

The Problem of Etiology and Variation of Diseases in Traditional Hausa Health System in Nigeria: Implication for Counseling Practices.

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ABSTRACT

Traditional Hausa health system involved indigenous herbalism and spirituality. In Nigeria there are problems in determining the causes of diseases in traditional Hausa health system. This paper revealed the differences in chosen method of treatment among Hausa community which rely heavily on spiritual aspects. The paper revealed that the non- proper treatment of disease and well understanding of its causes has implication for patient counseling. The percentage of traditional treatment of diseases is highest among Hausa ethnic group. A secondary source of data was employed for this study.

KEY WORDS: *disease, etiology, diagnosis, counseling, Hausa health system*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of mankind, health, sickness and diseases have been a cause of concern. It is generally agreed that sickness and disease are universal threat to individual and group survival. There has been continuous effort through healing practices to keep body and mind in a state of equilibrium. In this vein, man in all forms of societal epoch has engaged in some of medicine which some are quite ancient. While some are primitive cultural practices that have being passed down for generations through norms and values. Most traditional African cultures believed that, to maintain the health and vitality of human beings, they have to address forces in both the natural and spiritual world.

The term “medicine” from the context of Hausa community of Nigeria is in a way similar to the modern conception of the term. Medicine refers to medical beliefs, preventive and curative practices against diseases or misfortune (Gusau, 2014). All these beliefs and practices had their origin in traditions of the people and are accepted by them. Before the advent of western science medicinal practice as applied to human being traditional health system was probably very similar in all parts of the world (F.A.O 1984, cited in Neba 2011,). The healing arts among Hausa community in Nigeria consisted of two major elements that were often used in combination:

- i) The application of natural products
- ii) And appeal to spiritual forces.

Natural products include extract or concoction from leaves, roots, fats, animal’s parts or insect. Appeal to spiritual force involved incantations, symbols and sacrifices among other rituals

(Darshan and Bertus, 2000). These practices are still very common among many cultures. World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 70% to 80% of people in developing nations use traditional medicine as a major source of health care. Many African cultures have a holistic perception of health and vitality. They further stated that traditional Hausa health system etiology of diseases must put five entities in to consideration; God, the super human and ancestral spirits; Mankind; biological life forms (plants and animals); and finally all phenomenon and objects that do not have a biological life.

However, De Smet (2000) describes how these entities are always included in traditional African health care. There is a variety of health related belief held by people because of variation in culture and tradition, the traditional health belief of people is mostly associated with their culture, the socio-medical system of traditional health system place emphasis on social and spiritual dysfunction causing illness.

The manner in which traditional health belief work as a form of social control is most evident when the ways to prevent illness are considered. In traditional Hausa health system good health is associated with strict adherence to approved patterns of behaviors and avoidance of dangerous people, places and objects. Preventive measures to ensure wellbeing are based on laws governing behavior.

Etiology of Diseases in Traditional Hausa Health System

There are problems in determining the causes of disease in traditional Hausa health system. This is due to the fact that there is no standard way or procedure of identifying the causes of diseases in traditional Hausa health system. For example, it would be difficult to identify when and how witchcraft, magic, or ancestral spirit are at work when someone is fall sick. Unlike in modern medicine where someone might be taken to laboratory to investigate the causes of the sickness using various apparatus like microscope, statoscope, blood test to identify germs/bacteria as the causes of disease and can easily treated. However, their functional equivalents in traditional health system were shrines, prayers, incantations etc. Therefore, in traditional health system, there is difficulty in determining the causes of a particular sickness.

Diagnostic in Traditional Hausa Health System

The diagnoses and chosen method of treatment in traditional Hausa health system rely heavily on spiritual aspects, oftentimes based on the belief that psycho-spiritual aspects should be addressed before medical aspects. In traditional health system, it is believed that nobody becomes sick without sufficient reason. Traditional practitioners look at the ultimate "who" rather than "what" when locating the cause and cure of an illness, and the answers given come from the cosmological belief of the people. Rather than looking to the medical or physical behind an illness, traditional healers attempt to determine the root cause underlying it, which is believed to stem from a lack of balance between the patient and his/her social environment or the spiritual world, not by natural causes. Natural causes are in fact, not seen as natural at all, but manipulation of spirits or the gods. For example, sickness is sometimes said to be attributed to guilt by the person, family, or village for a sin or moral infringement. According to Morgan (2011), traditional practitioner uses incantation to make a diagnosis, divination is sometimes used if the illness is not easily identified, otherwise, if the sickness may be quickly diagnosed and given a remedy.

Treatment of Diseases in Traditional Hausa Health System

According to bedworth (2000), traditional practitioners used a variety of treatments ranging from magic to biomedical method such as fasting and dieting, herbal therapies, bathing, massage, and surgical procedures. Migraines, coughs, abscesses, and pleurisy are often cured using the method of bleed cupping after which an herbal ointment is applied with follow up herbal drugs. Animals are also sometimes used to transfer the illness to afterward. Some cultures also rub hot herbal ointment across the patient eyelids to cure headaches. Malaria for example, is cured by both drinking and using the steam from an herbal mixture. Fevers are often cured using a steam bath. Also vomiting is induced to cure some diseases. Some healers may employ the use of charms, incantation and the casting of spells in their treatment.

Orthodox and Traditional Health System

health care system consists of the major forms of health care delivery system in developing countries. The orthodox also known as western style medicine, this system comprises of trained nurses, mid wires, pharmacist doctors and other paramedical personnel. The orthodox health care facilities are spread to most urban and rural communities in the form of hospitals, health care center, an

According to erinosho (2006), traditional health care system is a significant component of health care delivery in most developing nations because it enjoys considerable support in the populace. The traditional health system has the following components.

- i- Diviners: divination and healing are often practiced by the same person, who has the power to deal with the spiritual realm. They look for disturbing events in the past, which can cause misfortune if left untreated. Many healers are specialized in one or more biomedical aspects such as herbalism, midwifery surgery.
- ii- Herbalism: Common ailments, such as headaches or coughs are considered to be diseases with natural causes. Their symptoms are treated at the household level without resorting to magical practices. For other illnesses, or when a common ailment persists, recourse is sought to divination in combination with herbalism. Herbal medicine is applied to every part of the body in any conceivable way. There are oral forms, enemas, fumes to be include, vaginal preparations fluid administrated into the urinary tract, preparations for the skin and various lotions and drops for the eye, ears and nose.

The traditional healer knows the virtues of the native plants. The healing includes all elements of the natural community, that is, the human society and its environment; mountains, clouds, plants, water, animals and streams.

Implication of Traditional Hausa Health System in Counseling Practice

Counseling is a set of procedures used in assisting individuals in solving problems that arises in various aspects of their lives (Akinade, 2013). As a personalized dialogue, interview or interaction between the client experiencing a problem and the counselor who tries to render help found to be difficult in traditional Hausa health system. Understanding the etiology of diseases and diagnostic method in traditional Hausa health system was based on speculation rather than undergone experiment or test. Diagnoses can only be given when the illness and its causes is fully understood and studied. Counseling is found hard in traditional Hausa health system due to the problem in determining the causes of diseases.

Concept of Traditional Medicine and Practitioner

Traditional Medicine

Reference was made to the definition of traditional medicine already attempted by a group of expert from the African Region convened by the WHO Regional official for Africa, which met in Brazzaville in 1976. The definition arrived at the group of experts was as follows:

“ It has been defined as the sum total of all knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosis, prevention and elimination of physical, mental or social imbalance and relying exclusively on practical experience and observation handed down from generation to generation, whether verbally or in writing (Gusau 2014).

“Traditional medical might also be considered as a solid amalgamation of dynamic medical know-how and ancestral experience.

“Traditional African medicine might also be considers to kinds sum total of practices, measures, ingredients and procedures of all kinds whether material or not which from time immemorial had enable the African to guard against disease, to alleviate his suffering and to cure himself

The Traditional Healer or Practitioner

Traditional practitioner is a person who is recognized by the community in which he lives as a competent to provide health care by using vegetables, animals and mineral substance and certain other methods based on social, culture and religions background as well as on the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that are prevalent in the community regarding physical, mental and social well-being and the causation of disease and disability.

Interaction of Traditional Health System and Western Medical System

According to mokaila(2001), Western medicine is primarily interested in the recognition and treatment of diseases. Traditional medicine seeks to provide a meaningful explanation for illness and to respond to the personal, family and community issues surrounding illness. Traditional medicine explain not only the “how” but also the “why” of a sickness. It was believed that all medicines in so far as it is satisfactorily directed towards the common goal of providing health care, despite the setting in time, place culture. In this light, it was observed that the essential differences among the various system of medicine arise not from the difference in the goal or effect but rather from the culture of the peoples who practice the different system. However, in a country like Sri lanka the traditional system of health meets the basic health needs of about 70% of the population. Most of the traditional physicians were employed by Government as specials in hospitals. India provided another example of the role of traditional medicine in health care system. The integration of traditional medicine into the public health care system is advancing satisfactorily. Ayurveda, Siddha, unani and Yoga are now widely adopted through government policy and included in the curricula of several institutions of learning and centers for the training of diverse types of health personnel.

Strengths and Weakness of Traditional Health System

In many part of the region both traditional and modern health system exists. Normally people consult both systems, though for different reason and during different stages of diseases.

Certain diseases are believed to be better treated by one of these systems. However, there are strength and weakness of traditional health system

Strengths

1. Traditional health care among Hausa community is more accessible to the population than cosmopolitan western style of health care system.
2. Traditional medicine cannot be ignored because it still commands a large following among Hausa community in Nigeria.
3. The society benefitted from the medicines and skills of traditional healers, as has been the case in some developing nations like India and China

Weaknesses

- 1- Indigenous healers lack the skills needed to profer correct diagnosis on very serious disorder.
- 2- In traditional health care system, the traditional healers are unwilling to accept the limitation of their knowledge, skills and medicines which may cause serious problem in a person health.
- 3- Traditional medicines lack standard dosage and have not been subjected to scientific verifications.
- 4- In traditional health care system there is lack of equipment, which are require to conduct physical examinations as regard to the etiology of diseases due to the divergent belief.

Conclusion

Since different paradigms of health and illness stand in the way of real integration of the two systems, western biomedicine and indigenous traditional medicine may remain a part parallel system. Traditional system of medicine remain the major source of health care for more than two third of the world population, and that impressive progress has been made in certain developing countries, such as china and india, through the integration of traditional with western system of health care, and the application of modern science and technology to the promotion and development of traditional medicine. However, there was a great disparity between western style of medicine and traditional (local) style of health system regard to the causation and variation in etiology of disease, in the traditional system of health care itself there was this difference because of the difference in culture and belief system. So many forces were believed to be causes of disease and illness in traditional health care system

Recommendations

In making recommendation so many thing has to be taken into consideration to find and, investigate on how to improve and develop traditional health care system to meets the yearning and aspirations of people toward meeting the health care needs.

- 1- The world health organization should use all the possible resource at its command to continue promote and develop traditional health care system
- 2- Promoting the formulation and declaration of specific national polices for the encouragement, support and development of traditional health care system. The elements for such a policy should include the legal recognition of traditional medicine and the

integration of traditional medicine into national comprehensive health system including primary health care.

- 3- Application of appropriate technology to traditional health care improvement based on simplicity, safety, efficacy and availability at low cost
- 4- Introduction of traditional medicine into public hospitals, dispensaries and health centers.
- 5- Government should intensify effort to promote co-operation between developed and developing countries and particularly science and technical cooperation among developing nations in the field of traditional medicine.

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