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MAThes, a unique French-based thesaurus for traditional or conventional knowledge indexation and information retrieval in “Associated Medicine”

Martin Sanou

Universite de Nantes, France

Background: The new notion of public health called “Associated Medicine” evaluates the ability of a health care system and its actors to use medical or biomedical paradigm of another health care system. Hypothetically, a controlled vocabulary could guide conventional practitioner of a health care system “A” to learn from a traditional healer’s concepts of a health care system “B”.

Objectives: developing a unique French-based thesaurus for traditional and/or conventional knowledge indexation and information retrieval in order to facilitate communication between health care actors and to promote integration between traditional medicine and conventional medicine.

Methods: We collected technical and commercial data sheets of African traditional healers. Then, we created a corpus of text from these documents. The extraction of candidate terms was realized by natural languages processing and terminology development procedures. The thesaurus was designed by a certified thesaurus builder software and Protégé tool. A final validation test of documentary research was performed on the browser of the review of exotic pathology Society.

Results: The Thesaurus of Associated Medicine (MAThes) is composed of 1190 multilingual descriptors located in 10 semantic fields. The concepts were both from traditional medicine and conventional medicine. Some words were indexed in other biomedical terminological resources as the French MeSH or CISMéF.

Conclusion: The development of a controlled vocabulary showed that traditional healers were associated with conventional indexed concepts which were integrated into their communication systems and medicinal practices. Thus were justified the concept of Associated Medicine. We could now study the capacity of a conventional practitioner to use traditional concepts for preventing or managing health risks related to wrong knowledge representations.

Biography

Martin Sanou has completed his PhD at the age of 37 years from Nantes University of France and dental studies from Casablanca University School of Dentistry. He is the manager of an international project on CAM named LaViMA (Virtual Laboratory of Associated Medicine). He has published “Conventional medical attitudes to using a traditional medicine vodou-based model of pain management: survey of French dentists and the proposal of a pain model to facilitate integration” in Journal of Chiropractic Humanities (2012).

martinsanou@gmail.com