

INNOVATIVE TRENDS IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

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Abstract

The human person has been confronted with fundamental health problems. These health challenges have led to the quest for various solutions. As a way to find cure for diseases, the human person discovered the medical values of some plants and herbs which have curative potencies. African people were not left out in this quest to find solution to the medical challenges of the human person and so we have African traditional medicine. African traditional medicine is a form of holistic healthcare system that provides healthcare services based on culture, religious background, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that are prevalent in a particular African community. Also, Africans view illness as having both natural and supernatural causes and thus must be treated by both physical and spiritual means, using divination, incantations, animal sacrifice, exorcism and herbs. Herbal

medicine is the cornerstone of traditional medicine in Africa. With the aid of hermeneutic and phenomenological methods in philosophy, this study discovers that the future of African traditional medicine is very bright if viewed in the context of service provision, increase of healthcare coverage, economic potential and poverty reduction. The study, therefore, calls on African Heads of Governments, NGOs and all lovers of Africa to facilitate the formal recognition and integration of African traditional medicine into conventional medicine in order to engender both sound healthcare delivery and economic development.

Keywords: African traditional medicine, spirituality, divination, herbs, healthcare

INTRODUCTION

The instinct to survive is always prevalent in the mind of everyone who has faced the threat to his or her life. Health is the greatest wealth and as such people go to any length to preserve their health. Africans, like other races, have this instinct and inevitably their own means of responding to health challenges. These means may be by divinations, rituals, incantations, visions, trances, dream, and the intervention of ancestral spirits. African traditional medicine has passed through various evolutionary stages, which Chike Ekeokpara has described as trial and error: “It is quite probable that man as soon as he has reached the stage of reasoning, found out through the process of trial and error that plants can be used as food, that some might be poisonous and may lead to death when eaten while some had medicinal value and power”.¹

In this study, we shall focus on African traditional medicine, with particular emphasis on its innovative trends. To do this, we shall first

¹C. A. Ekeokpara, “*African Traditional Religion: An introduction*”. (Calabar: Natos, 2005) p.25.

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of all explain some operational concepts and thereafter delve into the historical aspect of the traditional medicine in order to trace some important era in the life of African traditional medicine (ATM) and also to help us trace its evolution. Next, we will dwell a little on the influence of the religious aspect of the Africans on their medical system. In order to get a clear picture of what ATM is about, we will do a survey on the scope and science of ATM in these three aspects: divination, herbalism and spiritual activities. The innovations in the trends on ATM will be explored. The paper will end with a concluding reflection.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

According to *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, traditional medicine is the total combination of knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating a physical, mental or social disease. Traditional medicine refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being.² It comprises medical aspects of traditional knowledge developed over generations within the folk beliefs of various societies before the era of modern medicine.³ Traditional medicine could as well be defined as 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.⁴ One can simply say that African traditional medicine is the African way of responding to health challenges in varied ways.

²Traditional African medicine in <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> (Accessed: 3/5/2021)

³Traditional African medicine in www.wikipedia.com (Accessed: 3/5/2021)

⁴⁴ Traditional African medicine in <http://www.sciencedirect.com> (Accessed: 3/5/2021)

HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

The development and use of traditional herbal medicine have a very long historical background that corresponds to the Stone Age. In the continent of Africa, the practice of traditional healing and magic is much older than some of the other traditional medical sciences and seems to be much more prevalent compared to conventional medicine. African traditional medicine is a form of holistic healthcare system that is organized into three levels of specialty, which include divination, spiritualism and herbalism, though these may overlap in some situations. The first African that began the practice of African traditional medicine was ***Sangoma*** or spiritual healer as he was called.⁵ He is from South Africa. There were lots of controversies among African scholars with regard to the inventor of African traditional medicine. A historian, Mary Motley, said ‘it was ***Imhotep*** from ***Egypt*** who started the practice of medicine in Africa’,⁶ while some opposed the assertions made by this renowned historian. The first physician of antiquity of any fame was the black Egyptian, Imhotep, who lived about 2980BC during the third dynasty, and he was so highly thought of in his day that he was worshipped as a kind of god centuries after his death. He cured physical and mental sicknesses. In later years, people slept in the shrine at his temple, dreamed of him, and went away cured.⁷ Many scholars attributed African medicine to have originated from ***Hippocrates***. Some said that Imhotep lived two thousand years before the Greek doctor Hippocrates who is called the father of medicine. It is an irony of history that African medical doctors are ignorant of the existence and contributions of Imhotep. It is evident that the ancient Egyptian medical practitioners employed both magical and scientific means.

⁵Historical origin of African traditional medicine in <http://www.sciencedirect.com> (Accessed: 3/5/2021)

⁶I. C. Onyewuenyi. *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism* (Owerri: Assumpta Press. 2015), p. 51.

⁷Mary Penick Motley, “*African, its empires, nations and people*”(Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), p. 42

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This is clear testimony against the views of some scholars who are unwilling to credit Africans with any discovery and who would not admit that African scholars were the originators of ideas and theories which the modern scientists are still trying to understand.⁸

THE SCOPE AND SCIENCE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Traditional African medicine is a range of traditional medicine discipline involving indigenous herbalism and African spirituality, typically including diviners, spiritualists and herbalists. Traditional medicine is viewed as a combination of knowledge and practice used in diagnosing, preventing and eliminating diseases. This may rely on past experiences and observations handed down from generation to generation, either verbally, frequently in the form of stories, or spiritually by ancestors or, in modern times, in writing. It has also been said that before attaining knowledge in traditional African medicine, one is often required to be initiated into a secret society, as many characteristics of this form of medicine can only be passed down to initiates. These practitioners claim to be able to cure a variety of diverse conditions, including cancer, psychiatric disorders, high blood pressure, cholera, most venereal diseases, epilepsy, asthma, eczema, fever, and healing of wounds and burns.⁹

Diagnosis is reached through spiritual means and a treatment is prescribed, usually consisting of herbal remedy that is considered to have not only healing abilities but also symbolic and spiritual significance. Traditional African medicine, with its belief that illness is not derived from chance occurrences but through spiritual or social imbalance, differs greatly from modern scientific medicine which is technically and analytically based. Traditional medicine was the dominant medical system for millions of people in Africa prior to the

⁸ Ibid, opt. cit.

⁹ D. Helwig, “*Traditional African medicine*, Gale Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine”, in www.medicineherbaluses.com. Accessed: (4/6/2021).

arrival of the Europeans who introduced science-based medicine, which was a noticeable turning point in the history of the tradition and culture.¹⁰

Herbal Medicine

Herbal medicine is a part and parcel of and sometimes synonymous with African traditional medicine. It is the oldest and still the most widely used system of medicine in the world today. It is used in all societies and is common to all cultures. Herbal medicines, also called botanical medicines, vegetable medicines, or phytomedicines, as defined by World Health Organization (WHO), refers to herbs, herbal materials, herbal preparations, and finished herbal products that contain whole plants, parts of plants, or other plant materials, including leaves, bark, berries, flowers, and roots, and/or their extracts as active ingredients intended for human therapeutic use or for other benefits in humans and sometimes animals.¹¹ Herbal medicine is a special and prominent form of traditional medicine, in which the traditional healer, in this case known as the herbalist, specializes in the use of herbs to treat various ailments. Their role is so remarkable, since it arises from a thorough knowledge of the medicinal properties of indigenous plants and the pharmaceutical steps necessary in turning such plants into drugs such as the selection, compounding, dosage, efficacy, and toxicity. The use of herbal medicines appears to be universal in different cultures. However, the plants used for the same ailments and the modes of treatment may vary from place to place. The plants used for medicinal purposes are generally referred to as medicinal plants, that is, any plant which one or more of its organs/parts contain substances that can be used for therapeutic purposes, or in a more modern concept, the constituents can be used as precursors for the synthesis of drugs. For example, a number of plants have been used in traditional medicine for many years without scientific data to back up their efficacy. In this case, these plants, whole or parts, which have medicinal properties, are referred to as

¹⁰ Traditional African medicine, in <https://en.m.wikipedia> (Accessed: 3/4/2021)

¹¹ Ibid.

crude drugs of natural or biological origin. They may further be classified as “organized drugs,” if such drugs are from plant parts with cellular structures such as leaf, bark, roots, etc., and “unorganized drugs,” if they are obtained from acellular portions of plants such as gums, balsams, gels, oils, and exudates. Compared to modern allopathic medicine, herbal medicine is freely available and can easily be accessed by all. As a result, there is limited consultation with traditional healers, because there is a fairly good knowledge of common curative herbs, especially in the rural areas, except in the case of treatment of chronic diseases. Even where consultation is done, there is lack of coherence among traditional healers on the preparation procedures and correct dosage of herbal medicines. However, according to WHO, at least 80% of people in Africa still rely on medicinal plants for their health care.¹² In Nigeria, and indeed the entire West Africa, herbal medicine has continued to gain momentum, some of the advantages being low cost, affordability, availability, acceptability, and apparently low toxicity.

Illness

In African traditional setting, there was always an explanation as to why someone was suffering from a certain disease at a particular time. Illness is believed to be of natural, cultural, or social origin. Cultural or social illness is thought to be related to supernatural causes such as angered spirits, witchcraft, or alien/evil spirits, even for conditions now known to be well understood in modern medicine such as hypertension, sickle-cell anemia, cardiomyopathies, and diabetes. African traditional beliefs consider the human being as being made up of physical, spiritual, moral and social aspects.¹³ The functioning of these three aspects in harmony signified good health, while if any aspect should be out of balance, it signified sickness.¹⁴ Thus, the

¹² ibid

¹³ Ezekwesili-Ofili Josephine Ozioma and Okaka Chinwe, “*Herbal medicine in African traditional medicine*” (Enugu: SAN Press Ltd., 2012) p.56.

¹⁴ ibid

treatment of an ill person involves not only aiding his/her physical being but may also involve the spiritual, moral and social components of being as well. Many traditional medical practitioners are good psychotherapists, proficient in faith healing (spiritual healing), therapeutic occultism, circumcision of males and females, tribal marks, treatment of snake bites, treatment of whitlow, removal of tuberculosis lymphadenitis in the neck, cutting the umbilical cord, piercing ear lobes, removal of the uvula, extracting a carious tooth, abdominal surgery, infections, midwifery, and so on. According to Kofi-Tsekpo, the term “African traditional medicine” is not synonymous with “alternative and complementary medicine”.¹⁵ African traditional medicine is the African indigenous system of healthcare and therefore cannot be seen as an alternative.

Diagnostics

The medical diagnoses and chosen methods of treatment in traditional African medicine rely heavily on spiritual aspects. There is a belief among the practitioners of traditional healing that the ability to diagnose and treat illnesses is a gift from God. Rather than looking for the medical or physical reason behind an illness (or a spell of bad luck), traditional healers attempt to determine the root cause underlying it, which is believed to stem from a lack of balance between the patient and their social environment or the spiritual world. In other words, supernatural causes, not natural, are attributed to illnesses. According to the type of imbalance the individual is experiencing, an appropriate healing plant will be used, which is valued for its symbolic and spiritual significance as well as for its medicinal effect.

When a person falls ill, a traditional practitioner uses incantations to make a diagnosis. The incantations are thought to give the air of mystical and cosmic connections.¹⁶ Divination is typically used if the illness is not easily identified; otherwise, the sickness may be quickly

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ R. Onwuanibe, “*The philosophy of African medical practice*” (Enugu: Wisdom Press, 2019) p.67.

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diagnosed and a remedy prescribed. Sometimes, the practitioner will advise the patient to consult a diviner who can give a diagnosis and recommend a treatment. It is believed that contact with the spirit world through divination often requires not only medication, but sacrifices.¹⁷

Treatment

Traditional practitioners use a wide variety of treatments, ranging from standard medical treatments to the pseudoscientific and magical. Treatments may include: fasting, dieting, herbal therapies, bathing, massage, surgical procedures, among others. Examples of the pseudoscientific treatments include; the use of bleed-cupping, followed by herbal ointment and herbal drugs, to treat migraines, coughs and abscesses. A steaming mixture of herbs is both inhaled and consumed in the treatment of malaria. Fevers are often treated using a steam bath. The fat of a boa constrictor is used to treat gout and rheumatism and is thought to relieve chest pain when applied topically. Animals are also sometimes used to transfer the illness to afterward or for the manufacture of medicines for zoo therapy. For example, the bones of baboons are used to treat arthritis.

Divination

Divination means consulting the spirit world. It is a method by which information concerning an individual or circumstance of illness is obtained through the use of randomly arranged symbols in order to gain healing knowledge.¹⁸ It is also viewed as a way to access information that is normally beyond the reach of the rational mind. It is a transpersonal technique in which diviners base their knowledge on communication with the spiritual forces, such as the ancestors, spirits and deities. It is, therefore, an integral part of an African traditional way of diagnosing diseases. The “spirit world” is consulted to identify the cause of the disease or to discover whether there was a violation of

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Op. cit.

an established order from the side of the sick person. This is established through the use of cowry shells, throwing of bones, shells, money, seeds, dice, domino-like objects, or even dominos themselves, and other objects that have been appointed by the diviner and the spirit to represent certain polarities on strips of leather or flat pieces of wood. The divining bones that form the large majority of the objects include bones from various animals such as lions, hyenas, ant-eaters, baboons, crocodiles, wild pigs, goats, antelopes, etc. The bones represent all the forces that affect any human being anywhere, whatever their culture. Because of the revealing powers of divination, it is usually the first step in most African traditional treatment and medicine.

Spiritual Perspective of ATM

Spiritual-based cases are handled in the following manner:

Spiritual protection: If the cause of the disease is perceived to be an attack from evil spirits, the person would be protected by the use of a talisman, charm, amulets, specially designed body marks, and a spiritual bath to drive the evil spirits away. These are rites aimed at driving off evil and dangerous powers, spirits, or elements to eliminate the evils or dangers that may have befallen a family or community.

Physical Perspectives of ATM

If the illness is of a physical nature, the following approaches are exploited:

Prescription of herbs: Herbs are prescribed to the sick person, according to the nature of the illness. Each prescription has its own specific instructions on how to prepare the herb, the dose, dosing regimen, and time frame.

Clay and herbs application: Application of a mixture of white clay with herbs may be relevant in some of the healing processes. The mixture is applied to the entire body for a number of days, especially in the case of skin diseases. The view is that the human body is made out of the dust or ground; therefore, if the body has any problem, you would have to go to where it came from to fix it. The use of clay, with

some special herbs, is also sometimes used for preventive rituals to ward off the evil spirits responsible for an illness.

INNOVATIVE TRENDS IN THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

With the advent of colonialism, which in turn brought about the Westernization of most of African countries, the practice of ATM first of all went on a downward trend, especially during the colonial period, as earlier pointed out. The importance of traditional medicine, however, dwindled during the colonial period, whereby it was viewed as inferior to Western medicine. It was thus banned completely in some countries, due to its association with witchcraft/voodoo, supernatural and magical implications, in which case, it was also termed “juju” (Nigeria) or “native medicine,” since it made use of charms and symbols which were used to cast or remove spells.

Change is always constant and one can hardly stop change. Due to the advancement in technology and development in the society and around the globe, ATM has now remained in the dark, but has evolved and has undergone and still undergoing some innovations, and this modern use of ATM is becoming a trend. Firstly, the number one innovation in the ATM is the evolution of herbalism. This is because herbalism was easily and widely imbibed by Christians and the greater percentage that accepted Westernization, while others who seem to practice the other aspects of the system are seen as heathen. This does not mean that the divination and spiritual facets of ATM are not practised but they have not seen much innovation than their counterpart – herbalism. This having been said, we categorized this innovative trends into two broad classes or types in order to treat them to the best of our efforts. This classification was done based on the practicality and eminence the innovation is among our society.

Societal Induced/ Paradigm and Innovative Trends in ATM

This class of trend came about because of the development of the society. For the sake of clarity, in the past, our forefathers used clay pots to eat because that was the most sophisticated utensil for them to use, but right now everyone uses either ceramics plates or stainless plates. This paradigm shift also affects the world of the ATM. In a way to make this class of innovations explicit, it is to be noted that the innovations in this class do not affect fundamentally how the ATM is practised but the output and product of the ATM. Some of these changes or innovation are:

Herbalist Modern Clinic: People now build and establish firms that claim to treat diseases through herbal methods and in the traditional way; examples of such are Baba *Ijebu*, Papa na Mama *Chukwuebuka*, etc. They are spread all over the continent.

Use of Modern Medical Facilities: Some of these firms now use some modern medical machines to determine what is happening to the patient and no longer the guess work which the traditional herbalist are seemingly accused of doing.

Advertisement and Packaging: The method of packaging of the ATM drugs are no longer primitive, but they are now packaged in the modern way and properly labeled and also properly advertised all over the media and the newspapers.

NOVEL / FUTURISTIC INNOVATION IN THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

The African traditional medicine system is guilty of major setbacks or loopholes, two of which are: **Data Oriented and Research Oriented**. The novel innovations tried to solve these problems or loopholes by making ATM system pass through some high sophisticated measures.

Database and Information Oriented Innovation

One of the traits that make the Western medical system progressive is effective data management – records of drugs, patients, doctors, health history, research, etc. This makes the Western medicine so effective

because there is a kind of follow-up or wealth of sure information about particular a disease and its remedy, or about a particular medicine and how it works. In recent times, profound effort has been made to incorporate this effective data management into the African traditional medicine system. An example of such efforts is pointed out by Razieh Mirzaeian, Farahnaz Sadoughi, Shahram Tahmasebian and Morteza Mojahedi in their research called *Progresses and challenges in the traditional medicine information system: A systematic review*.¹⁹ Traditional medicine is experiencing its rapid advancements era based on health information technology. The modern and technology-based techniques are vital for controlling and maintaining the quality of the herbal drugs.²⁰

Creation of Traditional Medicine Database or Information System (TMDB OR TMIS)

The creation of a database for storing a large portion of the data and their transformation into useful data has effectively contributed to the progress of TMIS.²¹ This is a database that collects and stores data from many sources and reserves them for further usage. This database spans throughout the whole continent and beyond. China's Comprehensive Herbal Medicine Information System for Cancer (CHMIS-C) has served as an appropriate information resource for the TM researchers. In the same way, Web-based Decision Support System for Prescription in Herbal Medicine in Nigeria has played a significant role in controlling the quality of the herbal drugs prescription.²²

¹⁹R. Mirzaeian, "Progresses and challenges in the traditional medicine information: a systematic review" *Journal of Pharmacy & Pharmacognosy Research*, 7 (4), ISSN 0719-4250 (2019) pp.246-259,

²⁰ ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² ibid

The creation of TMDB is one of the main progresses achieved in the field of TM. Being common in China and India, this system has specifically been designed to support the decision-making system and data mining and processing. There are a lot of databases in TM. Traditional Chinese Medicine Database (TCMID) is the most comprehensive database in use in China, representing remarkable advances in information integration. Besides the combinations of the herbs, this database provides the three-dimensional structures of the herbal combination for research use.

There is universal standardization of traditional medicine all over the world, as encouraged by the WHO. Nowadays, different nations have recognized the critical function of the standards in promoting the levels of quality, safety, validity and efficacy of traditional medicine. These factors form the underlining of TM policies and plans. As a result, some nations have made effort to take effective steps towards the development of the TM knowledge base through sharing the information on the regulatory strategies.

The Clinical Data Ware House (CDW) of Traditional Medicine

There is also the clinical aspect to this data management. As one of the most significant TM information resources, CDW is a technical strategy used for storing, managing and processing the mass data. CDW integrates the data of the structured electronic medical record (SEMR) to be used for both the medical knowledge discovery and clinical decision system (CDS) in TM. In 2002, China created the TCM Electronic Medical Record (EMR) (TCM-EMRD). This database contains more than 3500 electronic medical records relating to the in-patients. In fact, it includes the data of TCM clinical practice on the inpatient, including the TCM diagnosis and the description of the concepts, symptoms and formula of herbal medicines. There are also discovery tools for TM modernization as a strong tool for knowledge acquisition from the data repository. Data mining has

found application in nearly all the TM areas. Technically, it serves as a support for the TM modernization process.²³

The essence of these database and information management is to solve the problem of information deficiency and sloppiness. Those who practice the ATM in this modern era can now have a body or a place or a well of information they can consult while carrying out their work. It also eliminates the problem that comes with individuation as a result of differences in culture and language. One can have access to information that is not of his culture and the person will understand clearly what he is to do because the information in the database is written in such a way that everyone in the field of ATM understands it well.

However, sometimes, one medicinal plant happens to be named differently using the general, Latin, local or commercial names. In contrast, some others of different species take similar names. This becomes more complicated, given the prevalence of the terminology specific to different world languages. Currently, there is no universal terminology and a unified coordinated regulatory attitude. To standardize the structured clinical data, an integration of the systematic terminologies is required. Therefore, the innovation of ICTM becomes a saviour to ATM. Accordingly, in line with the information standardization projects such as International Classification of Traditional Medicine (ICTM), a new project for the compilation of an international standard terminology has been incorporated into the recent ICD programs.

There has been a clarion call for the integration of ATM and Western medicine even by the World Health Organization. A clear example is in Kwa-Mhlanga, South Africa, where there is a 48-bed hospital that combines traditional African medicine with homeopathy, iridology, and other Western healing methods, as well as traditional Asian

²³ ibid

medicine. The WHO is trying its best to facilitate the global standardization of the TM and herbal medicines. Accordingly, in its planned strategy, it has attempted three goals, namely: constructing a database and compiling national policies, promoting the safety, quality and efficacy of the TM services through laws and standards establishment and integrating the TM services and self-medication into the national health system. Up to now, the majority of the relevant works using the clinical record of TM have been based on well-structured data of prescriptions extracted and organized manually. This method of data collection is highly time-consuming and cumbersome, making the provision of enough data required for achieving reliable knowledge impossible.

Developing a unique information system in TM capable of supporting a huge volume of non-homogeneous data and information is considered as an intriguing progress in TM modernization. The collected information is used for both pattern recognitions that is the main concept of diagnosis in TM and the treatment technique that may be herbal medicine prescription, acupuncture and other similar practices.²⁴

Having seen how data management information innovation in ATM has solved the problem of lack of adequate information in ATM, let us see the innovations made on the side of research.

Research-Oriented Innovations

Due to the fact that traditional medicine is now gaining ground in this modern era, there is now an increase in the study of its related courses which have always been at the background, or new courses have been created in order to ensure a close research on the traditional medical system. Such disciplines are *Ethno Botany and Phyto medicine*. Ethnobotany is the study of a region's plants and their practical uses through the traditional knowledge of a local culture and people.²⁵ On

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ Ethnobotany, in www.wikipedia.com (Accessed 07/05/2021)

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the other hand, Phytomedicine can be defined as the study of the herbal medicine with therapeutic and herbal properties. A herbal medicine or a phytopharmaceutical preparation can be defined as a medicine derived exclusively from the whole plant or parts of plants and manufactured in crude form or as a purified pharmaceutical formulation.²⁶

Concluding Reflection

The place of African traditional medicine in the lives of Africans is not to be doubted. Even though the African man is accused of imbibing Westernization, the inkling towards the African traditional medical practices has not ceased. A clear example of this claim was the experience during the Covid-19 in 2020. It was obvious that the Western system of medicine offered no hope to masses and this led to massive return to the use of herbs and traditional means of obtaining medical care which made ATM a beacon of light where other modes or systems of medicine have seemingly failed. The greatest development is that some who are not even Africans by any means are welcoming the ATM medical system because of its efficiency when used and practised well. In the era where everyone is advised to cut down on industry-produced equipment, the quest for natural and organic things is now in high demand, likewise that of health issues.

Some of the problems of ATM, which these innovations, as stated above, have made effort to solve, will make the practice of African traditional medicine a topnotch and a very effective system of curing and giving out medical services. The importance of ATM is now laid bare for all to try and to benefit from it, as the natural herbs and plant extracts are gifts from nature which it has given freely from its benevolence. This is a clarion call for the African man to preserve his environment in order to ensure the availability of such herbs and precious natural produce around us daily. These natural produce are

²⁶ Phytomedicine, in www.sciencedirect.com (Accessed 07/05/2021)

not far from us; they are all around us, only if we can utilize them well.

In sum, it is to be noted that with the rate which ATM is undergoing serious innovations, there will be a radical or complete paradigm shift from the demand of Western medical system to traditional system. Besides, some people see ATM as an alternative to Western medicine, but that notion is about to change in today's world. In fact, the African traditional medicine is a complete system of medicine itself which is different from that of the Westerners and particular to the Africans.

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