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The Hidden Hand: Orthodox Medical Doctors and their Quiet Reliance on Traditional Remedies

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ABSTRACT:

In a world led by modern medicine, many orthodox doctors quietly embrace traditional remedies and natural foods for personal well-being. This article reveals how they incorporate vegetables, fruits, herbal teas, and indigenous dishes into their diets, reflecting a silent respect for nature's healing power. It emphasizes traditional practices' historical roots and health benefits, calling for integration with modern healthcare. The document recommends interdisciplinary education, collaborative research, public health campaigns, and policy reforms to honor and preserve indigenous knowledge. Embracing this synergy fosters a more holistic, culturally grounded, and sustainable healthcare system for present and future generations

Keywords: Doctors' Hidden Hands and Traditional Medicine

INTRODUCTION

In a world dominated by modern medicine and clinical technologies, the general perception is that orthodox medical doctors rely solely on pharmaceutical solutions. However, behind the scenes lies a subtle yet profound truth: many professionals quietly incorporate traditional remedies and natural foods into their lifestyles. This silent integration is not a contradiction but a testament to the inherent value of nature's pharmacy. This article unveils how medical doctors, while encouraging scientifically-tested medications, also embrace vegetables, fruits, and other natural foods that support their health and well-being.

Purpose of the study

This paper explores how medical doctors, despite their scientific training, adopt and appreciate traditional and natural health practices in their personal lives. It sheds light on their consumption of vegetables, fruits, herbal teas, and indigenous dishes, revealing a hidden synergy between modern medicine and traditional wisdom.

Objectives

1. To examine the extent to which medical doctors incorporate traditional remedies and natural foods into their health practices despite their reliance on modern medical training.
2. To explore the potential for integrating traditional and modern healthcare systems by highlighting the implicit synergy observed in the personal health choices of orthodox medical professionals.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do medical doctors use traditional remedies and natural foods in managing their health?
2. What patterns of synergy exist between traditional and modern health practices among orthodox medical professionals?

Significance of the paper

The standing of this paper lies in its contribution to the growing discourse on holistic healthcare. Recognizing the quiet endorsement of natural remedies by conventional Doctors, the article challenges the rigid divide between traditional medicine. It advocates for integrating both systems through interdisciplinary education, collaborative research, and policy support. Ultimately, it aims to promote a culturally grounded, sustainable, and inclusive healthcare model that respects the value of indigenous knowledge alongside modern science.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore how medical doctors incorporate traditional remedies and natural foods into their health practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of ten medical practitioners, ten nurses, and ten pharmacists from various healthcare facilities in Ghana. Participants were selected based on their willingness to share insights into their personal dietary and health choices. Data collection focused on open-ended questions that allowed participants to describe their use of vegetables, fruits, herbal teas, and traditional dishes, as well as their perceptions of traditional medicine.

The interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed through thematic analysis. This technique allowed for the identification of repeated patterns and themes related to the combination of natural and traditional health practices in the lives of orthodox medical practitioners. Findings were validated through member checking and peer debriefing to enhance credibility and trustworthiness. The qualitative design provided a rich, in-depth understanding of the subtle yet significant ways that medical doctors embrace traditional health practices alongside their professional training in modern medicine.

FINDINGS/ DISCUSSION

Medical Doctors Consume Vegetables

Vegetables are powerhouses of nutrients (Boeing, H., et al. 2012), and doctors, while they may not openly promote traditional remedies in clinical settings, often show a deep respect for nature's healing potential through their diets. Spinach, rich in iron, magnesium, and vitamin K, supports blood health and bone density. Carrots, full of beta-carotene (Vitamin A), enhance vision and boost immunity. Broccoli offers sulforaphane, a compound known for its anti-cancer properties, along with vitamins C and K. Tomatoes provide lycopene, an antioxidant that lowers the risk of heart disease and certain cancers, whereas cabbage contains vitamin C, fiber, and antioxidants that aid digestion and reduce inflammation. Collectively, these vegetables form a silent prescription that many doctors follow—not with a pen, but with a plate.

Doctors Eat Fruits

Fruits provide both refreshment and healing properties (Slavin, J. L., & Lloyd, B., 2012), prompting medical professionals to increasingly integrate these natural treasures into their diets for preventive healthcare. For example, apples exemplify the adage "An apple a day..." due to their high fiber content (pectin) and antioxidants that promote heart and gut health. Bananas, rich in potassium and vitamin B6, assist in regulating blood pressure and enhancing nerve function. Oranges are recognized as an outstanding source of vitamin C, crucial for the entire human body and skin renewal. Furthermore, avocados are rich in healthy fats, folate, and potassium, and contribute significantly to cardiovascular and brain health. In the interim, berries such as blueberries and strawberries are abundant in flavonoids and antioxidants that combat oxidative stress and enhance memory function. Doctors recognize that regular fruit consumption is a cornerstone of chronic disease prevention (Boeing, H., et al. 2012).

Doctors Eat Other Natural Foods: Carbohydrates, Proteins, Minerals, and More

A balanced diet encompasses more than just fruits and vegetables; it relies on natural sources of macronutrients and minerals, which are key components of every doctor's health protocol. Complex carbohydrates derived from brown rice, oats, and sweet potatoes offer long-lasting energy and help maintain digestive health due to their fiber. Proteins such as beans, lentils, eggs, and omega-3-rich fish like salmon are crucial for muscle recovery and reducing inflammation. Minerals, including magnesium from pumpkin seeds, iron from dried apricots, and calcium found in milk and yogurt, support strong bones, nerve function, and muscle health. Fats from coconut oil, olive oil, and nuts provide vital fatty acids that improve brain function and hormone balance. Furthermore, herbal teas like chamomile, ginger, and moringa are habitually consumed to support digestion, encourage relaxation, and enhance immunity. These natural food choices, immersed in ancient traditions, are still tastefully incorporated by today's medical professionals trained in the modern scientific findings.

Traditional medicine practitioners have long possessed deep knowledge of food substances and natural remedies, well before the advent of orthodox medicine (Gurib-Fakim, A., 2006). Many of the practices now formalized within modern healthcare systems, such as nutrition counseling and physical therapy, were originally rooted in traditional medicine. For instance, naturopathic doctors have historically provided dietary guidance and home-based treatments that promoted wellness using locally available foods and herbs. Similarly, massage therapy, which is now institutionalized as physiotherapy, has been an integral part of traditional healing practices for generations.

Ironically, many foods orthodox nutritionists promote today, such as fufu, akple, banku, yam, and plantain, are staples that traditional medicine has long recognized for their therapeutic benefits. While modern medicine has made significant advancements, it is important for orthodox practitioners to honestly acknowledge and appreciate the foundational role that traditional medicine has played—and continues to play—in promoting health and well-being. A more collaborative and respectful integration of these systems would reflect gratitude and truth.

Orthodox medical practitioners often consume soups made with groundnuts and palm nuts, both of which are plant-based ingredients commonly found in traditional medicine. Additionally, alcohol or spirits, also derived from plant sources, are frequently used in clinical settings for wound care and disinfection. These practices highlight the valuable role of traditional, plant-based remedies in modern medical treatment and deserve recognition and commendation by the medical community.

CONCLUSION

The quiet reliance of orthodox medical doctors on traditional remedies and natural foods is not merely anecdotal—it is a compelling reality that bridges the gap between scientific advancement and ancestral wisdom. While these professionals may not openly advocate traditional medicine within the confines of their clinics or hospitals, their personal health practices tell a different story. Through their deliberate consumption of nutrient-rich vegetables, fruits, whole foods, herbal teas, and other plant-based substances, they pay homage to the healing potential of nature. These choices are not arbitrary but reflect a conscious effort to prevent disease, boost immunity, and maintain overall wellness—principles that traditional medicine has upheld for generations (World Health Organization, 2013; Tilburt & Kaptchuk, 2008).

It is becoming increasingly clear that modern medicine and traditional practices are not rivals but allies. The core objective of both systems is the same: to preserve and restore health. As orthodox practitioners incorporate natural foods and remedies into their lives, they reinforce the fact that traditional medicine has long provided foundational health solutions rooted in nature's bounty. Whether it's a bowl of vegetable soup, a cup of ginger tea, or a fruit-packed breakfast, these seemingly simple choices echo ancient healing practices that have withstood the test of time.

Recognizing this synergy should prompt a more open and honest dialogue between the two paradigms. There is immense value in fostering mutual respect and integration between traditional and modern medicine. Such collaboration not only enriches medical practice but also empowers communities to embrace a more holistic and culturally grounded approach to health (World Health Organization, 2013). In doing so, we move closer to a healthcare model that is not only scientifically sound but also deeply human and historically rooted. The hidden hand of traditional wisdom continues to guide even the most modern of healers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Promote Interdisciplinary Education and Training

Medical schools and health training institutions should consider introducing interdisciplinary modules exploring traditional medicine, nutrition, natural remedies, and modern medical sciences. This would help demystify traditional practices and empower doctors with a broader understanding of culturally significant health solutions.

Foster Research on Natural and Traditional Remedies

Governments, universities, and health organizations should invest in research that scientifically evaluates the efficacy of traditional foods and remedies. Validating these through peer-reviewed studies can bridge the gaps between tradition and science, making it easier for practitioners to advocate their use confidently.

Encourage Open Dialogue Between Traditional and Orthodox Practitioners

Platforms such as joint workshops, conferences, and community outreach programs should be established to allow traditional healers and orthodox medical professionals to share knowledge. This builds mutual respect and creates opportunities for collaboration in patient care, especially in rural areas.

Incorporate Traditional Foods in Institutional Meal Plans

Hospitals, clinics, and schools can set an example by including nutritionally beneficial traditional foods in their meal plans. Doing so reinforces the health benefits of indigenous diets and encourages wider public adoption.

Public Health Campaigns Highlighting Nutritional Wisdom

Ministries of Health and public health agencies should run campaigns that celebrate the nutritional value of local fruits, vegetables, and traditional dishes. These campaigns can counteract the overreliance on processed foods and pharmaceuticals for everyday health maintenance.

Develop Policies That Recognize Traditional Contributions to Modern Health

National health policies should acknowledge the foundational role of traditional practices in public health. Legal frameworks that protect traditional knowledge and integrate it into national health strategies will elevate its legitimacy and promote safe, responsible use.

Encourage Doctors to Model Wholesome, Natural Lifestyles

Medical professionals should be encouraged to be role models not just in clinical expertise but in lifestyle. Sharing their dietary and health practices—such as consuming herbal teas, fruits, and traditional soups—can inspire patients to adopt healthier, more natural lifestyles.

Integrate Traditional Wisdom in Community Health Programs

Community-based health initiatives can combine health screenings with sessions on the benefits of traditional foods and remedies. This strategy improves health literacy and encourages culturally relevant health behaviors.

Document and Preserve Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Academic institutions and cultural preservation bodies should collaborate to document traditional healing foods, herbs, and techniques to prevent the loss of this wisdom. This archival process is vital for future generations and could serve as a repository for continued study and integration.

Support Sustainable Farming of Medicinal Plants and Indigenous Foods

Governments and NGOs should support farmers and traditional healers in cultivating medicinal plants and indigenous crops. This not only preserves biodiversity but also ensures a steady, safe supply of natural remedies for both traditional and modern practitioners.

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