Call for more research in traditional medicine

SINGAPORE is lagging behind other countries when it comes to research into traditional Chinese medicine, said Minister of State for Health Amy Khor yesterday.

She said countries such as the United States and Australia are conducting studies in related fields, including acupuncture, despite their shorter history of using Chinese remedies.

"We should be open to conducting more research in traditional Chinese medicine treatment," she told a symposium at Nanyang Technological University.

She said this is an important way to gain public confidence in traditional therapies, and will help consumers to make informed choices.

Professor Hong Hai, a professorial fellow and traditional Chinese medicine physician at the university, said the lag in research is due to inadequate funding.

"We have people who are able to do it," he said. "I think some encouragement and better funding could result in better quality research and more research being done."

The symposium was attended by more than 120 people, including industry players and allied health-care professionals.

Dr Khor also lauded the community for making an effort to keep its skills and knowledge up to date.

For example, organisations such as the Singapore College of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Eu Yan Sang have been holding regular courses and workshops to enhance standards in the industry.

Nanyang Technological University students get a foot in the door through internships at hospitals.

Six in 10 of the pioneer batch of 58 graduates from its double-degree programme in Chinese medicine and biomedical science have secured jobs in industries related to traditional healing. The rest opted to continue their studies or join other professions such as teaching.

Student Teo Chun Huat, 24, said: "We are worried about finding jobs as the market is saturated but, with more external collaborations and research, I think more options will be open to us."

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