

Integrating Traditional Medicine into the Health System

3rd South African Nurses Conference 2016

Ngaka Conrad Tsiane

Chairperson: Traditional Health Practitioners Council

□ Outline of Presentation

- Introduction
- Mandate of THP Council
- Importance of integrating traditional medicine into the health system
- Challenges
- Summary

□ Introduction

- *In many rural areas traditional medicine is still the only way for providing basic health care.*
- *It is estimated that 80% of Africans rely on traditional health needs to meet their health needs (WHO 2010)*
- *According to WHO(2008), traditional medicine is the sum total of knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures that are used to maintain health, as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve or treat physical and mental illnesses*

□ Introduction cont....

- There is clear evidence of the increased involvement of Member States in traditional medicine: between 1999 and 2012 the number of Member States with national policies on traditional medicine (WHA56.31.)
- Traditional Health Practitioners Act (THPA) of 2004 was signed into law on 7 February 2005 in [South Africa](#)

□ Mandate of THP Council

- promote public health awareness
- ensure the quality of health services within the traditional health practice
- protect and serve the interests of members of the public who use or are affected by the services of traditional health practitioners
- promote and maintain appropriate ethical and professional standards required from traditional health practitioners

□ Mandate cont....

- promote and develop interest in traditional health practice by encouraging research, education and training
- promote contact between the various fields of training within traditional health practice in the Republic and to set standards for such training
-
- compile and maintain a professional code of conduct for traditional health practice; and
- ensure that traditional health practice complies with universally accepted health care norms and values.

□ Importance of integrating traditional medicine in the health system

- Majority of the population visit the traditional healer before they go to a western doctor/health facility
- Utilization of traditional healers will assist to deal with inadequacies that occur in the health system due to limited finance leading to limited material and human resources
- They are relevant where modern health care is not readily available or affordable, as the public rely on traditional medicine
- The role of traditional medicine in communicable diseases has shown a number of systemic studies on efficacy indicating a reduction in opportunistic infections (Liu, 2007)

□ Cont.....

- Traditional healers can assist in adherence to medication in poor communities if referral systems are well coordinated between hospital/clinics and THP
- Traditional healers continue to play a key role in contributing to availability of human resources where the population to physician ratio is high
- Traditional healers remain primary health providers in rural areas where health facilities are not easily accessible

□ Challenges

While there have been international and national policies for preserving and promoting traditional medicine, there are still concerns at various levels (Bodeker et al. 2007)

- Data on safety of traditional medicine are far from sufficient to meet criteria needed to support its use worldwide
- Licencing of traditional healers still a challenge
- Sustainability use of natural resources a challenge
- Acknowledgement of qualifications of traditional healers
- Lack of acknowledgement of sick certificates from traditional healers

□ Summary

Proper coordinated services between traditional Health Practitioners and health institutions can go a long way to accommodate far reaching areas and save lives in the developing countries.

Thank you

For listening