

Platforming Local Evidence: Knowledge Translation and the Future of Cambodian Pharmacy Research

Editorial

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Introduction

High-quality health systems depend on high-quality evidence. Yet evidence only improves health when it is generated, shared, translated and applied. Cambodia is entering an important period in which locally generated research is becoming an increasingly important component of national health system development.

Accordingly, this first *Journal of Cambodian Health* Special Edition marks an important moment for the journal and for the visibility of Cambodian health research. Linked to the University of Puthisastra Faculty of Pharmacy Conference 2025, the edition is more than a publication exercise. It is aligned with the conference theme, “*Innovation Pharmacy Research: Advancing Therapeutics, Technology and Health Care*,” and reflects the university’s commitment to strengthening pharmacy research as a contributor to Cambodian health system development. It is an opportunity to convert local research activity into visible, peer-reviewed, and usable knowledge.

This direction reflects Cambodia’s wider health, research, and innovation trajectory. National policy frameworks increasingly position research, innovation, workforce development, and health system strengthening as central to long-term social and economic development. The *National Research Agenda 2025* links Cambodia’s Vision 2030 and Vision 2050 ambitions to the development of a knowledge-based society, emphasizing research and development as a means to build human capital, identify societal problems, generate innovation, and strengthen national development. It also calls for a stronger, more standardized research ecosystem aligned with national priorities and supported by collaboration between universities, government, the private sector, civil society, and development partners (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2023).

This is also visible in the health sector. The *Health Strategic Plan 2025–2034* sets out a vision of healthy lives and well-being for all Cambodians, supported by people-centered services, responsive systems, quality, innovation, and collaboration (Ministry of Health, 2025a). Within this context, the Faculty of Pharmacy Special Edition provides a timely opportunity to show how a local journal can support research visibility, scholarly development, and the translation of evidence into wider use.

The Faculty of Pharmacy has a central role in this process, as a key focal point for pharmacy education and professional development. The Faculty provides an important platform for students, academics, and practitioners to engage with research that is directly connected to medicines, therapeutics, pharmaceutical science, pharmacy practice, and public health. By linking conference activity to peer-reviewed publication, this Special Edition helps strengthen a research culture within the Faculty and supports the development of future pharmacist-researchers who can contribute evidence to Cambodia’s evolving health priorities.

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Why pharmacy research matters in Cambodia

Pharmacy research is especially important because medicines sit at the center of many health system challenges. Pharmaceuticals are not only clinical products; they are part of a wider system involving regulation, procurement, distribution, professional practice, consumer behavior, private-sector provision, affordability, and public trust. Cambodia's pharmaceutical sector has also been shaped by a complex history of disruption and rebuilding, including the loss of pharmacists, pharmacies, and formal pharmaceutical infrastructure during periods of conflict, followed by rapid market expansion and the growth of formal and informal medicine distribution systems (Bureau-Point, 2021; Bureau-Point, Baxerres and Chheang, 2020).

These issues continue to matter. Research on self-medication in Cambodia highlights blurred boundaries between prescribed and self-directed medicine use, while national policy has recognized the need to strengthen pharmaceutical laws and regulations, address substandard and counterfeit medicines, improve prescribing and dispensing, promote rational use of medicines, and build the pharmaceutical workforce (Ministry of Health, 2012). More recent health strategy also emphasizes rational selection and use of medicines, resilient supply systems, regulatory compliance, and quality assurance (Ministry of Health, 2025a).

For these reasons, pharmacy is an appropriate focus for JCH's first thematic issue. Pharmacy research can generate locally grounded evidence on how medicines are used, regulated, supplied, prescribed, dispensed, understood, and trusted. It can also support practical improvements in education, clinical practice, public health, pharmaceutical technology, and policy. In this sense, pharmacy research is not only about medicines themselves, but about the systems and relationships through which medicines become safe, effective, equitable, and meaningful for Cambodian communities.

From conference outputs to research capacity

Conferences create space for researchers, practitioners, students, and institutions to exchange ideas, test early findings, receive feedback, and build scholarly communities. This is especially valuable in emerging research systems, where conferences may be among the first formal opportunities for students and early-career researchers to present their work. However, conference outputs are often time-limited. Abstracts, posters, and presentations may generate discussion, but they do not always become part of the permanent scholarly record. Bibliometric research suggests that conference proceedings can support scientific communication and discussion, but also that they generally have a shorter useful life and are cited less frequently than journal literature in many fields (Lisée, Larivière and Archambault, 2008).

The value of the JCH Special Edition is therefore its ability to extend the life and reach of conference research. By supporting presenters to develop abstracts into full articles, the edition can move work from presentation to publication, from discussion to documentation, and from institutional achievement to shared evidence.

Special editions can also function as capacity-building platforms, particularly where early-career researchers have limited access to mentoring, publication support, peer review, and international academic networks. The challenge is often not a lack of ideas or local insight, but the absence of structured routes through which those ideas can be developed into publishable, policy-relevant, and practice-facing work.

Similar lessons can be drawn from structured publication initiatives in Cambodia, including the *Cambodia 2040* series. Developed through a partnership between Future Forum and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, *Cambodia 2040* brought together Cambodian authors and intellectual voices to examine future

scenarios across areas of socioeconomic development, using a shared foresighting and policy-focused methodology (Deth et al., n.d.). As an editorial project, the series demonstrated that structured publication platforms can support authors to strengthen analytical confidence, contribute to policy debate, and build networks of exchange that continue beyond publication. The same principle applies to journal special editions. Peer review is not only a gatekeeping mechanism; when well managed, it is also a formative learning process.

Knowledge translation and the role of JCH

The ultimate value of local research lies not only in its production, but in its use. Knowledge translation provides a useful framework for understanding this process. It has been defined as a dynamic and iterative process involving the synthesis, dissemination, exchange, and ethical application of knowledge to improve health, strengthen services, and support evidence-informed decision-making (Straus, Tetroe and Graham, 2009; Straus, Tetroe and Graham, 2011). In this sense, KT is concerned with closing the “know-do gap”: the space between what is known through research and what is applied in practice, policy, education, and health system design.

For journals, this creates an important responsibility. Publication is necessary, but not sufficient. Research that remains inaccessible, overly technical, poorly contextualized, or disconnected from decision-makers is unlikely to shape real-world change. A recent JCH commentary argued that KT should be understood not as an add-on, but as a central pillar of ethical and effective health system development in Cambodia, requiring localization of evidence, workforce capacity-building, equitable partnerships, digital tools, embedded inquiry, and tailored communication (Water, Kong and Renfrew, 2025).

Special editions can contribute to this process by making research more visible, coherent, and usable. A themed issue does more than gather articles; it frames a body of work around a shared problem or field of practice. For the Faculty of Pharmacy Special Edition, this means creating a platform where research on medicines, pharmacy education, clinical practice, public health, pharmaceutical technology, and regulation can be read together as part of a wider contribution to Cambodia’s health system.

This reflects the broader purpose of the *Journal of Cambodian Health*. JCH is a multidisciplinary platform for health and social science research relevant to Cambodia, Southeast Asia, and the wider Asia-Pacific region. Its mandate recognizes that health is shaped not only by clinical care, but also by social, economic, political, environmental, educational, and institutional conditions. The Faculty of Pharmacy Special Edition therefore provides an important test case for how JCH can support locally generated research.

Locally generated pharmacy evidence is especially important because medicine use, access, regulation, and trust are shaped by national systems and community realities. Cambodian pharmacy research can help inform safer prescribing and dispensing, better medicine-use behaviours, stronger pharmaceutical education, improved regulatory practice, and more responsive health services. In this way, the Special Edition is not only a record of academic work, but also a contribution to evidence-informed pharmacy practice and policy in Cambodia.

For the JCH, this first Special Edition should be understood as both a milestone and a model. Its success should be measured not only by the number of papers published, but by whether it strengthens research capability, encourages collaboration, supports emerging authors, and helps position Cambodian evidence within regional and global conversations. For the Faculty of Pharmacy, it is also a model for nurturing future pharmacist-researchers and promoting evidence-informed pharmacy practice in Cambodia. The same approach can be extended to future thematic issues across other health priorities, disciplines, and forms of knowledge translation. In this way, the Special Edition represents an important

step towards a wider vision: Cambodian health research that is not only produced and published, but translated, shared, and used to inform national priorities and international scholarship.

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