



The Significance of Traditional Medicine in Shaping the Economy of Ghana

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ABSTRACT:

This research delved into the economic significance of traditional medicine in Ghana, examining strategies for its seamless integration into the formal healthcare system. The study explored the positive perception of traditional medicine, highlighting variations that necessitated nuanced exploration. Identified strategies encompassed research, regulation, education, collaboration, public awareness, policy integration, and research and development. Findings contributed valuable insights for policymakers, healthcare practitioners, and businesses, fostering a symbiotic relationship between traditional medicine and economic development in Ghana. The research covered Obuasi East, Obuasi West, Adansi South, and New Edubiase, targeting traditional medicine practitioners, students, lecturers, users, opinion leaders, sellers, orthodox medical practitioners, hospital administrators, and pharmacists. Using a mixed-method approach, data was collected through interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and questionnaires, involving 100 participants. Demographic characteristics revealed a diverse sample with varied age and educational levels. Findings indicated a positive perception of traditional medicine's economic impact, with 93% agreeing on its role in employment opportunities and 71% acknowledging benefits to local communities. Additionally, 59% believed Ghana could export traditional medicinal products.

In conclusion, the research underscored the positive economic role of traditional medicine in Ghana and offered a roadmap for integration. Recommendations included establishing robust regulatory frameworks, investing in education and training, promoting collaboration, enhancing public awareness, and incorporating traditional medicine into national health policies. These measures could collectively foster an environment where traditional medicine thrives economically, contributing to holistic well-being and economic development in Ghana.

Keywords: Healthcare Integration

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine is also recognized as native or folk medicine. It refers to the knowledge, skills, and practices based on theories and beliefs (Mpofu, 2006). It incorporates a variety of healing practices that have been established over periods and are often passed down orally or through written traditions. Traditional medicine can include herbal medicine and acupuncture, massage or spiritual healing, and various other forms of therapy. The World Health Organization (WHO 2002) recognizes the importance of traditional medicine and has published guidelines on its integration with modern healthcare systems. According to the WHO, traditional medicine plays a crucial role in primary healthcare in many countries, particularly in low- and middle-income regions where access to modern healthcare may be limited.

Traditional medicine plays an essential role in shaping the economy of Ghana (Barimah KB, van Teijlingen E, 2008) intertwining with the country's cultural heritage and contributing to the overall well-being of its population. With a rich history intensely rooted in indigenous knowledge, the Republic of Ghana's traditional medicine system has become a cornerstone in healthcare, addressing several illnesses and promoting holistic healing. The reliance on herbal preparations, spiritual or divine practices, and traditional healing approaches reflects not only the resilience of the Republic of Ghana's diverse ethnic communities but also the economic significance of this sector. As an important element of the healthcare landscape, traditional or complementary medicine cares for local economies by providing employment opportunities, nurturing herbal agronomy or cultivation, and nurturing an exceptional market for traditional healers and practitioners or experts. This intricate web of traditional medicine and economic activities showcases the interconnectedness of culture or value, healthiness, and commerce in the Republic of Ghana, emphasizing the stable impact of traditional healing practices on the country's economic fabric.

In conclusion, this research aims to unravel the intricate relationship between traditional medicine and the economy of Ghana. By addressing the outlined research objectives and questions, the study aspires to contribute valuable insights that can guide policymakers, healthcare practitioners, and businesses in fostering an environment where traditional medicine thrives economically, contributing to the holistic well-being and economic development of Ghanaian society.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite the long-standing cultural and historical significance of traditional medicine in Ghana, there is limited empirical evidence on its economic impact and the challenges it faces in integration with the formal healthcare system. This research seeks to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis that explores the economic contributions of traditional medicine, identifies barriers to its integration, and strategies to overcome the barriers, and ultimately provides valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders in the healthcare sector.

1.2 Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this academic work were:

1. To assess the economic impact of traditional medicine on local communities and businesses in Ghana.
2. To examine the strategies for integrating traditional medicine into the formal healthcare system for economic development.

1.3 Research Questions

The questions the researcher provided answers to include:

1. What is the economic contribution of traditional medicine to local communities and businesses in Ghana?
2. How can traditional medicine be effectively integrated into the formal healthcare system to contribute to economic development?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

Ho: Traditional medicine has a negligible economic impact on local communities and businesses in Ghana.

HI: Traditional medicine significantly contributes to the economic well-being of local communities and businesses in Ghana.

Ho: The integration of traditional medicine into the formal healthcare system has no significant effect on economic development in Ghana.

HI: The integration of traditional medicine into the formal healthcare system positively influences economic development in Ghana.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research holds immense significance for several reasons. Firstly, understanding the economic impact of traditional medicine can provide insights into the livelihoods of traditional healers and the businesses associated with herbal remedies. This knowledge can inform policies that support and sustain these practices, ensuring the economic well-being of the communities involved.

Secondly, exploring the integration of traditional medicine into the formal healthcare system can lead to the development of hybrid health approaches that incorporate the strengths of both traditional and modern medicine. This synergy has the potential to enhance the overall healthcare system, fostering economic growth in the health sector and improving health outcomes for the population.

In conclusion, this research seeks to unravel the intricate relationship between traditional medicine and the economy of Ghana. By addressing the outlined research objectives and questions, we aim to contribute valuable insights that can guide policymakers, healthcare practitioners, and businesses in fostering an environment where traditional medicine thrives economically while contributing to the holistic well-being of Ghanaian society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Traditional medicine has been an integral part of healthcare systems worldwide for centuries, including in Ghana. It encompasses various healing practices deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and indigenous knowledge, offering alternative approaches to health and well-being. This section presents a review of existing literature focusing on the economic impact of traditional medicine in Ghana and the challenges and opportunities associated with its integration into the formal healthcare system.

2.1 Economic Impact of Traditional Medicine in Ghana

Ghana, like many other countries, has a rich tradition of using traditional medicine to address health issues within its communities. Barimah and van Teijlingen (2008) just mentioned the significant economic contribution of traditional medicine to local communities and businesses in Ghana without elucidating the kind of business traditional medicines generated. The economic significance of traditional medicine in Ghana extends beyond individual livelihoods to encompass broader economic sectors. A study by Mpfu (2006) emphasizes that traditional medicine plays a vital role in shaping the

economy of Ghana by intertwining with the country's cultural heritage. He, however, failed to provide how traditional medicines shape the economy of Ghana.

2.2 Integration of Traditional Medicine into the Formal Healthcare System

Notwithstanding the economic importance of traditional medicine in Ghana, its incorporation into the formal healthcare scheme presents numerous challenges. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies the importance of integrating traditional medicine into modern healthcare structures (WHO, 2002). However, achieving this integration requires overpowering barriers such as regulatory issues, lack of standardized training and certification for traditional healers, and skepticism among modern healthcare practitioners (Aziato et al., 2018). Efforts to integrate traditional medicine into Ghana's formal healthcare scheme have been met with mixed victories. Whereas there is an upward acknowledgment of the possible benefits of integrating traditional healing practices into conventional healthcare, significant barriers persist. For example, Aziato et al. (2018) highlight the need for policy reforms and building capacity initiatives to enhance the collaboration between traditional healers and modern healthcare providers.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This research fragment discussed the study population, sample size, data collection methods, techniques, and data analysis.

3.1 Study Area

The research study areas include Obuasi East, Obuasi West, and Adansi South district, New Edubiase.

3.2 Study Population

The target population for this research were traditional medicine practitioners, students and lecturers from the College of Integrated Healthcare herbal medicine department, traditional medicine users, chiefs and opinion leaders, and traditional medicine sellers.

3.3 Sample Size

The researcher chose **25** traditional medicine practitioners, **25** alternative medicine sellers, **3** lecturers including the head of the alternative medicine department, **10** traditional medicine users, **5** opinion leaders, **5** alternative medicine experts, **10** orthodox medical practitioners, **10** hospital administrators, and **7** pharmacists. In all, 100 participants were selected for data gathering.

Table 1: The table shows the cadre of respondents.

NO	CADRE OF RESPONDENTS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
1	Traditional Medicine Practitioners	25	25
2	Traditional Medicine Sellers	25	25
3	Lecturers	3	3
4	Traditional Medicine Users	10	10
5	Opinion Leaders	5	5
6	Alternative Medicine Experts	5	5
7	Orthodox medical practitioners	10	10
8	Hospital Administrators	10	10
9	Pharmacists.	7	7
TOTAL		100	100

3.4 Data Sources

The researcher obtained data from both the primary sources and the secondary sources. The primary sources where the writer got data were interviews, observations, experts' opinions, and focus group discussions. Nevertheless, the secondary sources where the investigator assembled data included articles, books, and websites.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

This research utilized a mixed-method approach, the qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with traditional medicine practitioners, local medicine sellers, alternative medicine users, opinion leaders, and orthodox medicine practitioners. The quantitative data gathered were through questionnaires.

3.6 Data Collection Techniques

The researcher engaged traditional medicine practitioners, alternative medicine sellers, and users in group and individual discussions for data gathering. The research team also had separate group discussions with orthodox medicine experts, lecturers, and students to obtain data. The investigator met opinion leaders who were 40 years and above and had used traditional medicine in an individual discussion for data gathering. The expert group also met in another group discussion with the research team. The discussions were directed toward the research objectives. In addition, the writer **formulated 3** open-ended questions and administered them as an interview with the chosen participants.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data were prearranged into tables to understand the research findings comprehensively. The data assembled were reduced or condensed and summarized while retaining its essence. This comprises choosing crucial quotation marks or examples that demonstrate the identified themes.

4. RESULTS

DATA INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Age)

AGE	FREQUENCY	CUMULATIVE FREQUENCY	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
20-25	3	3	3
26--31	10	13	13
32-37	15	28	28
38-43	20	48	48
44-49	20	68	68
50-55	10	78	78
56-61	10	88	88
62-67	7	95	95
68-73	5	100	100
Total	100	100	100

The distribution showed that the majority of individuals (68%) were aged 43 or below, as this was the cumulative percentage at the end of the 38-43 age range.

The age group 38-43 had the highest frequency (20 individuals), followed by 44-49 with the same frequency.

The cumulative percentage reached 100% at the last age range (68-73), indicating that the data covered all individuals in the given sample or population.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Educational Level)

CADRE OF RESPONDENTS	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS		
	BASIC LEVEL	SECONDARY LEVEL	TERTIARY LEVEL
Traditional Medicine Practitioners	8	15	2
Traditional Medicine Sellers	20	5	0
Lecturers	0	0	3
Traditional Medicine Users	3	5	2
Opinion Leaders	0	4	1
Alternative Medicine Experts	0	0	5
Orthodox medical practitioners	0	0	10
Hospital Administrators	0	0	10
Pharmacists.	0	0	7
Total	31	29	40

The data suggested that there was a diversity of educational levels among respondents, with some having a basic education, secondary education, or tertiary education.

Traditional Medicine Sellers predominantly have a basic level of education.

Lecturers, Alternative Medicine Experts, Orthodox Medical Practitioners, Hospital Administrators, and Pharmacists had respondents with tertiary education.

Traditional Medicine Practitioners and Traditional Medicine Users had a mix of basic, secondary, and tertiary education. Opinion Leaders had respondents with secondary and tertiary education.

Objective 1: To assess the economic impact of traditional medicine on local communities and businesses in Ghana.

Table 4: Traditional medicine provides employment opportunities for a significant number of people, including traditional healers, herbalists, and other support staff involved in the preparation and distribution of traditional remedies.

INDICATORS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Agree	93	93
Neutral	4	4
Disagree	3	3
Total	100	100

The majority of respondents (93 out of 100, or 93%) agreed with the statement that traditional medicine provides employment opportunities. This suggested a strong consensus among the surveyed individuals that traditional medicine played a role in job creation, involving traditional healers, herbalists, and support staff.

Neutral (4%): A small percentage (4 out of 100, or 4%) of respondents chose the "Neutral" option. This could indicate uncertainty or a lack of a clear stance on whether traditional medicine contributes significantly to employment opportunities.

Disagree (3%): A small percentage (3 out of 100, or 3%) of respondents disagree with the statement. This suggests that there are individuals who do not believe that traditional medicine provides substantial employment opportunities.

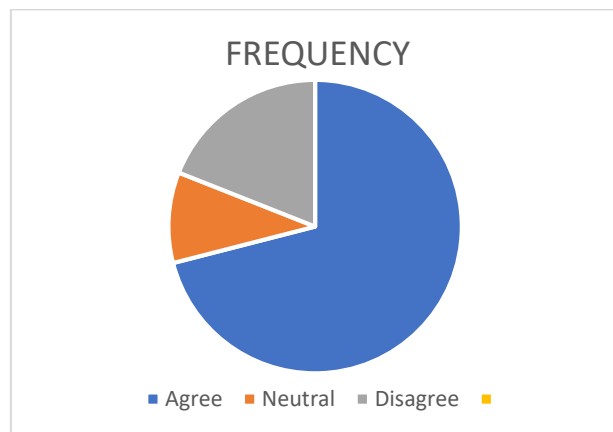
Figure 1



Table 5: Local communities benefit from the economic activities generated by traditional medicine, contributing to livelihoods and income generation.

INDICATORS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Agree	71	71
Neutral	10	10
Disagree	19	19
Total	100	100

Figure 2



The widely held respondents (71%) agreed with the declaration. This suggested that a noteworthy portion of the chosen population believed that traditional medicine pays certainly to the economic happenings of local communities, leading to livelihoods and income generation.

A smaller percentage of respondents (10%) articulated a neutral stance. This showed that these individuals neither strongly agreed nor disagreed with the statement, reflecting a lack of strong opinions or uncertainty about the economic benefits of traditional medicine.

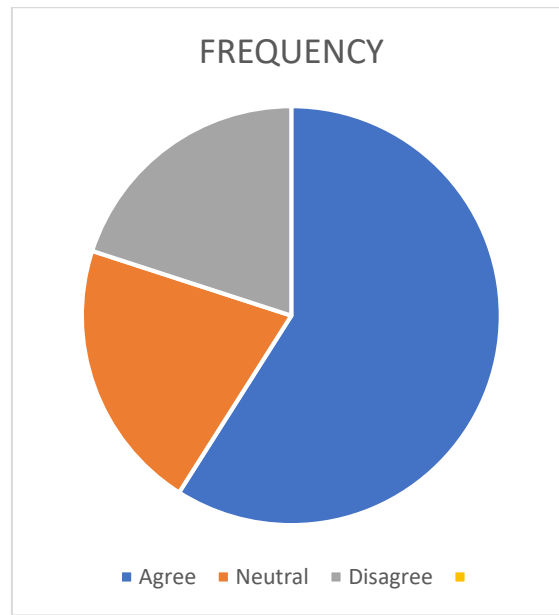
The remaining 19% of respondents disagreed with the statement. This implied that there was a percentage of the surveyed populace that did not believe traditional medicine contributed meaningfully to the economic well-being of local publics or that it did not contribute completely to livelihoods and income generation.

Table 6: Ghana has the potential to export traditional medicinal products to international markets, contributing to foreign exchange earnings.

INDICATORS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Agree	59	59
Neutral	21	21
Disagree	20	20
Total	100	100

The total number of respondents was 100, and the percentages across the three categories added up to 100%, indicating that all respondents responded. In summary, a majority of the respondents (59%) agreed that Ghana has the potential to export traditional medicinal products to international markets, while a smaller percentage (20%) disagreed, and a portion (21%) remained neutral on the matter.

Figure 3



Objective 2: To examine the strategies for integrating traditional medicine into the formal healthcare system for economic development.

STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTIONS
Research and Documentation	<p>Research to understand the efficacy and safety of traditional medicine practices.</p> <p>Document traditional medical knowledge, practices, and formulations.</p> <p>Collaborate with traditional healers and practitioners to compile a comprehensive database.</p>
Regulation and Standardization	<p>Establish regulatory frameworks for traditional medicine, ensuring quality, safety, and efficacy.</p> <p>Develop and enforce standards for the production, marketing, and use of traditional medicine products.</p> <p>Implement quality control measures to standardize traditional medicine formulations.</p>
Education and Training	<p>Provide formal education and training programs for traditional healers to enhance their skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Integrate traditional medicine modules into the curriculum of healthcare professionals.</p> <p>Foster mutual understanding and respect between traditional and modern healthcare practitioners.</p>
Collaboration and Partnerships	<p>Facilitate collaboration between traditional healers and modern healthcare professionals.</p> <p>Establish partnerships between traditional medicine practitioners, researchers, and healthcare institutions.</p> <p>Encourage joint research projects to explore integrating traditional and modern medical practices.</p>

Public Awareness and Acceptance	Educate the public about the benefits and limitations of traditional medicine. Promote awareness of traditional medicine within the formal healthcare system. Engage in public campaigns to reduce stigma and build trust in traditional medicine practices.
Incorporate Traditional Medicine into National Health Policies	Integrate traditional medicine into national health policies and strategies. Allocate resources for the development and promotion of traditional medicine. Ensure that traditional medicine is considered in healthcare planning and service delivery.
Research and Development	Finance research and development to bridge the gap between traditional and modern medicine. Discover the potential of traditional medicine in the development of new pharmaceuticals. Support or finance research initiatives that study the integration of traditional and modern medical tactics.

These findings are long-established the hypothesis that "The incorporation of traditional medicine into the formal healthcare system positively influences economic development in Ghana".

5. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

Economic Impact of Traditional Medicine - Employment Opportunities

The majority of respondents (93%) agree that traditional medicine provides employment opportunities. A small percentage (4%) are neutral, indicating uncertainty. A smaller percentage (3%) disagrees with the statement.

Economic Impact of Traditional Medicine - Benefits to Local Communities

71% of respondents agreed that local communities benefit economically from traditional medicine. 10% are neutral, indicating a lack of strong opinions or uncertainty. 19% disagreed, suggesting a portion of respondents did believe in the economic benefits of traditional medicine for local communities.

Ghana's Potential to Export Traditional Medicinal Products

59% of respondents believed Ghana has the potential to export traditional medicinal products to international markets. 20% disagree, indicating skepticism about Ghana's export potential. 21% were neutral, reflecting uncertainty or a lack of a clear stance on the matter.

Generally, the findings suggested a largely positive perception of traditional medicine's economic impact, but there were variations in opinions, especially regarding benefits to local communities and export potential. This indicated the need for further exploration and understanding of the nuances in public opinion and the economic aspects of traditional medicine in Ghana.

Research and Documentation

The experts and focus group discussions concluded that researchers focus on the efficacy and safety of traditional medicine practices. They mentioned that if the efficacy and safety of the medicines are assured, it encourages patronage and eventually contributes to the economy. The discussions advised traditional medical knowledge, practices, and formulations are highlighted and documented. The experts advised the collaboration with traditional healers and practitioners, emphasizing the comprehensive database as a valuable resource for future integration efforts.

Regulation and Standardization

The experts suggested showcasing the established regulatory frameworks and their impact on ensuring quality, safety, and efficacy builds trust in the use of traditional medicine. The experts advised traditional medicine practitioners to provide insights into the development and enforcement of standards for the production, marketing, and use of traditional medicine products. In addition, the focus group discussed how quality control measures contribute to standardizing traditional medicine formulations and promoting consumer trust.

Education and Training

The focus group discussions and interview outcomes or findings revealed formal education and training programs for traditional healers or practitioners. They added that the training will enhance the skills and knowledge of the practitioners. The experts discuss the integration of traditional medicine modules into the curriculum of healthcare professionals and its role in fostering mutual understanding. The discussions highlight the importance of mutual respect between traditional and chemically saturated healthcare practitioners for successful integration.

Collaboration and Partnerships

The discussions suggested that traditional healers and orthodox healthcare professionals collaborate to promote their medicine. The practitioners working as a team will not only promote a healthy society but to create an opportunity for consumers to choose local medicines where chemically saturated medicines are scarce without any fear or hesitation.

The experts highlighted the need to establish partnerships between traditional medicine practitioners, researchers, and healthcare institutions. They established that the partnership would ensure that right from the academic institutions the students are informed about the potency, importance, efficacy, and safety of traditional medicines. The expert opinions were of the view that the partnership between these institutions would help promote indigenous medicines for their full economic potential. The discussions concluded that joint research projects be encouraged to explore the integration of traditional and chemically saturated or orthodox medical practices.

Public Awareness and Acceptance

The experts' opinions suggested that public education regarding the benefits and limitations of traditional medicine be instituted. They added that reducing the impact of the stigma and building trust in traditional medicine practices be factored into the awareness campaigns. The experts mentioned how increased public acceptance would contribute to the successful integration of traditional medicine into the formal healthcare system.

Incorporate Traditional Medicine into National Health Policies:

The discussions provided insights into the integration of traditional medicine into national health policies and strategies. They suggested the allocation of resources for the development and promotion of traditional medicine be carried out by the institutions. The opinion leaders highlighted the importance of considering traditional medicine in planning and service delivery for comprehensive healthcare.

Research and Development

The discussions revealed the potential of traditional medicine in developing new pharmaceuticals should be shared. They added that research findings relating to bridging the gap between traditional and orthodox medicine be shared. They Highlighted the support or financing of research initiatives studying the integration of traditional and so-called modern medical tactics, emphasizing their contribution to economic development.

Implications

The recognized strategies for integrating traditional medicine into the formal healthcare structure provide a roadmap for policymakers and healthcare professionals. The emphasis on research with documentation and regulation mirrored a yearning for fact-based practices and quality control in traditional medicine. The call for education and training with collaboration and partnerships underscored the importance of mutual understanding and respect between traditional and modern healthcare practitioners. The importance of public awareness and acceptance with policy integration and research and development signified a holistic approach to the integration of traditional medicine into the healthcare system.

In conclusion, the study's findings and contributions pave the way for further research, policy development, and practical initiatives to enhance the economic contributions of traditional medicine in Ghana. The identified strategies provide a framework for stakeholders to collaboratively work towards integrating traditional medicine into the formal healthcare system for economic development.

5.1 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the economic impact of traditional medicine in Ghana and explores strategies for its integration (Adams, J., & Tovey, P. 2018) into the formal healthcare system. The findings indicate a generally positive perception of traditional medicine's contribution to employment, local communities, and the potential for international export. However, variations in opinions highlight the need for nuanced understanding and further exploration.

The research addresses the existing gap in empirical evidence regarding the economic contributions of traditional medicine in Ghana. By conducting a comprehensive analysis involving a diverse sample of participants, the study provides tangible data and insights into the economic significance of traditional medicine.

The research sets the stage for further exploration and future research endeavors in the field of traditional medicine in Ghana. The identified strategies can serve as a foundation for more in-depth studies, policy developments, and practical interventions to enhance the economic contributions of traditional medicine.

The strategies identified for integration encompass research and documentation with regulation and standardization, education and training with collaboration and partnerships with public awareness and acceptance, and incorporation into national health policies with research and development. These strategies provide a comprehensive roadmap for policymakers, healthcare professionals, and stakeholders to foster an environment where traditional medicine thrives economically while contributing to holistic well-being.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Establish Regulatory Frameworks: There is a need to develop and implement robust regulatory frameworks to ensure the quality and safety of efficacy of traditional medicine products. This will build trust among consumers and enhance the integration process.

2. **Promote Education and Training:** Invest in formal education and training programs for traditional healers, integrating traditional medicine modules into the curriculum of healthcare professionals. This will enhance skills, knowledge, and mutual understanding between traditional and modern healthcare practitioners.
3. **Encourage Collaboration and Partnerships:** Facilitate collaboration between traditional medicine practitioners, researchers, and healthcare institutions. This collaborative approach can lead to joint research projects and a unified effort to integrate traditional and modern medical practices.
4. **Enhance Public Awareness:** Implement public awareness campaigns to educate the public about the benefits and limitations of traditional medicine. Reducing stigma and building trust in traditional practices are crucial for successful integration.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Godwin Ayittey is the Medical Director at Todah Hospital, a Christian Health Association Health Facility. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (Ph.D.) in Alternative Medicine, a Doctorate Degree in Hospital Administration, a Master's Degree in Hospital and Healthcare Management, a Master's Degree in Disaster Management, a Bachelor's Degree, and a Certificate in Education. Dr. Godwin Ayittey was a Lecturer, a Banker, and a teacher. He indeed started his career in the year 2000.

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