

2nd International Conference and Exhibition on **Traditional & Alternative Medicine**

August 25-26, 2014 DoubleTree by Hilton Beijing, China

Biomedical personnel's perceptions and attitudes regarding the incorporation of traditional healers into the national health care delivery system of South Africa

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The attitudes of biomedical personnel are a mixture of emotions varying from being negative to positive regarding the process of incorporating the traditional healers into the National Health Care Delivery System of South Africa. Negative notions were attributed to concerns like, financial gains and the prestige of being a biomedical person. The positive notions identified in those who were interested in establishing a working relationship, was mainly to avail health services to a large number of the population in rural and or urban settings. The only way seen as befitting to avail these services, was to involve the traditional healers in health care provision.

To be able to identify ways of working together the research focused on investigating the perceptions and attitudes of the biomedical personnel regarding the incorporation of traditional healers into the South African National Health Care Delivery System, as well as their views on how this incorporation should be achieved.

A descriptive, exploratory and contextual qualitative research design was used. Participants were selected by means of non probable purposive voluntary sampling. Data was collected by means of conducting semi- structured interviews using a tape recorder and documenting field notes. Data analysis was achieved by transcriptions and open coding. A co-coder and researcher analysed the data independently. Consensus discussions took place to finalise the data. Trustworthiness was ensured. Ethical principles were applied according to the guidelines of the South African Department of Health and the Democratic Nurses Organisation.

Results and conclusion: Government need to be involved in incorporation by passing an act. Traditional healers need to be self organized to control their practice, licensed, trained and educated. Communication is necessary to effect working together.

Biography

Martha G Pinkoane completed her PhD from North West University in Potchefstroom, South Africa. She completed her junior nursing degree from the University of the North, has been lecturing nursing from 1977 until 1996 when she joined the Vaal University of Technology. She now heads Health Sciences Department, and is an external examiner for Masters Program. Has presented papers nationally and internationally, published papers in national and international journals, peer reviewer for two national journals as well as the National Research Foundation of South Africa. Commenced studies on traditional medicines from 1997 to date.

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