

National Standard for Traditional Medicine Services

Introduction

Traditional Medicine is an integral part of the national health care delivery system in Bhutan since 1968. Due to strong political commitment of the Royal Government, the traditional medicine system has grown steadily and has become almost at par with modern medicine. With all the medicines produced within the country and also the human resources developed inside the country, it is one of the most sustainable methods of health care delivery system.

In order to improve the quality of traditional medicine services, there is a need to develop standards in terms of profession, service and facility. Therefore, the minimum standards required for the professional development for traditional practitioners, levels of services in different health facilities and the number of rooms required at each level is highlighted in this document.

According to WHO Traditional Medicine strategy, the standards should be set for national policy and regulatory framework, safety and efficacy, access, and rational use of traditional medicine. Bhutan's Traditional Medicine is well integrated with modern health care delivery system as per the national policy of integration. Traditional Medicine also falls under the regulatory framework of Bhutan Medical and Health Council Act, the Medicines Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Biodiversity Act of Bhutan, and the Forest and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan.

The WHO has defined traditional medicine as including diverse health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and/or mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises applied singularly or in combination to maintain well-being, as well as to treat, diagnose or prevent illness.

Mission of Traditional Medicine Services

The main mission is to provide traditional medicine services as an alternative choice of treatment for the people of Bhutan. It is also mandated to preserve and promote the unique system of medicine that is based on rich culture and tradition through capacity building and establishing an effective system within the framework of overall national health system.

Bhutan 2020: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness states the importance of Traditional Medicine as follows. *“We must continue to provide a place for traditional medicine in our system of health care. Traditional medicine embodies knowledge that has been accumulated over centuries and which draws upon the nation’s rich bio-diversity and of plants with proven medical qualities. As these qualities become substantiated by scientific research, there is a growing need to integrate more effectively traditional medicine with the modern system of health care. The maintenance of traditional medicine not only adds dimensions to the nation’s system of health care, but provides an alternative for those who seek one. It should also be regarded as a conscious decision to conserve a part of our rich and varied cultural heritage”.*

Therefore, strengthening of traditional medicine and integrating it with modern health care system is considered as an important policy objective of the health sector.

The specific **aims and objectives** of Traditional Medicine are to:

- Promote traditional system of medicine in the country
- Preserve the unique culture and tradition related medicine practice
- Provide alternative medicine as complementary to the allopathic system
- Produce medicines required by the traditional medicine system
- Conduct research and quality control of drugs
- Develop human resources required for the traditional medicine system
- Achieve excellence in traditional medicine services in Bhutan.

A. Professional Standard

Currently, there are two categories of professionals responsible for the provision of traditional medicine services in Bhutan. They are Drungtsho (Traditional Physician) and sMenpa (Traditional Clinical Assistant)

1. Drungtsho

The Drungtshos undergo five and half years training in the National Institute of Traditional Medicine after passing class 12. There are mainly four broad modules also known as four Medical Tantras in the study of Traditional medicine popularly known as gSo-ba-Rig-pa education. They are:

- rTsa-rGyud (Root Tantra)
- bShed-rGyud (Explanatory Tantra)
- Man-Ngag-rGud (Secret Tantra)
- Phyema-rGyud (Other Tantra)

In addition to these four main subjects, they also study the following subjects:

- Shel-gong / Shelthreng
- Zin-tig
- Astrology
- sMengi-Phenue-Jordey

Therefore, the actual curriculum consists of the following:

1. rTsa-rGyud

1.1. Introduction to gSo-ba Rig-Pa - This course provides the students an overview of gSo-ba Rig-Pa, its history, origins and development. It provides a brief discussion of the gSo-ba Rig-pa education, the profession and the opportunities in the practice of gSo-ba Rig-pa.

1.2. gLeng-gzhi gLeng-slong - This is a preliminary to the succeeding subjects. It also discusses the alternative treatment methods like tsha-chu and sman-chu.

1.3. rTsa-ba gSum and sDong-'grems - This course provides brief description on the origins of diseases, its management and treatment.

2. bShed-rGyud (Pre-requisite: rTsa-rGyud)

2.1. Grub-pa lus - This course provides a basic understanding of human anatomy and basic principles of physiology. It also provides a detail discussion on the science of birth, living and death.

2.2. 'phel-'grib ned and Bya-ba sPyod-lam - This course deals with the detail discussion on the nature, causes and origins of the diseases. It also deals with the concept and fundamental importance of behavioral pattern in the management of conditions.

2.3. 'Tsho-ba zas and sByor-ba sman - The course provides the detail description on the management and control of diets and its benefits. It also familiarizes the effect of four elements (Earth, Water, Heat, Wind) on 6 different types of taste.

2.4. Cha-byed and nGos-bzung brtag-pa - This part covers extensively the use and requirements of different kinds of instruments for therapies and their mode of usage. It also covers as a separate part, the importance and the different methods that can be used in the diagnosis of diseases.

2.5. gSo-thabs and gSo-ba Po - This part covers extensively the different methods of treatment. It also covers the moral principles of practice (ethics) that governs the Drungtsho profession.

3. Man-Ngag-rGyud (Pre-requisite: rTsa-rGyud and bShed-rGyud)

- 3.1. Nyes-gsum and Khong-ned - This course intends to familiarize the students with the fundamental concepts of three humors of the bodily system namely wind, bile and phlegm. It also discusses the diseases and conditions of the abdomen region.
- 3.2. Tsha-ba, lus-sTod, Don-sNod and gSang-ned - This course provides the detail study on the diseases of fever related, upper torso reproductive and vital organs including their aetiology and organ-system involvement.
- 3.3. Thor-ned, lhan-sKyes rMa and Byes-pa gSo-ba - This course provides the detail study in the origin, cause and management of vascular, neural, skin diseases etc. This part also covers the study on diseases of reproductive organs, digestive system, and pediatrics.
- 3.4. Mo-ned, mTshon-rma and Dug-ned - This part covers the detailed study on the signs and symptoms of the gynecological diseases, cause and treatment of poisons, and wounds resulting from the accidents.
- 3.5. gDon-ned, rGas-pa and Ro-tsa - This part covers the study of psychotic conditions and geriatric diseases. It also discusses on rejuvenation with emphasis placed on the maintenance or normal organ systems.

4. Phyema-rGyud (Pre-requisite: rTsa-rGyud, bShed-rGyud and Man-Ngag-rGyud)

- 4.1. bRtag-pa rTsa-chu - The course deals with the principles of diagnosis particularly through Pulse reading and Urine analysis.
- 4.2. Zhi-byed sman - The fundamental concepts of pharmaceutical dosage forms, their classification, principles and process involved are discussed. It familiarizes the

student with the pre-formulation, detoxification, formulation and preparation of various dosage forms.

- 4.3. sByong-byed las. - This course provides an overview of therapies particularly by treatment through excretion, irrigation, etc.
- 4.4. 'Jam-rtsub dPyed - This part covers techniques in the wide range of therapies like blood letting, moxibustion, serkhap, cupping, hot and cold compression, herbal steaming, herbal bath, herbal massage etc.
5. Shel-gong (Pre-requisite: bShed-rGyud) - This course covers the uses and origins of precious materials, mineral and animal parts. It also provides the morphological studies, uses and diversity of herbal plants.
6. **Zin-tig** (Pre-requisite: Man-Ngag-rGyud) - This part focuses mainly on the different aspects of treatment modes and methods. It also discusses the specific uses of each drug with respect to the types of diseases and the methods involved in preprocessing and formulation.

7. Astrology

- 7.1 'byung-rtsi sNgon-'gro - This course provides an introduction to the astrology and intends to familiarize with the classical abbreviations used in dha-tho.
- 7.2. Dha-tho lde-mig - This part discusses the method and gives detail instructions on reading and interpreting the dha-tho.

Note: Anyone wishing to apply for registration with Bhutan Medical and Health Council must fulfill the above minimum requirement of educational standards

Job Description

The generic job description for Drungtsho:

1. Treatment: Examine patients, diagnose, prescribe medicine, give advice on diet and behaviour and conduct for better health (counseling) and maintain patient history of diseases for future planning
2. Conduct therapy: Such as Ser-khap, moxibution, blood letting, cupping, massage and maintain record of these.
3. Survey: Participate in survey of medicinal plants, minerals, hot springs, medicinal water and other natural resources which have medicinal values. Document them, see possibility of incorporating these into traditional medical services. Advice local people on positive health effects of these resources especially hot spring and medicinal waters
4. Reporting: Refer patients with unusual cases to senior Physicians and prepare patient reports for future planning of production and treatment
5. Outcall visit: Take services to the people during emergency and to religious centre such as meditation centre
6. Monitor status of patients in the wards and take wards rounds
7. Attend emergency duties as and when required in calamities etc.
8. *Conducting research on the disease trends and their treatment as well as other areas related to traditional medicines*
9. *Create awareness on traditional medicine services and promote healthy life styles such as healthy dietary habits as per the gso-ba rig-pa system*

Proposed Career Enhancement for Drungtshos under PCS

1. The Medical Service

Bachelor Degree in Traditional Medicine

Stage one	Traditional Physician	P4
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4 years

Stage two	Senior Traditional Physician	P3
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4 years

Stage three	Deputy Chief Traditional Physician	P2
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4 years

Stage four	Chief Traditional Physician/Med. Superintendent	P1
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Master Degree in Traditional Medicine or PhD

Stage one	Traditional Medicine Specialist/ Medical Director	ES3/EX3
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4 years

Stage two	Senior Traditional Medicine Specialist	ES2
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4 years

Stage three	Chief Traditional Medicine Specialist	ES1
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2. The Teaching Profession

Bachelor of Traditional Medicine

Stage one	Assistant Lecturer	P4
	4 years	
Stage two	Associate lecturer	P3
	4 years	
Stage three	Lecturer	P2
	4 years	
Stage four	Senior Lecturer/Dean	P1

Master Degree or PhD in Traditional Medicine

Stage one	Assistant Professor/Director	ES3/EX3
	4 years	
Stage two	Associate Professor	ES2
	4 years	
Stage three	Professor	ES1

Note: There shall be a minimum of 2 scientific publications for becoming Assistant Professor and 4 scientific papers for Associate Professor.

2. sMenpa

The sMenpa course is 3 years after passing class 10 and Diploma in Traditional Medicine is awarded on successful completion of the training.

The Curriculum consists of:

1. rTsa-rGyud

1.1. Introduction to gSo-ba Rig-Pa - This course provides the students an overview of gSo-ba Rig-Pa, its history, origins and development. It provides a brief discussion of the gSo-ba Rig-pa education, the profession and the opportunities in the practice of gSo-ba Rig-pa.

1.2. gLeng-gzhi gLeng-slong - This is a preliminary to the succeeding subjects. It also discusses the alternative treatment methods like tsha-chu and sman-chu.

1.3. RTsa-ba gSum and sDong-‘grems - This course provides brief description on the origins of diseases, its management and treatment.

2. bShed-rGyud (Pre-requisite: rTsa-rGyud)

2.1. Grub-pa lus - This course provides a basic understanding of human anatomy and basic principles of physiology. It also provides a detail discussion on the science of birth, living and death.

2.2. ‘phel-‘grib ned and Bya-ba sPyod-lam - This course deals with the detail discussion on the nature, causes and origins of the diseases. It also deals with the concept and fundamental importance of behavioral pattern in the management of conditions.

2.3. 'Tsho-ba zas and sByor-ba sman - The course provides the detail description on the management and control of diets and its benefits. It also familiarizes the effect of four elements (Earth, Water, Heat, Wind) on 6 different types of taste.

2.4. Cha-byed and nGos-bzung brtag-pa - This part covers extensively the use and requirements of different kinds of instruments for therapies and their mode of usage. It also covers as a separate part, the importance and the different methods that can be used in the diagnosis of diseases.

2.5. gSo-thabs and gSo-ba Po - This part covers extensively the different methods of treatment. It also covers the moral principles of practice (ethics) that governs the Drungtsho profession.

3. Phyema-rGyud (Pre-requisite: rTsa-rGyud, bShed-rGyud and Man-Ngag-rGyud)

3.1. bRtag-pa rTsa-chu - The course deals with the principles of diagnosis particularly through Pulse reading and Urine analysis.

3.2. Zhi-byed sman - The fundamental concepts of pharmaceutical dosage forms, their classification, principles and process involved are discussed. It familiarizes the student with the pre-formulation, detoxification, formulation and preparation of various dosage forms.

3.3. sByong-byed las. - This course provides an overview of therapies particularly by treatment through excretion, irrigation, etc.

3.4. 'Jam-rtsub dPyed - This part covers techniques in the wide range of therapies like blood letting, moxibustion, serkhap, cupping, hot and cold compression, herbal steaming, herbal bath, herbal massage etc.

5. Astrology

5.1. 'byung-rtsi sNgon-'gro - This course provides an introduction to the astrology and intends to familiarize with the classical abbreviations used in dha-tho.

5.2. Dha-tho Ide-mig - This part discusses the method and gives detail instructions on reading and interpreting the dha-tho.

Job Description

The generic job description for sMenpa is:

1. Dispensing medicines to the patients as per the prescription of the Drungtsho and giving directions on the intake doses
2. Counseling patients on diet regulation and behavioral regulations based on their ailments
3. Maintain patient and drug records and periodic reporting on them.
4. Good store management, inventory management and maintain hygiene
5. Diagnose and treat patient during the absence of Drungtsho
6. Make field visit to remote areas for treatment of elderly and disabled patients
7. Collection of medicinal ingredients

Proposed Career Enhancement for sMenpa under PCS

Diploma in Traditional Medicine

Stage one	Traditional Clinical Assistant	S2
	4 years	
Stage two	Senior Traditional Clinical Assistant	S1
	4 years	
Stage three	Dy Chief Trad. Clinical Assistant	P5
	4 years	
Stage four	Chief Traditional Clinical Assistant	P4

B. Service Standards

According to gSo-ba Rig-pa, disturbance or imbalance in any of these three elements leads to diseases and ill health. The diagnosis of the diseases is made through history taking, pulse reading and urine examination. The patients are treated with medicines and different therapies such as golden and silver needle insertion, blood letting, herbal steam application and bath, cupping, moxabustion, massage etc.

In order to practice the Traditional Medicine legally, the Drungtshos and Menpas will have to be registered with Bhutan Medical and Health Council after completing their training programmes and will need to renew their license every five years as like any other medical profession.

The traditional medicine is considered more effective for chronic diseases such as sinusitis, arthritis, asthma, rheumatism, liver problems, diseases related to digestive and nervous system etc. The reason why traditional medicine is particularly good for such chronic diseases is because of its holistic, rounded and profound approach in the treatment. The number of patients using traditional medicine is increasing every year at all levels and the demand for traditional medicine will increase.

Traditional medical services will be available at all level of health care facilities in Bhutan and will be housed in the district hospitals, BHU Grade I and BHU Grade II in view of the national health policy of integration. The exception is at the national level where traditional medicine hospital at Thimphu will remain at separate location in view of the teaching responsibilities for NITM students and other functions.

At the National Traditional Medicine Hospital, the following traditional medical services will be available:

1. General medical care
2. Secondary medical care
3. Tertiary medical care
4. All types of therapies
5. Outreach services to religious centres
6. In Patient services
7. Clinical teaching

Number of Drungtshos including Medical Superintendent will be 10

Number of Menpas will be 10

Number of support staff will be 15

Number of Traditional Medicines will be 98

At the Regional Referral Hospital, the following services will be available:

1. General Medical care
2. Secondary medical care

3. Selected therapies like Serpkhap, Nyulkhap, Chu-lum, Lang-lum, lang-duk, blood letting, heat application
4. Outreach services to religious centres and remote areas
5. Field training centre for NITM students

Number of Drungtshos will be 4

Number of Menpas will be 4

Number of Medicines will be 75

At the district hospital level, the following services will be available:

1. General medical care
2. General therapies like Serkhap, Nyulkhap, blood letting, heat application etc.
3. Outreach services to religious centers and remote area

Number of Drungtsho will be 1

Number of Menpa will be 1

Number of Medicines will be 50

At the Basic Health Unit level, the following services will be available:

1. Basic medical care
2. Serkhap and Nyulkhap
3. Outreach services to remote areas

Number of Menpa will be 1

Number of Medicines will be 30

***Note:** The patient referral system will be from the lowest level to the highest level and the feed back from the highest level to the lowest level*

Apart from the routine therapies like blood letting, heat application and acupuncture, the traditional medicine practitioners shall refrain from carrying out any invasive procedures.

General Medical Care will include:

- Routine medical check up
- Diagnosis and treatment
- Behavioral and dietary advice
- Simple therapy like Serkhap
- Maintaining proper patient record and follow up
- Referral of patients to secondary and tertiary level care facilities
- Submit monthly morbidity reports

Secondary Medical Care:

In addition to the above activities listed under general medical care, other therapies like:

- Blood letting
- Application of heat
- Steam application
- Herbal bath
- Moxabustion
- Application of medicated oil
- Prescribing of additional medicines

Tertiary Medical Care:

In addition to the activities listed under general medical care and secondary medical care, the advanced services like:

- Nasal irrigation
- Suppository

- Enema
- Stomach wash
- Steam bath
- Tra-den Serkhap (gold needle with moxa)
- Prescribing of advanced medicines like Rinchen Rilbu
- Prescribing of restricted and selected medicines
- Acupuncture
- Advanced diagnosis and treatment

Quality Assurance

All medical services will be delivered as per the standard treatment guidelines that will be developed and all therapy services will be provided as per the standard therapy guidelines that is being developed. The patient records and reports will be maintained as per the Classification of traditional diseases under BHMIS

The professional standards and safety of all medical practices will be followed at all levels of health care delivery system and the Quality Assurance Division of the Ministry of Health will monitor the service standards.

All Drungtshos and Menpas will follow the Standard Code of Medical Ethics and Conduct as per the Regulations of the Bhutan Medical and Health Council, under clauses 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 while discharging their professional duties.

Standards for Medicine Production

Since all traditional medicines are manufactured within the country by Pharmaceutical and Research Unit (PRU) of the Institute of Traditional Medicine Services, it is important to set standards for the production of traditional medicines. The PRU was established in 1998 with the purpose of manufacturing traditional medicines and conducting scientific

research for quality enhancement of the same. Unlike modern medicines, traditional medicine in Bhutan is purely an indigenous product since its source, processing know-how and the human resources are all available within the country.

The PRU will produce medicines based on the traditional medicine list that is approved by the Government which is subject to revision from time to time as per the requirement. The WHO good manufacturing practices (GMP) rule must be followed for all medicine production. The quality control must be carried out for all medicines for safety and efficacy based on quality parameters for products and raw materials. The drug regulatory authority (DRA) of Bhutan will monitor the quality of medicines produced by the PRU.

C. Facility Standards

In order to be able to provide quality medical care, the minimum space requirement at each level of health care delivery system should be made available for traditional medical services.

The National Traditional Medicine Hospital will have following facilities:

1.	Chamber for Medical Director	1 room with toilet
2.	Medical Superintendent	1 room with toilet
3.	General Office	1 room
4.	Consultation	8 rooms with wash basin
5.	Reception	1 room
6.	Dispensary	1 room
7.	Medicine Store	1 room
8.	Serkhap and Nyulkhap	1 Room
9.	Tar Sek	1 room
10.	Chulum	2 rooms with toilet
11.	Langlum	2 rooms with toilet
12.	Numtshuk and Najhong	1 room with wash basin

13.	Meboom and Ngabra	1 room
14.	Meeting Hall	1 room
15.	Menlha Lhakhang	1 room
16.	Common Toilets	2 rooms (Male /Female)
17.	General Store	1 room
18.	Inpatient	5 rooms (20 beds, 10 each for M/F)
19.	Patient kitchen	2 rooms
20.	Maintenance	1 room

The Regional Referral Hospitals will have the following facilities:

1.	Chamber for Drungtsho Incharge	1 room with toilet
2.	Consultation	3 rooms with wash basin
3.	Dispensary	1 room
4.	Serkhap/Nyulkhap	1 room with wash basin
5.	Chulum	1 room with toilet
6.	Langlum	1 room with toilet
7.	Tar / Sek	1 room with wash basin

The District Hospitals will have the following facilities:

1.	Drungtsho consultation	1 room with wash basin
2.	Dispensary	1 room
3.	Serkhap / Nyulkhap	1 room with wash basin

The Basic Health Units will have the following facilities:

1.	Consultation and dispensing	1 room with wash basin
2.	Serkhap and other therapies	1 room with wash basin

Note: These are minimum requirements, and for any other activities related to traditional medical services, additional room need to be made available

Privatization of Traditional Medicine

In view of the Govt. policy of privatization, the Pharmaceutical and Research Unit will be de-linked from the Institute of Traditional Medicine Services and transformed into a Corporation in the near future.

The Traditional Medicine practitioners registered with BMHC can apply for opening private clinics and practice.

Charging for therapies like herbal bath and steam bath available at the National TM Hospital may be introduced and eventually privatized. Some of the high value medicines like Rinchen rilbu pills, Da-shel, Samphel Norbu etc. may be charged at the rate of production cost

Conclusion

In order to provide safe and quality traditional medicine services, the above minimum standards must be followed by all practitioners. In view of the rapid advancement in medical science and technology and also the changing health needs, these Standards may be reviewed after every five years.

Since traditional medicine service is a unique system based on rich culture and heritage that needs to be preserved and promoted as per the Govt. policy, there is a need to strengthen the traditional medicine system through further recognition and creating either an Autonomous Agency or a separate Department under the Ministry of Health with more budget allocation as recommended by WHO. If we consider the countries of SEARO region, most countries have established separate Department of Traditional Medicine and Sri Lanka even have a Ministry of Indigenous Medicine.

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