanning pharmacognosy, clinical practice, health policy and the philosophical foundations of *Sowa Rigpa*, drawing contributions from Bhutan and beyond.

To broaden the representation of traditional medicine knowledge, philosophies, skills, know-how and practices from around the world, while continuing to promote research on *Sowa Rigpa*, we have expanded the scope of the journal and renamed it the *Journal of Traditional Medicine and Sowa Rigpa*, effective from Volume 3, Issue 1 (May 2026). This development reflects both the growing interest we have observed from researchers working on other traditional medicine systems, and our conviction that traditional medicine, in its many forms, benefits from integrative research and wider discourse.

The *Journal of Traditional Medicine and Sowa Rigpa* is not a new journal. It is a continuation of what was formerly published as *Bhutan Sorig Journal*, with the same editorial team and the same commitment to maintaining scientific quality and publication standards. The journal will continue its volume and issue numbering, preserving the continuity of its publication record. All articles published will be open access, continuing our commitment to making science accessible to all.

What is new is the expanded scope of articles published, creating space for contemporary research while keeping pace with emerging trends in traditional medicine. Traditional medicine is practised in various forms across all countries and continents. It constitutes a large body of knowledge, intricately linked to culture, environment, beliefs and ways of life. With traditional medicine now playing an increasingly important role in integrative medicine, holistic care and people-centred services across many

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countries and health systems [1], the *Journal of Traditional Medicine and Sowa Rigpa* offers an academic forum for the sharing of knowledge, ideas, philosophies and wisdom. We welcome original research articles, systematic and narrative reviews, case reports, commentaries, perspectives and field reports on the safety, efficacy, quality and practice of traditional and complementary medicine systems, as well as work examining their integration into the delivery of health care services. We are equally interested in the social science and humanities dimensions of traditional medicine, including its history, its place within cultural identity, the lived experience of practitioners and patients, and its influence on mindfulness living, happiness and wellbeing.

The principles and practices of traditional medicine systems are frequently under-documented in peer-reviewed literature, and much of the evidence generated locally does not reach an international audience. Researchers working on traditional medicine also often navigate the difficult task of generating evidence that satisfies contemporary scientific standards, while remaining grounded in the theoretical frameworks, diagnostic categories and therapeutic rationale of the systems they study. Often, there are no directly translatable terminologies equivalent to biomedicine, and researchers have to resort to terminologies that do not capture the true meaning and essence of symptoms and diagnoses. Language remains a major barrier, as a great deal of traditional medical knowledge is recorded in local scripts and languages. Some original texts are in the forms of folios, wood blocks, stone or slate blocks that are difficult to catalogue in a standard list of references. In *Sowa Rigpa*, there is a set of secret teachings and practices that are passed down from masters to only selected and trusted students. These are not easy questions to resolve, and this remains uncharted territory for editorial review of such manuscripts. What we can offer is a space where such work is taken seriously on its own terms, reviewed rigorously, while encouraging methodological approaches that are appropriate to the subject at hand and reproducible to future scientists.

Sowa Rigpa is the predominant form of traditional medicine in Bhutan and the Himalayan region, utilized by up to one-fifth of the population [4]. Only a small part of its principles, therapies and medications is accessible to a wider audience. A large part

of it remains in texts, in practice within communities and away from the limelight [5]. The same is true for other forms of traditional medicine where principles, philosophies and practices are yet to be documented in written form. The *Journal of Traditional Medicine and Sowa Rigpa* aims to serve as the bridge to connect *Sowa Rigpa* and traditional medicine practitioners from across the globe and extend its benefits and wisdom to all those in need.

We invite researchers, clinicians, students and practitioners of traditional medicine everywhere to consider the *Journal of Traditional Medicine and Sowa Rigpa* as a home for their work. We particularly encourage submissions that document traditional medical knowledge at risk of being lost, that examine the safety and efficacy of traditional therapies using rigorous methods, and that reflect on the practical and ethical questions that arise when traditional and biomedical systems meet in clinical practice and health policy. The journal remains committed to a fair, transparent and timely peer review process, and to supporting authors, particularly early-career researchers, students and those publishing for the first time, throughout that process. As with our earlier issues, submissions will continue to be assessed on their scientific merit and relevance alone, under a double-blind review process that safeguards this standard.

The Journal, published by the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan, offers an aspiration prayer for an auspicious *tendrel* – the coming together of the right causes and conditions – to serve as a repository of knowledge on traditional, complementary and integrative medicine and *Sowa Rigpa*. Guided by the principles of Gross National Happiness and mindfulness living in this interconnected world, may the knowledge generated today contribute to healthier lives for generations to come.

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Consent for publication

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