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Traditional medicine to treat AIDS

KUNMING: Chinese medicine practitioners are trying to use the country's 2,000-year-old traditional medicine to treat AIDS in the hope of finding a way to help conquer the incurable epidemic that just entered its fourth decade.

Since 2004, China's State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has conducted a pilot programme for the application of TCM to AIDS treatment that has benefited more than 14,000 HIV carriers and AIDS patients in 19 provinces by the end of last year, according to Wang Jian, deputy director of the TCM Center for AIDS Prevention and Treatment under China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences.

It can prolong patients' life and eventually reduce the death rate.
— MA KEJIAN

Under the programme, a HIV-infected person can voluntarily choose free TCM treatment if their counts of CD4, a type of cell in the immune system, reaches 350 per cubic millimetre or above.

But when their CD4 count declines below this level, they will be given the Western antiretroviral therapy, the predominant treatment of AIDS in the world, alone or

in combination with the TCM treatment.

While the antiretroviral therapy focuses on the suppression of the HIV virus, the TCM treatment puts more emphasis on the protection of the immune system, which is highly vulnerable to HIV, according to Ma Kejian, director of the research institute of traditional Chinese medicine in southwestern Yunnan province.

In addition, TCM treatment can also improve quality of life by significantly alleviating AIDS symptoms with nearly no side effects, Ma said.

"Thus it can prolong patients' life and eventually reduce the death rate." — Xinhua