A REPORT from the
Sixth INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HERBAL MEDICINE IN THE
CARIBBEAN  27 to 29 June 2003.  Trinidad, The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

The Caribbean Association of Researchers and Herbal Practitioners (CARAPA) held its sixth annual conference on Herbal Medicine in the Caribbean, from Friday 27 to Sunday 29 June 2003, at the Learning Resource Centre, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus in Trinidad. The conference theme was “Advancing Caribbean herbs in the 21st century.”

The conference was organized in partnership with The University of the West Indies (UWI) at St. Augustine and supported by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA).

The organizing committee members are shown in the Appendix 1.

Over the three-day period, there were at least one hundred and forty registered participants, including eight residents coming over from Tobago, and twenty-six persons coming from fourteen countries outside the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Several university students and school children also were in attendance at various times during the conference. Appendix 2 provides a list of the registered participants.

The conference included oral presentations of twenty-five papers, eight posters of scientific works, as well as six business exhibitors who displayed examples of their herbal medicinal products.

The conference started on Friday 27 June, when, at the invitation of the Chairman, the National Anthem of Trinidad and Tobago was sung beautifully by Ms. Alicia Jagessar. At the Opening Ceremony, the keynote address was given by Dr. Rampersad Parasram, acting Chief Medical Officer of Trinidad and Tobago, on behalf of the Honourable Mr. Colm Imbert, Minister of Health who was unavoidably absent. Other major speakers were the Pro Vice-Chancellor Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewari, the Principal of the UWI, St. Augustine, Dr. Lilian Reneau-Vernon, the PAHO-WHO Representative, Mr. Aaron Parke, the IICA Representative for Trinidad and Tobago, and Mr. Vernon Douglas, Chief Technical Officer, representing the Honourable Mr. John Rahael, Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources who was unavoidably absent.

The conference was constructed in four sessions, each of which consisted of papers delivered by selected speakers, and of discussions led by the chosen chairman. The conference programme appears in the Appendix 3.

The Session 1 was named “Science and Commercialization of Herbs”.

This was followed by two parallel sessions, namely – Session 2A “Scientific evaluation of medicinal plant extracts”, and the Session 2B “Developing a viable Caribbean herbal industry”.

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3
These parallel sessions were followed by four workshops, held concurrently which focused on the sub-theme - “The public and users of traditional medicine request safe, quality controlled and effective remedies”. This sub-theme was addressed by four groups of participants distinguished as: (i) scientific researchers; (ii) traditional healers; (iii) importers and distributors, and (iv) persons for integrating education and continuing education in herbal medicine. The four Group Reports were considered at the plenary session which followed, and they are shown in the **Appendix 4**.

Session 3 focused on “Issues for a Caribbean herbal industry”.

Session 4 was “Continuing Education in herbal medicine”.

Throughout the conference, there were contributions which reflected the multi-disciplinary composition of the membership of CARAPA, from farmers, herbalists, scientists, traders, manufacturers, healthcare professionals and other persons interested in herbal remedies.

A documented version of the Proceedings of the conference will be produced by The University of the West Indies at St. Augustine.

There were three very popular field trips for the participants, – at the House of Angostura Ltd., at the National Herbarium of Trinidad and Tobago, and at Dr. Chabinath Harry Ramnarine’s clinic.

Small exhibits were mounted inside the University Libraries both at St. Augustine and at the Mt. Hope campus to mark the CARAPA 6 event at St. Augustine.

The Business Meeting of CARAPA 6 was held on Saturday 28 June from 2.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. In the absence of the President of CARAPA, Mr. Heinjes Landveld of Suriname, Dr. Compton Seaforth of Trinidad and Tobago as the CARAPA Vice-President was allowed to chair the business meeting. In the absence of Mr. Kwame Garcia of St. Croix, who is the CARAPA Secretary, the CARAPA Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, Dr. Yuri Clement of Trinidad and Tobago acted as the Secretary.

The business meeting was brief, as the Chairman urged that only critical issues should be addressed on this occasion, leaving others for later in the year. The meeting accepted that Dr. Compton Seaforth should become the CARAPA President for 2003 - 2004 in accordance with the CARAPA Constitution. The meeting accepted also that Dr. Yuri Clement and Ms. Rose Rajbansee, both of Trinidad and Tobago should take up the posts of CARAPA Secretary and CARAPA Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, respectively, for the 2003-2004 period.

The meeting accepted both the Chairman’s recommendations and Dr. Gilbertha St. Rose-Benjamin’s agreement that the next international conference, CARAPA 7, should take place in June 2004 in Saint Lucia. The 2004 conference theme should be “Advancing Caribbean herbs in the 21st century II”.
As a consequence of these decisions, Dr. Gilbertha St. Rose-Benjamin assumed the position of CARAPA Vice-President for 2003-2004.

It should be noted that copies of the “Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop on Herbal Medicine in the Caribbean” (ISBN: 0-9628909-8-7) were distributed at the meeting. This 62-page document is based on the conference which was held 19-22 July 2001 in Saint Lucia. It was edited by Manuel C. Palada, Valerie Combie and Clarice C. Clarke of the USVI., and published in May 2003 by the University of the Virgin Island’s Cooperative Extension Service, St. Croix, USVI.

The meeting noted that a small group consisting of Ms. Judith-Ann Francis (IICA), Dr. Gilbertha St. Rose-Benjamin (Saint Lucia), Dr. Henry Lowe (Jamaica), Ms. Ginny Riviere (Export Development, Dominica), and Mr. Aaron Parke (IICA) would meet concerning the establishment of the Caribbean Herbs Business Association (CHBA). The CHBA could work as a sister organization of CARAPA in collaboration with the IICA Office in Port-of-Spain. More information about these developments can be accessed at www.caribbeanherbs.net

The Closing Session of the conference took place at 12.30 p.m. on Sunday 29 June 2003. As Conference Chairman and the new CARAPA President, Dr. Compton Seaforth expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to all who contributed in making a resounding success of the CARAPA 6 event. Persons and agencies cited for special mention whose support is acknowledged are listed in the Appendix 5.

We look forward to good news from the organizers of the CARAPA 7 event in 2004 in Saint Lucia.

CARAPA 6 ended at 1.15 p.m. on Sunday 29 June 2003.

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