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### EDITORIAL COMMENT

#### ACCEPTING THE TRUTH ABOUT HERBAL MEDICINE

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Several arguments have been put forward to justify the need for caution in the use of herbal medicine for conventional therapeutic purposes. Yet the undeniable benefit, availability, accessibility, cost effectiveness, and reliability in many instances, remain to be disputed. The irony however, is the fact that while other natural resources like gold, coal, tin, diamond, and crude oil are constantly and maximally been exploited for human benefit, plants with invaluable potentials remains yet to be so treated; despite the very-well publicized side effects of mining these so-called economically viable natural resources. Even the extensive air, water, and land pollution often associated with such mining activities and their toxicity potentials that are gradually overwhelming host communities, have not deterred governments and individuals from embarking on more and more of such mining activities.

Obviously, one can not dispute the economic and social benefits of mining, but the recklessness associated with it is becoming worrisome, especially when human health and wellbeing, as well as that of animals and plants, are on the line. The focus of course, without the seeming deviation, remains the ignored ubiquitous potentials in plants, which though are gradually been recognized and appreciated in instances like bio-fuels, dyes, and herbal medicine production, more effort is still required to fully situate the place of plants in the economic and social well being of humans beyond being just a source of food and fruits.

Surely, harnessing the therapeutic potentials of herbal plants will not only provide a source of raw materials for pharmaceutical industries but also serve as a huge source of employment; judging by the expected production chain and the required product advertising/marketing. Indeed, it is appalling to observe that despite the obvious therapeutic benefits of plant products, some still prefer to dwell in the negatives than in the positives. Such negative in-dwelling have only succeeded in painting the image that herbal medicines have no role in conventional clinical management. Some even literally discard any discussion on it with a wave of the hand, insisting that there's no need wasting time discussing in that direction.

However, the concern should have been on how: 1) to make concerted efforts towards harnessing the positives in plants to achieve positive goals; 2) to work assiduously towards harmonizing the therapeutic potency-claims of herbal plant products by various practitioners; 3) to enhance capacity for herbal medicine research; 4) to provide the right environment for herbal drug trials based on accepted international standards; 5) to provide grants for the establishment of herbal medicine-based research institutes and pharmaceutical industries that can in turn provide employment, training, and research opportunities; 6) to enact relevant laws that would standardize and regulate herbal medicine production and usage; 7) to enact relevant laws that would regulate the activities of herbal medicine practitioners; and 8) to enact relevant laws that prohibits unjustifiable discrimination against the production and use of standardized and regulated herbal medicines by citizens.

Finally, it is no longer news that Asians for centuries have benefited and are still benefitting from the therapeutic potentials of plants as evident in their characteristic longevity, which has remained a good reason to acknowledge the fact that it is high time the truth about herbal medicine is accepted.