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Role of herbal medicine and traditional healers in response to HIV/AIDS**Prem P Rai**

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HIV/AIDS is not only a regional but global challenge and a major public health problem. Globally, about 36.7 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, with a burden on developing countries. Despite active control measures and series of programs initiated by government an estimated 34,100 people are still living with HIV infection in Papua New Guinea (PNG). High cost and scarcity of antiretroviral and other drugs make it difficult to provide health care needs for this group of patients. Traditional healers in PNG are treating patients with HIV and AIDS symptoms and herbal preparations are being promoted specifically for this use. In a cross-sectional pilot study conducted in Milne Bay and Oro provinces of PNG, the study showed the positive role played by traditional healers in providing treatment for HIV/AIDS-related sicknesses. Their main contribution is in alleviating suffering from opportunistic infections and providing advice on diet and healthy life-style and improving the quality of life by effectively treating the symptoms of the disease. People living with HIV (PLHIV) infection responded better to herbal treatments for conditions such as chronic diarrhea, loss of appetite and nausea, skin infections, sores and painful blisters, persistent fever and cough, thrush, weight loss and weakened immunity. *Psidium guajava*, *Acalypha wilkesiana*, *Syzygium malaccense*, *Ficus copiosa*, *Eleusine indica*, *Codiaeum variegatum* and *Calophyllum inophyllum* were most commonly used medicinal plants by healers. Specific uses, preparations and mode of applications of these plants will be presented. It is concluded that traditional healers are potential key to scaling up comprehensive care for PLHIV in PNG as in many other countries in Africa and Asia.

Biography

Prem P Rai has served in the University of Papua New Guinea for over 20 years. He is currently the Dean of the School of Natural Resources and Applied Sciences at Solomon Islands National University. His specialty includes pharmacognosy and quality control aspects of herbal medicine. He has also headed the traditional medicine program of the National Department of Health in Papua New Guinea for over 15 years. He is an active Researcher and has published more than 98 papers and authored number of technical books including one on Medicinal Plants in Papua New Guinea, published by the World Health Organization. He serves as an Advisor and Member on editorial board of number of local and international scientific journals.

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