

## Oral presentation

### **“Learning from both sides”: collaborative ethnopharmacological research examining plant-based therapies in Cape York, Queensland, Australia**

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**Introduction.** The need for indigenous people to share in benefits from investigation of their traditional medicines and for ethnopharmacological research to focus on improving health care outcomes for those that hold traditional knowledge is increasingly recognized. However, much research examining the pharmacology and chemistry of traditional medicine is still initiated by Western scientists. We argue that there is a need to further develop models of research collaboration between indigenous researchers and Western scientists where research on medicinal plants is locally initiated and driven by indigenous people as part of their own planning for sustainable natural resources management and economic development.

**Objectives.** To describe the first stages of a collaborative plant products project initiated by Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation, a clan-based organization representing the interests of Kaanju people living on their traditional homelands centred on the Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers (Cape York Peninsula, Australia).

**Methods.** The Corporation has developed a comprehensive land and natural resource management strategy to facilitate sustainable homelands and economic development [1]. This emphasizes management according to local laws and customs. It also includes, where appropriate, the incorporation of western scientific knowledge.

**Results.** Western scientific investigation of medicinal plants through collaboration with University-based researchers is being used to provide information that will assist in determining opportunities for developing sustainable plant-based enterprises as well as supporting the safe use of traditional remedies in health care. The research partnership allows exchange of knowledge and understandings between University-based researchers with expertise in botany, pharmacology and plant chemistry and Kaanju researchers with expertise in traditional medicine, methods of plant harvesting, preparation and management of natural resources. The team have worked together to produce a detailed research collaboration and intellectual property (IP) agreement. This defines work and funding commitments, confidentiality, protection of indigenous cultural and IP rights and ownership and development of project IP. Joint publication of research findings and recognition of traditional knowledge are emphasized in the research agreement.

**Conclusion.** Kaanju people work as researchers in collaboration with University-based colleagues in the investigation of medicines rather than “stakeholders” or by-standers to the actual research process.

Keywords: Australian Aboriginal medicine, natural resources management, medicinal plants

#### Selected References

1. Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation (2005). Kaanju Homelands Indigenous Protected Area Management Plan, Coen, Queensland

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