

The Prevalence of Herbal Medicine Practice and Associated Factors among Cancer Patients Receiving Palliative Care at Mobile Hospice Mbarara

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Abstract : In Uganda, over 90% of people use herbal remedies. Herbal medicine use has been associated with delayed clinical appointments, presentation with advanced cancers, financial constraints, and misdiagnosis. This study aimed to evaluate the prevalence of herbal medicine use and practices amongst cancer patients receiving Palliative Care at Mobile Hospice Mbarara (MHM) and the associated challenges. This was a mixed-methods prospective study conducted in 2022 at MHM, where patients were interviewed, and a questionnaire was completed. 87% of the patients had used herbal medicine. Of these, 83% were female, and 59% had not received formal education. 27% of patients had used herbal remedies for a year or more. 51% of patients who were consuming herbs stopped using them after starting palliative care treatment. Motivations for herbal medicine use were in the hope for a cure in 59%, for pain relief in 30%, and peer influence in 10%. There is a high prevalence of herbal medicine use in Palliative Care. Female gender and lack of formal education were disproportionately associated with herbal remedy use. Most patients consume herbal remedies in search of a cure or to relieve severe pain. Education of cancer patients about herbal remedy use may improve treatment outcomes in Palliative Care.

Keywords : prevalence, herbal medicine, cancer patients, palliative care

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