Autor(en) des Beitrags: Hök, Johanna; Lewith, George; Weidenhammer, Wolfgang; Santos-Rey, Koldo; Fønnebo, Vinjar; Wiesener, Solveig; Falkenberg, Torkel


Abstract: Background: The aim of this study was to analyse global research and development (RD) strategies for traditional medicine (TM) and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) across the world to learn from previous and on-going activities. Methods: 52 representatives within CAMbrella nominated 43 key international stakeholders (individuals and organisations) and 15 of these were prioritised. Information from policy documents including mission statements, RD strategies and RD activities were collected in combination with personal interviews. Data were analysed using the principles of content analysis. Results: Key stakeholders vary greatly in terms of capacity, mission and funding source (private/public). They ranged from only providing research funding to having a comprehensive RD and communication agenda. A common shift in RD strategy was noted; whereas 10 years ago research focused mainly on exploring efficacy and mechanisms, today the majority of stakeholders emphasise the importance of a broad spectrum of research, including methodologies exploring context, safety and comparative effectiveness. Conclusion: The scarce public investment in this field in Europe stands in stark contrast to the large investments found in Australia, Asia.
and North America. There is an emerging global trend supporting a broad research repertoire, including qualitative and comparative effectiveness research. This trend should be considered by the EU given the experience and the substantial research funding committed by the included stakeholders. To facilitate international collaborative efforts and minimise the risk of investment failure, we recommend the formation of a centralised EU CAM research centre fostering a broad CAM RD agenda with the responsibility for implementing the relevant findings of CAMbrella.

Stichworte: Complementary medicine; Research methodology; Qualitative study
Zeitschriftentitel: Forschende Komplementärmedizin / Research in Complementary Medicine
Jahr: 2012
Band: 19
Heft / Issue: 2
Seiten: 44--50
Volltext / DOI: http://doi.org/10.1159/000342724
Verlag / Institution: S. Karger GmbH
Verlagsort: Freiburg, Germany
Print-ISSN: 1661-4119
E-ISSN: 1661-4127
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Occurences: · Kollektionen > Open Access Publikationen > 2012 · Kollektionen > Open Access Publikationen > Verlage > Karger
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