Title:
The Use and Safety of Herbal Medicine Within the Context of Ghana: A Qualitative Exploration

Lydia Aziato, PhD, MPhil, BA (Nurs) (Psych) (Hons)
Department of Adult Health, School of Nursing, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

Session Title:
Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Slot:
C 03: Sunday, 29 October 2017: 10:45 AM-11:30 AM
Scheduled Time:
10:45 AM

Keywords:
Herbal medicine, Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and Qualitative research

References:


Abstract Summary:
The use of herbal medicine for different health challenges continue to rise. This study explored the factors which enhanced and hinder herbal medicine use as well as practices that unsure the safety of herbal medicine as well as the dynamics of clinical use of herbal medicine in Ghana.

Learning Activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The learner will be able to gain a comprehensive knowledge on factors that influence the use of herbal medicine in Ghana</td>
<td>The presentation will highlight processes of exploratory inductive qualitative research approach that were used to generate findings</td>
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<td>The learner will understand the clinical use of herbal medicine and safety issues production</td>
<td>The concept of herbal medicine safety and clinical decision making will be discussed in-depth</td>
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Abstract Text:

Purpose: This study sought to investigate the facilitators and barriers of herbal medicine among Ghanaian adults who use one form of herbal medicine or the other and to provide an in-depth description of the safety and clinical use of herbal medicine in Ghana.

Methods: The study employed an inductive exploratory qualitative approach. It was conducted at a private herbal clinic in Accra. Purposive sampling was employed to recruit 16 herbal medicine users and 15 key informants. Data collection was through individual face-to-face interviews and these were transcribed and analysed using content analysis procedures.
Results: It was realized that the factors that enhanced the use of herbal medicine included use of convincing information to enhance the initiation of herbal medicine use, effectiveness of herbal medicine, personal preference for herbal medicine, perceived ineffectiveness of western medicine and integration of spirituality in herbal medicine. The factors that hindered herbal medicine use included negative perceptions and attitudes about herbal medicine, poor vending environment, poor knowledge of vendors, high cost of herbal products at credible herbal clinics and inconsistent effectiveness of some herbal products. Participants desired that the national health insurance scheme will cover the cost of herbal medicine to alleviate the financial burden associated with herbal medicine use.

Findings from key informants generated two major themes focusing on the production and processing of herbal medicine, and the usage of herbal medicine. The sub-themes generated were production of herbs and herbal medicine, analysis of herbal products, training of herbalists, client assessment, herbal medicine treatment decisions and adjuvant therapy. It was realized that there were difficulties acquiring sustainable raw materials for herbal medicine production. Quality aspects include the input of research institutions and regulatory bodies to ensure that safe herbal products are used, and the formal training of herbalists. Patients at the study locations are assessed using orthodox means and may be treated with adjuvant therapies as well as herbal medicine.

Conclusion: Although some Ghanaians patronize herbal medicine, the negative perceptions about herbal medicine resulting from deceitful producers and vendors call for enhanced education and monitoring to ensure that effective herbal products are used. The findings provide insight into the issues and possibilities of integrating herbal medicine into a wider health system.