

## Uniting Western, traditional medicine



The role of traditional medicine and healers was acknowledged by Western research at a symbolic ceremony yesterday.

Academics, traditional healers and health professionals celebrated the partnership between traditional healers in South Africa and researchers from the U.S. and the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

A significant initiative was made in the history of medicine following long negotiations between scientists, traditional healers and medical doctors to ensure a better healthcare system for all South Africans. The ceremony, attended by Professor William Folk from the University of Missouri in the U.S. and Professor Nceba Gqaleni, chairman of Indigenous Health Care Systems Research, was viewed as a commitment by the universities to forge partnerships with traditional healers.

A cow was slaughtered in a private ceremony to pay respects to the traditional healers who felt it was important to appease their ancestors. A video of the prayer was shown during the ceremony.

Traditional healers and researchers have also joined American scientists to study several indigenous herbal medicines used by South Africans with HIV, tuberculosis and cancer.

UKZN Vice-Chancellor Professor Malegapuru Makgoba said it was time for traditional medicine to be recognised as part of SA's health care system because 40 million people still consult traditional healers.

"Traditional medicines have been tried and tested for many generations. There is dignity, rules and ethics that all traditional healers follow and this should be part of our country," he said.