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Korea steps up support for expanding traditional medicine overseas

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Targeting market expansion to North America, including the US and Canada

The Ministry of Health and Welfare (MoHW), South Korea government and the National Institute for Korean Medicine Development (NIKOM) have selected seven new medical institutions for the Traditional Korean Medicine Overseas Expansion Support Programmme, with three for overseas expansion and four for attracting Chinese patients.

Since last year, the MoHW and NIKOM have supported the establishment and growth of traditional Korean medicine clinics overseas, including in the Philippines and Vietnam. This year, they plan to expand the programme to North America, targeting the United States (US) and Canada.

In 2024, the number of foreign patients visiting traditional Korean medicine clinics in Korea reached approximately 33,000, an 85% increase from the previous year and the highest since international patient attraction efforts began in 2009. In response, the government plans to strengthen support for leading institutions with strong capabilities in attracting patients from Southeast Asia and the Middle East and to expand outreach through certified medical tourism agencies.

The three newly selected medical institutions expanding to the US (two institutions) and Canada (one institution) have completed preliminary preparations, including securing permanent residency, obtaining acupuncture licenses, assessing market status, and conducting market research. They are now set to begin phased expansion. Each institution will receive a total of KRW 90 million in support, as well as legal consulting on clinic establishment and regulatory consulting for the export of pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

Building on existing supports to attract foreign patients from Japan, China, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, the MoHW has selected four additional clinics in popular tourist areas with proven experience in international patient services. These clinics will focus on attracting Chinese patients.