



HISTORY OF CARAPA

The first workshop of the Caribbean Association of Researchers and Herbal Practitioners (CARAPA) in 1998 was held to formulate Caribbean responses to the prevailing global resurgence of herbal medicine products and practices. It was co-sponsored by The University of the West Indies, the IICA, and the CNIRD in Trinidad .

Conference 2005 There is ambivalence towards herbal medicine (including traditional folkloric "bush medicines") in Caribbean society and the healthcare system. At the same time, it is possible that the medicinal plants and the folk knowledge about them might be under the threat of becoming extinct.

The CARAPA organization recognizes the richness of the diversity in Caribbean medicinal plants, and the traditional knowledge being documented. It is envisaged also that the integration of traditional (folkloric, herbal) medicines into the evidence-based practice of medicine will occur in the near future in the Caribbean region. The CARAPA organization recognizes the imperative to validate the use of herbal extracts as medicines, and to promote the scientific study of these plant products and their evaluation for safety and efficacy and standardization, - whilst preserving the Caribbean heritage of traditional knowledge. This is in accord with the declarations of WHO, especially at the May 2002 launch of its first global strategy for 2002-2005 on traditional and alternative medicine. Similar views have been announced by the Commonwealth Health Ministers at their November 2001 meeting in New Zealand .

PAST CONFERENCES

The themes of previous CARAPA annual workshops have been:

1998 (Trinidad): "*To restore a Caribbean heritage*"

1999 (St. Croix): "*Utilizing medicinal plants to add value to Caribbean agriculture*"

2000 (Jamaica): "*Applications of Caribbean herbal products in promoting health and treating disease*"

2001 (St. Lucia): "*Integrating herbal medicine into the healthcare system I*"

2002 (Suriname): "*Integrating herbal medicine into the healthcare system II*".

These international meetings have been attended by persons from the Caribbean islands, including Jamaica, Haiti, The Dominican Republic, Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, as well as from Belize, Guyana, England, India, Africa and North America . At these meetings, the discourse has been rich and rewarding, and the conference proceedings have been documented in most cases.

