



Integrating Indigenous Medicinal Knowledge into National Health Policy: A Gynaecological and Obstetric Analysis for the Republic of Congo

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Abstract

In the Republic of Congo, a substantial reliance on indigenous medicinal knowledge for gynaecological and obstetric care persists, operating parallel to the national biomedical health system. Current policy does not formally recognise or integrate these practices, creating a gap in comprehensive and culturally resonant healthcare. This policy analysis critically examines the potential for integrating Congolese indigenous medicinal knowledge into national health policy for gynaecology and obstetrics. It aims to identify principal barriers, opportunities, and a feasible framework for integration. The study employed a qualitative desk-based policy review. It synthesised data from existing ethnographic studies, public health reports, and national policy documents. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify prevailing practices, policy gaps, and stakeholder perspectives. Indigenous practices for conditions such as postnatal recovery and fertility demonstrate deep cultural trust. Plant-based remedies during pregnancy are reportedly widespread, particularly in rural areas. Key barriers to integration include a lack of standardised practice, insufficient documented safety profiles, and institutional resistance within the biomedical community. The formal integration of indigenous medicinal knowledge into national health policy represents a significant public health and cultural opportunity for improving women's healthcare in Congo. A structured approach could enhance healthcare access and outcomes while preserving cultural heritage. Key recommendations are to establish a national ethnomedical research committee; develop safety and efficacy protocols for prevalent botanicals; create training for biomedical practitioners on culturally sensitive engagement; and pilot integrative community health programmes in selected districts. Indigenous knowledge, health policy, gynaecology, obstetrics, traditional medicine, Republic of Congo, integration This analysis provides a focused policy framework for bridging biomedical and indigenous healthcare systems in Congolese women's health, offering concrete steps towards culturally informed policy reform.

Keywords: *Indigenous knowledge systems, Maternal health, Health policy integration, Central Africa, Ethnomedicine, Traditional medicine, Gynaecological care*



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