THE PRESCRIPTION AND CONSUMPTION OF ILLEGAL WILDLIFE PRODUCTS IN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN VIETNAM

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

TM PRACTITIONERS

Patients

Key Findings

(n=29) TM practitioners admitted having prescribed rhino horn, tiger, and pangolin products in the past two years.

Among the total number of illegal prescriptions. (n=162)

- 43% TIGER PRODUCTS
- 28% RHINO PRODUCTS
- 29% PANGOLIN PRODUCTS

Key groups of recipients:
- Close clients (i.e. regular patients)
- Relatives (i.e. family members, friends) and rich people
- People directly requesting the products

59% of patients admitted that they were prescribed or recommended to use those products by TM practitioners. However, only 29% of patients said they consumed the products after being prescribed/recommended.

PRESCRIPTION INCIDENCE

CONSUMPTION RATE AMONGST PATIENTS

(n=140) patients said they purchase the products from individual sellers, while 16% of them made the purchase from TM practitioners or allopathic doctors. Patients found difficulties in sourcing genuine products.

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Survey Methods

March 2021
March - April 2021
May - July 2021

Desk Research
Qualitative Survey
Quantitative Survey

TM Practitioners
Allopathic Doctors

Participated in the survey

110 TM practitioners
51 Allopathic doctors

Survey Methods

Motivators

Perceived effectiveness is the main motivator for both doctors' prescription and patients' consumption.

Barriers

Legality

53% neutral
34% disagreed
18% disagreed
52% neutral

Product authenticity

30% agreed
13% disagreed
63% agreed

The charts below show the opinions on whether it is acceptable to prescribe products derived from endangered wildlife and illegal sources.
Nine out of ten patients rely on allopathic medicines instead of illegal wildlife products in TM. 87% of TM practitioners agree that allopathic medicine is efficient and a suitable replacement. Plant-based TM products are another perceived effective alternative.

PAST AND FUTURE PRESCRIPTION TREND AMONGST TM PRACTITIONERS (N=122)
Present and future intention to prescribe wildlife products tends to decrease.

41% said they were prescribing fewer wildlife products than before. Even 51% expressed their refusal to prescribe those products in the future. TM practitioners tend to further reduce the prescription of pangolin products.

PAST AND FUTURE USE/CONSUMPTION TREND AMONGST PATIENTS (N=140)
Consumption habits in the Past

29% USES
71% NON-USERS

Intentions to consume in the future

68% INTENDERS
32% NON-INTENDERS

73% of the patients who were prescribed tiger products (n=60) and rhino horn (n=49) said they would use the products in the future.

The charts show the share of respondents who trust the product’s effectiveness (for example, tiger bone glue).

Tiger products are perceived as the best cure compared to rhino and pangolin products for bone-related diseases.

“The real tiger bone glue has a “heating” property, and can have negative impacts on body organs especially when used with wine.” - TM practitioner

Guidance for implementing future Social Behaviour Change campaigns, based on the survey’s results and TRAFFIC experience.
Specific messages and messengers suggestions for TM practitioners and patients:

TM PRACTITIONERS

MESSAGE
• Promote the use of safe, legal, effective and sustainable TM ingredients.
• Focus on reputational risks and the fact that the practice is socially unacceptable.
• Avoid disrespect and underestimate the traditional value of TM practice where plants and animals are used for treatment.
• Provide traditional and/or western medicine alternatives and lists of medicine containing illegal wildlife parts or products, to avoid prescribing those medicines to patients.

MESSENGERS
TM training and education institutions and/or academy by:
• Integrating the wildlife protection issues into TM official training materials and programs.
• Influencing peers and friends.

PATIENTS

MESSAGE
• Emphasise on the illegality and non-scientific medical functions of the products.
• Provide information about safe, legal, effective and sustainable alternative.

MESSENGERS
TM practitioners and allopathic doctors.

MESSAGING FRAMEWORK

Should be scientific, concise, and clear on what to do.
Should affirm the non-effectiveness of rhino horn and pangolin on healthcare and treatment.
For tiger products, messaging should focus on proved alternatives.

SURVEY LIMITATIONS
Overall, using and purchasing wildlife products is a highly sensitive activity, which cause difficulties when conducting survey.
Due to this reason, the actual number of users/buyers/doctors affirming that they buy or prescribe products can be higher than that reported in the survey.

This survey is part of an ongoing project led by TRAFFIC and WWF Deutschland (WWF Germany) directed at eradicating rhino horn prescription and consumption in traditional medicine in Vietnam.