



Integrating Traditional Knowledge and Modern Practice: Sustainable Medical Strategies in Southern Africa

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Abstract

The integration of indigenous knowledge systems with biomedical practice is a significant aspect of developing sustainable healthcare in Southern Africa. In Burkina Faso, a dual healthcare system exists where traditional and modern medicine often operate separately, which may affect care coherence and resource use. This study examines the potential for structured integration of traditional knowledge with modern obstetric and gynaecological practice in Southern Africa, focusing on Burkina Faso. It aims to identify collaborative models, perceived barriers, and enabling factors from the perspectives of healthcare practitioners. A qualitative, exploratory study was conducted using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Participants included biomedical professionals and recognised traditional healers and birth attendants from selected urban and rural districts. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. A dominant theme was the willingness of both practitioner groups to collaborate, contingent on mutual respect and clear referral protocols. A majority of biomedical respondents acknowledged the widespread use of traditional medicine for maternal health, particularly for postnatal recovery and fertility issues. A key barrier identified was the absence of a formal regulatory framework for interaction. Sustainable medical strategies in the region can be enhanced by fostering structured dialogue and partnership between traditional and modern medical practitioners. Integration, rather than assimilation, is a viable path towards more holistic and accessible care. Develop interdisciplinary training workshops to build mutual understanding. Establish pilot programmes for supervised, community-based referral pathways. Advocate for policy frameworks that recognise and regulate the role of accredited traditional practitioners within the public health system. Traditional medicine, medical integration, sustainable healthcare, maternal health, Burkina Faso, interdisciplinary collaboration This paper provides an analysis of practitioner perspectives on integration, offering a practical framework for developing collaborative, sustainable healthcare strategies in obstetric and gynaecological practice.

Keywords: *Traditional medicine, Healthcare integration, Sub-Saharan Africa, Sustainable healthcare, Indigenous knowledge systems, Medical pluralism, Burkina Faso*



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