

Perceptions of Pregnant Women on the Transitional Use of Traditional Medicine in the Transitional District Western Uganda

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Abstract : Background: The use of traditional medicine in Uganda forms the preliminary therapeutic approaches among many people. Traditional medicines have been used in Uganda for many years, not only for the management of pregnancy-related complications but also for the management of other physical and psychological illnesses. Traditional medicines are always considered the first line of treatment by a considerable number of people. This study, therefore, sought to explore the lived experiences of pregnant women by assessing their perceptions of the transitional use of traditional medicine. Methods: Ethnography was used to capture data from an emic perspective. The ethnographic approach involved visiting a few selected pregnant women to observe and participate in the identification of traditional medicines. The ethnographic fieldwork was carried out within a period of three months. In-depth interviews were carried out and audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Data was thereafter analyzed thematically. The thematic analysis involved identifying statements made by research participants by transcribing audio and reading through field notes, coding was done, and themes were generated according to commonly mentioned experiences of using traditional medicine. Results: The findings revealed that women performed a ritual of 'cutting the cord' by making a small horizontal incision on the belly across the linea Nigra (also known as a pregnancy line) at around six months of pregnancy to avoid producing a baby with an umbilical cord tied around the baby's neck. They also used crushed egg shells, crushed snail shells and herbs such as pawpaw roots, Entarahompo (*crassocephalum vitelline*), Ekyoganyanja (*Erlangea tomentose*), to manage Omushohokye (a term used by the study participants to refer to a situation where women pass out too much water when giving birth, producing a child with mold and oozing out of a milky liquid through the breasts before giving births); prepare for safe delivery and also to manage pregnancy-related complications. The study recommends the implementation of a traditional medicine use policy using a bottom-up approach. Designing and implementing of culturally sensitive maternal healthcare intervention programs and involving village health teams and the elderly in health education.

Keywords : traditional medicine, pregnant women, uganda, perceptions

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