

## Ethnic Andean Concepts of Health and Illness in the Post-Colombian World and Its Relevance Today

**Authors :** Elizabeth J. Currie, Fernando Ortega Perez

**Abstract :** "MEDICINE" is a new project funded under the EC Horizon 2020 Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions, to determine concepts of health and healing from a culturally specific indigenous context, using a framework of interdisciplinary methods which integrates archaeological-historical, ethnographic and modern health sciences approaches. The study will generate new theoretical and methodological approaches to model how peoples survive and adapt their traditional belief systems in a context of alien cultural impacts. In the immediate wake of the conquest of Peru by invading Spanish armies and ideology, native Andeans responded by forming the Taki Onkoy millenarian movement, which rejected European philosophical and ontological teachings, claiming "you make us sick". The study explores how people's experience of their world and their health beliefs within it, is fundamentally shaped by their inherent beliefs about the nature of being and identity in relation to the wider cosmos. Cultural and health belief systems and related rituals or behaviors sustain a people's sense of identity, wellbeing and integrity. In the event of dislocation and persecution these may change into devolved forms, which eventually inter-relate with "modern" biomedical systems of health in as yet unidentified ways. The development of new conceptual frameworks that model this process will greatly expand our understanding of how people survive and adapt in response to cultural trauma. It will also demonstrate the continuing role, relevance and use of TM in present-day indigenous communities. Studies will first be made of relevant pre-Colombian material culture, and then of early colonial period ethnohistorical texts which document the health beliefs and ritual practices still employed by indigenous Andean societies at the advent of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit campaigns of persecution - "Extirpaci<sup>o</sup>n de las Idolatr<sup>as</sup>". Core beliefs drawn from these baseline studies will then be used to construct a questionnaire about current health beliefs and practices to be taken into the study population of indigenous Quechua peoples in the northern Andean region of Ecuador. Their current systems of knowledge and medicine have evolved within complex historical contexts of both the conquest by invading Inca armies in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, followed a generation later by Spain, into new forms. A new model will be developed of contemporary Andean concepts of health, illness and healing demonstrating the way these have changed through time. With this, a "policy tool" will be constructed as a bridging facility into contemporary global scenarios relevant to other Indigenous, First Nations, and migrant peoples to provide a means through which their traditional health beliefs and current needs may be more appropriately understood and met. This paper presents findings from the first analytical phases of the work based upon the study of the literature and the archaeological records. The study offers a novel perspective and methods in the development policies sensitive to indigenous and minority people's health needs.

**Keywords :** Andean ethnomedicine, Andean health beliefs, health beliefs models, traditional medicine

**Conference Title :** ICETM 2017 : International Conference on Ethnomedicine and Traditional Medicine

**Conference Location :** Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Conference Dates :** May 14-15, 2017