

Relevance for Traditional Medicine in South Africa: Experiences of Urban Traditional Healers, Izinyanga

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Abstract : Access to relevant health indicates people's likelihood of survival, including craft of indigenous healing and its related practitioners-*izinyanga*. However, the emergence of a dreaded novel corona virus - COVID-19 that has engulfed almost the whole world has necessitated the need to revisit the state of traditional healers in South Africa. This circumstance tended to expose the reality of social settings in various social structures and related policies including the manner coloniality reveal its ugly head when it comes treatment between western and African based therapeutic practices in this country. In attempting to gain a better understanding of such experiences, primary and secondary sources were consulted when collecting data that perusal of various literature in this instance including face-to-face interviews with traditional healers working on the street of Tshwane Municipality in South Africa. Preliminary findings revealed that the emergence of this deadly virus coincided with the moment when the government agenda was focussed on fulfilment of its promise of addressing the past inequity practices, including the transformation of medical sector. This scenario can be witnessed by the manner in which government and related agencies such as health department keeps on undermining indigenous healing practice irrespective of its historical record in terms of healing profession and fighting various diseases before times of father of medicine, Imhotep. Based on these preliminary findings, it is recommended that the government should hasten the incorporation of African knowledge systems especially medicine to offer alternatives and diverse to assess the underutilised indigenous African therapeutic approach and relevant skills that could be useful in combating ailments such as COVID 19. Perhaps, the plural medical systems should be recognized and related policies are formulated to guarantee mutual respect among citizens and the incorporation of healing practices in South African health sector, Africa and in the broader global community.

Keywords : indigenous healing practice, inyanga, COVID-19, therapeutic, urban, experience

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