



Medical Pluralism among Canadians of Caribbean Descent



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Abstract

Medical pluralism is defined as the use of more than one medical system or the use of both conventional medicine and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) for treatment of health and illness (Wade et al., 2008). The objective of this research project was to determine if cultural factors influence an individual's decision to use alternative forms of medicine. I gathered qualitative data by interviewing a Canadian research participant of Jamaican descent. After the interview was conducted I examined the data and found that the respondent was influenced by their Jamaican culture where they learned folk remedies and learned to rely on their Christian beliefs for healing. They also were influenced by peers who would recommend CAM treatments.

Research Methods

The method used to gather data was a face-to-face interview in the research respondent's place of residence. The interview schedule consisted of 13 open ended questions. The interview lasted 45 minutes and the answers were re-read to assure clarity so that there were no generalizations or assumptions made on behalf of the respondent.

Results and Analysis

The qualitative data gathered showed that the factors that contribute to the use of more than one medical treatment in the research respondent was culture and religious views. Because they both were major influential forces that impacted her decisions on what treatments to use. I have separated the data into sections to help explain my findings; religious beliefs, advice from peer groups, and folk remedies.

Folk Remedies

The use of folk remedies is passed down from elder family members. Jamaica has a history of mixing cultures due to slavery and colonialism and both of those elements have had great influence over the citizens who balance both traditional medicine as well western biomedicine (Seaga, 2005). The traditions are passed down through mothers and grandmothers since they have a very important place in matriarchal Jamaican culture (Seaga, 2005).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the influential factors of medical pluralism in my research participant were culture and religion. Her Jamaican culture caused her to rely on traditions learned from elders in her family to use or combine the use of herbs to help with medical treatments. Her religion caused to have faith that God would heal her, gain social resources and avoid certain unhealthy and risky behaviours. Although she had gotten advice from peers, she was reluctant to try methods that had conflicted with her religious beliefs.

Religious beliefs and Advice from peers

PRAYER

The research respondent is a Christian woman and had expressed that she uses prayer for physical and mental health issues. Her lifestyle choices were influenced by her religion, she did not indulge in any unhealthy practices like smoking and drinking and she avoided certain foods.

PEER ADVICE

Peer advice included seeing an acupuncturist and a chiropractor for migraine relief. They did not see the chiropractor because they did not trust their medical expertise and acupuncture conflicted with their religious beliefs,

Remedies Mentioned:

- Sugar water as a pain reliever
- Coconut water for blood pressure
- Moringa for blood pressure and diabetes
- Mint tea as a digestion aid
- Ginger tea for nausea
- Aloe Vera for its healing properties
- Leaf of life for colds and coughs
- Rosemary for muscle and joint pain

Mint leaves



Moringa leaves



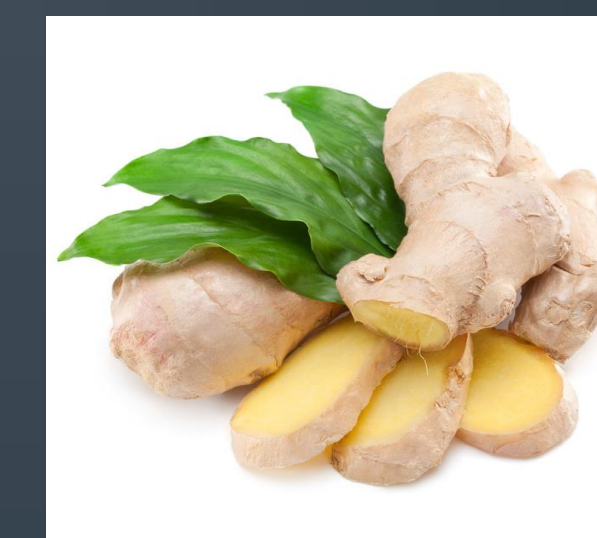
Rosemary



Aloe Vera



Ginger



Coconut Water

