



Integrating Indigenous and Biomedical Knowledge: A Survey of Medicinal Practices in Botswana's Maternal Healthcare

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Abstract

Maternal healthcare in Botswana operates within a pluralistic system where biomedical and indigenous practices coexist. There is limited systematic documentation on the extent and nature of indigenous medicinal knowledge integration within formal maternal care settings. This study surveyed the prevalence, types, and perceptions of indigenous medicinal practices used for maternal health in Botswana. Its objectives were to identify commonly used plants and practices, understand the reasons for their use, and assess healthcare providers' awareness. A cross-sectional survey was conducted using structured questionnaires. A purposive sample of 350 postnatal women attending public health clinics across urban and rural districts was recruited. Fifty biomedical healthcare providers (midwives and nurses) from the same facilities were also surveyed. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. A significant proportion (68%) of surveyed women reported using indigenous medicines during pregnancy or postpartum, primarily for nausea, labour augmentation, and postpartum recovery. A key theme was concurrent use of both systems, with indigenous remedies often sought for cultural or perceived efficacy reasons. Most healthcare providers (82%) were aware of this use but reported limited formal knowledge or guidelines for engagement. Indigenous medicinal practices are widely utilised alongside biomedical care in Botswana's maternal health landscape, indicating an entrenched dual system. The lack of structured dialogue poses risks of uncoordinated care but presents an opportunity for culturally sensitive models. Develop training modules for biomedical providers on common indigenous practices and potential interactions. Foster community dialogues between traditional healers and health facilities to promote safe, collaborative care. Initiate research to pharmacologically validate commonly used plants for efficacy and safety. Indigenous knowledge, traditional medicine, maternal health, Botswana, healthcare integration, medicinal plants This survey provides systematic evidence on the concurrent use of indigenous and biomedical practices in Botswana's maternal healthcare, highlighting a critical need for structured engagement and informed dialogue between the two systems.

Keywords: *Maternal healthcare, Indigenous knowledge systems, Medical pluralism, Sub-Saharan Africa, Cross-sectional survey, Traditional medicine, Botswana*

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