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<AT>Integration of traditional and ‘modern’ medicine: Reflections on a visit to DPR Korea

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<ABS-HEAD>**Abstract**

<ABS-P><ST>Introduction</ST> Many traditional, complementary and alternative medicine systems are used throughout the world. The reasons for use and government support of these systems vary. In the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPR Korea, i.e. North Korea) traditional Koryo medicine is strongly supported by the government, reportedly providing around half of all healthcare services and medicines. The purpose of this paper is to impart reflections from a short stay in the little visited country of DPR Korea, provide some insights into their healthcare delivery, and reflect on transferable lessons that support traditional medicine integration with national healthcare systems.

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<ABS-P><ST>Methods</ST> Field notes and photographs from a trip to DPR Korea were used to aid the writing of this reflective piece. Information drawn from broader literature provides contextual and comparative background and discussion.

<ABS-P><ST>Results</ST> Contributing to the strong level of provider-level integration of traditional Koryo and biomedical approaches to healthcare in DPR Korea are the high level of government recognition of Koryo at a constitutional level, and the education of all medical students (traditional and biomedical) in both traditional and biomedical healthcare practices.

<ABS-P><ST>Discussion</ST> While DPR Korea is the focus of this piece, more health services research is needed internationally to provide better understanding of what are best practices of integration of traditional and complementary medicine systems with national health systems, and the population health impacts of such integration.

<KWD>Keywords: North Korea; Health systems; Healthcare delivery; Integration; Koryo medicine; Traditional and complementary medicine

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