



A One Health Approach to Antimicrobial Resistance: The Role of Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Healthcare (TCIH)

A Fostering Health or Improving Resilience to Infectious Illness Narrative for a Balanced AMR Policy

Infectious illness

Infectious illness results from the convergence of two factors - the presence of the infectious agent and the receptiveness and response of the patient (1-11). That is why different people experience different outcomes after being in contact with the same infectious agent: some will fall ill, others less so, some not at all. The presence of infectious agents is natural. There is ample agreement that people (and animals) with a well-balanced, normally responding immune system are less susceptible to pathogens and respond to infectious diseases more effectively without the need for antibiotic treatment (6-11).

The perspective of resilience

Overall, current AMR policy has a perspective of the infectious agent being the principal cause of infectious illness; the role of the patient, or recipient, in infectious illness tends to be overlooked (13). Whereas improving the health of farm animals is seen as a strategy to reduce the use of antibiotic medicines, this focus tends to receive little attention when it comes to people. (14)

EUROCAM argues that, for any AMR strategy to be successful, it is paramount to explore how to enhance the resilience of people, animals and crops (and ecosystems) to infectious pressures. Resilience is an expression of health; therefore, policy measures facilitating and promoting methodologies that seek to foster health, and effective natural defenses, hold the potential to contribute to the reduction of AMR (5-16). It needs to be considered that such an approach may also contribute to tackling other health issues, such as non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health conditions.

One Health and the cooperation of all knowledge bases

The WHO and EU have adopted the OHHLEP definition of One Health (18). OHHLEP defines One Health as an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimise the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. One of its key principles states that this needs to happen through the cooperation and utilisation of all knowledge bases, which includes traditional knowledge (15, 18, 19).

Health and Resilience

EUROCAM argues that it is necessary to broaden the mainstream One Health focus on illness and infections with a vision of *promoting and fostering health*. This means that the preoccupation of One Health approaches focused on the transmission of infections and antibiotic resistance across environments, animals, and humans must be complemented by a perspective that recognizes health as a shared condition among all living beings where improvements in one domain inherently benefit the whole and that improved health goes hand in hand with improved resilience also in relation to infectious pressures.

Health and resilience can be improved through better living circumstances, reducing pollution, good hygienic practices and, in general, by tackling the determinants of disease. Whilst these are effective approaches, they are aimed at reducing various systemic and structural stresses to improve health (6-12, 14-22). TCIH takes a proactive approach, aiming to improve the inherent responses of people, animals and crops to the stresses of life, thereby improving effective natural responses to the presence of infectious agents (1-6, 24 -32).

Health and resilience should be seen as critical determinants to mitigate the consequences of infectious pressures. Treatments and techniques aiming at regulating and supporting patients' responses for improved natural resilience to, and recovery from, infectious illness need to benefit from the attention of the research community to increase the contribution of resilience in AMR policy.

There is a growing body of data showing that certain TCIH interventions reduce the need to use antibiotic medicines without these interventions specifically targeting the infectious agents (23-32 and paragraph: '*Good practice examples*').

Sharing health and the 'transfer of health'

The One Health principles highlight the interdependence of health between all systems: between people, animals, farms and the environment (17-19). In this context, EUROCAM argues for the development of a positive concept of 'the transfer of health between all systems' as a narrative that brings all knowledge bases together. The OHLEPP panel that developed the One Health principle mentioned the importance of finding ways for all knowledge bases to cooperate on health-related matters.(18)

Broadening of health systems with TCIH modalities

As noted, the main aim of the various TCIH modalities is to improve health and resilience in relation to infectious pressures. "Integrating TCIH into antimicrobial resistance strategies offers a promising pathway to better outcomes, all while safeguarding the essential role of antibiotics and current AMR measures."(33-35)

Many AMR action plans mention alternative or innovative approaches (14, 34, 35) without specifying their kind, role or place. These can be interpreted as alternative ways of eliminating infectious agents, i.e.; alternatives to antibiotic medicines. EUROCAM argues that these alternative approaches need to include TCIH or other methodologies that focus on improving the resilience of people, animals, crops, farms and the wider environment (23-32) to focus on positive health and resilience.

European expertise

Europe has a strong foundation in this area, with established academic institutions, clinical expertise, agricultural experience, and a population that already engages with TCIH (35-40, 57). Strategic policy convergence, supported by targeted funding and cross-sector collaboration, would enable the EU to assess and harness this potential responsibly, while maintaining high standards of safety, evidence and public trust.

Patient Choice

Over 25% of people in Europe already use TCIH methodologies and even more have an interest in using them as an alternative to or alongside conventional healthcare: their integration into healthcare is likely to be popular, helping to reduce patients' reliance on antibiotic medicines (34-38). Evidence based medicine, as defined by Sackett et al (48), and patient charters highlight the importance of patient participation in healthcare decisions (34-50). During a WHO Europe Region meeting on primary care (September 2025) experts were arguing that patient involvement needs to be built in all levels of decision making, including health policy development processes.

International Declarations

The need to include TCIH into health policy is highlighted in multiple international statements such as: the [WHO traditional and complementary medicine strategy 2025-34](#), the [G20-Gujarat declaration 2023](#), [The WHO Global TCIM summit 2025](#), the [Astana declaration](#) , [The Ottawa declaration](#), the [OHHLEP One Health expert panel](#), and [Integrative Medicine strategies](#) .

Education of policy makers

By engaging with the TCIH sector and making funding available for TCIH research, the EU can take part in the worldwide evolving approach to healthcare which is moving towards the inclusion of TCIH. For this to happen successfully, education of policymakers into TCIH is warranted. For their education, Policy makers can engage with Europe's considerable expert knowledge on TCIH. (See 'Case Studies and Examples', 57)

Investing in TCIH to contribute to modern health care

By definition, TCIH includes 'integrative' modalities. EUROCAM advocates for their inclusion not as substitutes for conventional medicine, but as innovative additions that broaden clinical understanding and enhance patient outcomes. (35)

There is an urgent need to invest in researching TCIH and the contributions it can bring to healthcare and AMR in particular. A lack of research in this field poses a serious risk of losing critical knowledge that could advance healthcare outcomes and innovation (56,57).

The sector is ready to engage (16, 23-32,54-57). Investing in this sector supports One Health objectives and enhances the likelihood of success in AMR mitigation strategies.

Definitions of Health that have a cross-sector appeal under One Health

How we define health will influence vision and strategies that determine health care policy. It will also play a role in how people and patients take part in their health care, and their health overall.

Emerging definitions of health increasingly embrace a dynamic perspective, one that views health as the capacity to adapt and lead a fulfilling life. This shift enables all policy sectors and the wider population to align around a shared goal: building a healthy, fulfilled, and economically resilient society (51-53).

These modern definitions align with One Health principles and underscores that TCIH modalities aim to foster health. They also support the [Refocusing Health](#) narrative that underpins EUROCAM's advocacy efforts.

Examples of proposed new definitions of health:

The ability to adapt and self-manage in the face of social, physical, and emotional challenges (51-52)

Health enables individuals to adapt to their physical and social environments, satisfy their needs, attain their goals, and live long lives (53).

Summary

The vision of fostering health and resilience offers a compelling focus that can unite diverse knowledge bases and policy sectors in a coordinated effort to improve citizens' lives and contribute to national success. Explicitly integrating TCIH into AMR strategies, policies and action plans can further advance positive health outcomes. This broader vision aligns with modern definitions of health, framing it as the capacity to adapt and thrive, and reflects values embedded in modern declarations aimed at improving the health of both people and the planet.

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18. One Health: A new definition for a sustainable and healthy future (definition accepted by the WHO and EU).
<https://journals.plos.org/plospathogens/article?id=10.1371/journal.ppat.1010537>
19. The Copenhagen recommendation on One Health.
<https://euonehealth2025.dk/Media/639002638887062185/One%20Health%20Collaboration%20and%20Implementation%20one%20paper.pdf>
20. Roots of progress: draining the swamp.
<https://blog.rootsofprogress.org/draining-the-swamp>
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Good AMR practice examples

Below are links to research and initiatives of TCIH and the wider sector that are working on and contributing to reducing AMR:

- I) The PEANUT method: A follow up study: reduced antibiotic use in primary care and outpatient services with an integrative intervention for chronic otitis media.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7911258/>
- II) Conclusions of a retrospective study: Homeopathic treatment for respiratory diseases (asthma, allergic complaints, Acute Recurrent Respiratory Infections) was associated with a significant reduction in the use and costs of conventional drugs. Costs for homeopathic therapy are significantly lower than those for conventional pharmacological therapy.
doi:10.1016/j.homp.2008.11.005
- III) Antibiotic Use in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Practicing Integrative Medicine: a retrospective Analysis. The study confirmed an association between integrative medicine practice and low antibiotic prescribing in newborns
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37815790/>
- IV) Homoeopathy vs. conventional primary care in children during the first 24 months of life-a pragmatic randomised controlled trial: the homeopathic cohort necessitated fewer antibiotics and its overall cost was lower. DOI: 10.1007/s00431-024-05791-1
- V) The Tuscan (Italy) example of successful and beneficial integration of TCIM into health care.<https://www.itcim.org/tuscanys-experience-of-integrating-cam-into-the-healthcare-system> (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.itcme.2015.03.006>.)
- VI) The Fever app : a support for parents to help in decision making for their children who have a fever, based on the best available evidence to reduce antibiotic consumption.
<https://www.feverapp.de/en/>
- VII) Fegerl, S. The Role of Mayr Therapy in the Prevention of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) via the Gut–Liver Axis – A Contribution to One Health and WHO-TCIM Goals. A technique to improve the intestinal microbiome in people.
(https://www.ganzheitsmed.at/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2025-10-24_Mayr_Therapy_AMR.pdf)
- VIII) A survey of farmers using TCIH to reduce antibiotic consumption in farms in the UK.
<https://wholehealthag.org/survey/full-report/>
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<https://www.louisbolck.nl/media/pdf/Research-Agenda.pdf>
- XI) A roadmap to planetary Health: an international association of academia for better planet health and health for all.
<https://planetaryhealthalliance.org/roadmap-action-plan/>

European TCIH Institutions

- Institute of Complementary and Integrative Medicine: IKIM Bern University: https://www.ikim.unibe.ch/index_eng.html
- Institute for Complementary and Integrative Medicine, University Zurich, Switzerland <https://www.usz.ch/en/department/complementary-and-integrative-medicine/>
- Charité Competence Center for Traditional and Integrative Medicine: <https://ccctim.charite.de/en/>
- Center for Integrative Medicine, University of Tübingen, Germany - Cochrane Complementary Medicine Europe. <https://cam.cochrane.org/news/announcing-establishment-cochrane-complementary-medicine-germany>
- Institute for Integrative Medicine, Witten/Herdecke University, Germany <https://www.uni-wh.de/en/aim-starts-work>
- Center for Research in Medical Bioclimatology, Biotechnologies & Natural Medicine, University of Milan, Italy (WHO Collaborating Centre) https://www.femteconline.org/Bioclimatology/bioclimatology/60_med_non_conv.html
- Department for Integrative Medicine, Faculty of Health Science, University of Pécs, Hungary. https://english.etk.pte.hu/about_us/departments-and-institutions
- Royal London Hospital for Integrated Medicine, University College London - (WHO Collaborating Centre) <https://www.uclh.nhs.uk/our-services/our-hospitals/royal-london-hospital-integrated-medicine>
- Homeopathy Research Institute, London, UK. <https://www.hri-research.org/>
- The college of medicine and integrative health, <https://collegeofmedicine.org.uk/>
- National centre for integrative medicine: <https://ncim.org.uk/>
- The Louis Bolk Institute Netherlands: <https://www.louisbolk.nl/>
- Sustainable animal Husbandry: FIBL: <https://www.fibl.org/en/>
- Whole Health Agriculture. <https://wholehealthag.org/>
- FIBL agriculture research centre. <https://www.fibl.org/en/>
- [The WHO Bulletin of November 2025](#) states that “To harness the potential of traditional medicine, more robust scientific evidence and regulatory frameworks are needed.”