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The use of traditional medicine among Bayero University community, Kano

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Abstract

The use of traditional medicine among the educated people has not been widely studied in Nigeria because of the assumption that only uneducated and rural people use traditional medicine. The present study assessed the extent of use, efficacy, safety, affordability and potential toxicities of traditional medicine among the students, academic and non-academic staff of Bayero University, Kano. Respondents were interviewed with a well structured questionnaire. The results showed that more than two-third of the respondents had ever used traditional medicine for various health concerns. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that traditional medicine is effective, safe, affordable and have moderate side effects. Also, most of the respondents supported the integration of orthodox and traditional systems of medicine in Nigeria. It can be concluded that the use of traditional medicine products is popular among the respondents, but there is need to evaluate the efficacy, safety and quality of most of those products.

Keywords: Use, Bayero University, traditional medicine, orthodox medicine and integration

Introduction

Traditional medicine (TM) is known to be a method of healing illnesses on its own concept of health and diseases which includes unscientific knowledge systems that developed over generations within various societies before the era of orthodox medicine [1]. The Knowledge is passed orally from parents to their children and is jealously guarded in certain families. The components of Traditional Medicine are encompassing and include herbal medicine, therapeutic fasting and dieting among others [2]. The practitioners include herbalists, diviners and midwives. Most traditional medicine practitioners (TMPs) in Nigeria are people without formal education, who have rather received knowledge of medicinal plants and their effects on the human body [1]. They have a deep and personal involvement in the healing process and protect the therapeutic knowledge by keeping it secret from others [2]. In a manner similar to western medicinal practice, the practitioners of Traditional Medicine specialize in particular areas of their profession [3].

The World Health Organisation (WHO) urged developing countries to develop Traditional Medicine and include them in national medicine lists, i.e. traditional preparations that have demonstrated their efficacy and safety in scientific researches [4]. During the last decade, WHO and the African Union (AU) developed various instruments to support countries to develop Traditional Medicine and make it a credible instrument in order for it to be integrated into the national health system. Although the AU declared that the decade 2001-2010 was the decade for traditional medicine to fast track its development so as to make Africans proud. However, the outcome of the programme within the stipulated time was not encouraging [5]. Despite the poor results from the programme, African Governments are being urged and supported to continue research activities on Traditional Medicine as a means of contributing to the development of quality health care service in Africa and the world at large [6].

The reasons why there is a high growth in the population with regards the use of traditional medicine are poverty and the cultural believe on the safety of the medicine. Most people believe that traditional medicine is more natural than orthodox medicines. However, studies have shown that not all natural medicines are safe; some are poisonous [7].

The use of traditional medicine among the general population, pediatric population, pregnant women, medical students and urban residents has been extensively studied by many

researchers in Nigeria [8]. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study was conducted to specifically determine the use of traditional medicine among the educated people because of the assumption that users of traditional medicine are mostly uneducated and living in the rural communities. Therefore, this study was aimed to determine the level of acceptance, usage, safety and efficacy of traditional medicine among Bayero University community, Kano.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

Bayero University Kano is situated in Kano State, Nigeria. It was formerly known as the Ahmadu Bello College set up in 1960, in the old city of Kano, and later renamed Abdullahi Bayero College in 1962. Abdullahi Bayero College was then raised to the status of a university College in 1975, with the right to award degrees on behalf of the prestigious Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The status was again changed to that of university, and Bayero University became the name. The University is operating in two campuses (old and new site) with 15 faculties, 85 academic departments, research centres, teaching hospital and micro finance bank. The university is also hosting some federal government agencies, commercial banks among others [9].

Data Collection

After a free and informed consent was obtained, the respondents were allowed at least 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The information collected included the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the use of traditional medicine, its safety and efficacy. Opinions of the respondents on the need to integrate and/or co-recognized traditional medicine with orthodox medicine were also obtained.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as percentages and pie chart were used in the analysis of the data.

Results

A total number of 550 respondents were interviewed, and this included the undergraduate and postgraduate students, academic and non-academic staff of Bayero University, Kano (Table 1). Most of the respondents (90%) were within the age range of 20-40years old. The highest number of the respondents were undergraduate students (50%), male (54%) and single (73%).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Specification	Percentage (%)
Age	20-40	90
	41-60	8
	61 and above	2
Sex	Male	54
	Female	46
Marital Status	Single	73
	Married	24
	Divorced	3
Educational status	Undergraduate	50
	Graduate	27
	Postgraduate	23

Majority of the respondents (85%) had ever used traditional medicine for various health concerns which included malaria, typhoid fever, pile, cancer, fever, measles, diarrhea, cough sexually transmitted diseases, stomach ulcers, pneumonia and diabetes.

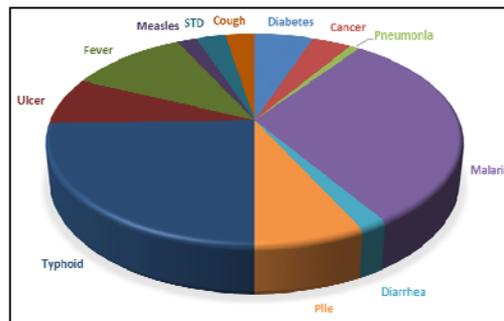


Fig 1: Percentage Occurrence of Diseases for which the Respondents Used Traditional Medicine Preparations

The respondents were of the opinion that traditional medicine is effective (80%), safe (71%), affordable, accessible and have no adverse effects (80%) (Table 2). Also, most of the respondents (94.5%) supported the integration of traditional medicine with its modern counterpart i.e orthodox medicine. Also, about 19% of traditional medicine users in this study had experienced one or more adverse effects following the use of traditional medicine, and this includes dizziness, diarrhea, total body weakness, abdominal pain etc. Non-users of traditional medicine (15%) avoided it because they believed that it is ineffective, unsafe and bitter to taste.

Table 2: Level of Acceptance, Efficacy, Safety and Affordability of Traditional Medicine

Variable	Percentage (%)
Acceptance	85
Efficacy	80
Safety	70.9
Affordability and accessibility	80
Need for integration	94.5

Discussion

The present study assessed the level of acceptance and/or use of traditional medicine among the highly educated people of Bayero University. The study showed that a substantial number of the respondents are using traditional medicine. This finding is similar to a study on herbal/traditional products which showed that the educated middle class have turned to herbal remedies and botanicals all over the world [10].

Most of the respondents were influenced by parents, relatives, spouses and friends to use traditional medicine. This finding is in agreement with the previous studies [8, 11, 12], and this further corroborates the fact that the knowledge of traditional medicine is passed from parents to their children, spouses, relatives and friends [13].

Majority of the respondents believed that traditional medicine is safer, effective and relatively affordable when compared to orthodox medicine. The respondents mistakenly attributed the safety of traditional medicine to its natural sources. However, this does not automatically guaranty its safety [14], this is because traditional medicine can cause serious illness from allergy to liver or kidney malfunction to cancer and even death [15].

Malaria and typhoid fever were the most common diseases for which the respondents used traditional medicine preparations to treat; this is not surprising since malaria and typhoid are one of the major diseases responsible for significant mortality in developing countries [16]. Previous studies have shown that traditional medicine has been found to be effective especially in the treatment of malaria [17].

A substantial number of the respondents in this study

supported the integration of traditional and orthodox systems of medicine into the official health care systems of Nigeria. This was quite expected since majority of them believed that traditional medicine is safer and effective. One of the greatest benefits to be made in integrating traditional and orthodox system of medicine into the official health care system of Nigeria and other developing countries is that the increase in manpower will help to provide total health coverage for all, thus primary health care will then be available to the whole population^[18].

Conclusion

The use of traditional medicine products is popular among the respondents; however, there is need to evaluate the efficacy, safety and quality of most of those products. Also, the support shown by the respondents toward the integration of traditional and orthodox medicine is encouraging, and this shows that the future of traditional medicine in Nigeria is bright.

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