

Innovation, education, health and human capital

TITLE: Innovation in Traditional Medicine.

Case Study from Nigeria

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Medicinal plants are the primary source of medicines used by Traditional Medicine Practitioners (TMPs) in Nigeria. Several medicinal plants of global importance originate in the country. 85% of the population makes use of traditional medicine (2, 3). The National Demographic and Health Surveys Report (NDS, 1999) indicate that only 37% of births take place in conventional health centers or hospitals.

Series of study was carried out between 2005 and 2006 for the following reasons:

- To investigate the gender distribution and the areas of specialization of the TMPs.
- To document the common plants used by Traditional Medicine Practitioners in Nigeria.
- To acknowledge the level of innovation and the current challenges to Traditional Medicine Practice in Nigeria. This is to assist the government formulate policies that will document, regulate and promote the practice.

900 questionnaires were distributed to TMPs in the South West, South South and North Central geographical zones of Nigeria. 37% of the respondents were women while 63% were men. 41% do not refer cases but adhere to strict traditional methods by making use of plants. The later group may not want to refer their cases because of the unhealthy working condition that exist between them and the orthodox doctors. (4).

The type of method or medicinal plant used is related to the symptoms observed. (1). This also reveals one of the deficiencies of Traditional Medicine Practitioners as the method of diagnosis is not adequate in most cases although they enjoy increasing popularity. Some of the Herbs used by the Practitioners include: *Vermonia amygdalina* (For the treatment of Diabetes), *Morinder Lucida* (For the treatment of Malaria) and *Acalypha wilkesiana* (For treating skin infections).

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