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Traditional medicine for type 2 diabetes in Burkina Faso (West Africa): Level of use and outcomes

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Aim: The study aimed to assess the level of use and outcomes of traditional medicine (plants) by type 2 diabetic patients managed in urban setting (Ouagadougou) in Burkina Faso.

Methods: This was a prospective and descriptive study which was conducted in the Internal Medicine department of Yalgado Ouédraogo Teaching Hospital (CHUYO) of Ouagadougou. Sociodemographic characteristics, medical history included diabetes and medication used within the last three months; and glycated haemoglobin (HbA1C) measurements of these subjects were collected during face-to-face interviews. The Chi-square test was used for the comparison of proportions and the Fisher test for comparison of means. The significance level adopted was 5%.

Results: The survey consists of 369 type 2 diabetic patients with a mean age of 54.17 ± 12.4 years and a sex ratio (men/women) of 0.3. 114 diabetic patients (30.9%) used traditional plants. Among them 107 used traditional plants in combination with modern oral glucose-lowering drugs and 7 exclusively used traditional plants. 77.2% of these patients resided in urban areas, and 64% were schooled. 48.2% of patients related family history of diabetes. The mean history of diabetes was less than five years in 49.2% of cases. The board of another diabetic patient (73.7%), the low cost and rural residence were significantly associated to the use of traditional medicine ($p=0.03$). The most commonly used plants were *Moringa oleifera* (49.1%), *Sclerocarya birrea* (17.8%) and *Ziziphus mauritiana* (7.9%). Under these traditional plants, 22% had good glycemic control (HbA1C <7%), $p=0.07$. Glycemic control was better among users of modern medicine compared to those who used only traditional medicine ($p=0.05$); it's also seems to be better among those who used traditional plants in combination with modern medication.

Conclusion: In Africa, there is said to be one traditional healer to every 200 people; an estimated 80% of people in the continent turn to traditional medicine as a source of primary care, including those with diabetes. One third of patients with type 2 followed in urban Burkina Faso turn to traditional medicine for diabetes. However, the efficacy of these medicines on the good glycemic control is not yet proven.

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