

Development of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Ethiopian Traditional Medical Practitioners Through a Comprehensive Training Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Background: The Ethiopian health sector has shown remarkable progress in improving the maternal and under five children by reducing the morbidity and mortality throughout the country level. There is an improvement in the expansion of health facilities and health services in each health care facility. Besides the expansion of health facilities, a large number of Ethiopian utilizes traditional medicine. Providing training or health education to the traditional medical practitioners expands the Ministries effort for the prevention of diseases which one of the core components of the health policy. The goal of the training is improving in the Ethiopian health care systems through participation of the Traditional medical practitioners in the health care systems.

Techniques: The training package was cover topics relevant to health policy, regulations, Health System Transformation Plan agendas, and progress of the health system, Ethiopian Traditional medicines, Intellectual Property Rights, Conservation of traditional medicines, Research methods on Traditional medicines, Regulation of Traditional medicine/Traditional medicine Practitioners, Medical Ethics World health organization guidelines on good manufacturing practices for herbal medicines and Health Education. The audiences are traditional healers from various regions of Ethiopia. The training methods were include Lecture, Case Studies, Demonstration, practice and Group discussion to capture the knowledge, skill and value areas of each training course.

Outcome: On this the first round traditional healer training 50 traditional practitioners was participated though out the country. Analysis from a mini training assessment during the time of training indicated that the training were capacitating knowledge, attitude and practice on traditional medicine and practice as a primary health care service provider on the community.

Conclusion: based on the outcome evaluation we concluded that multidisciplinary approach and practice are required to achieve the objective of this project. Also, compressive and holistic training manual preparations are expected from this and planned subsequent traditional medicine practitioner training.

Keywords: Traditional Medicine; Traditional Medicine Practitioners; Ethiopian; Herbal; Homeopathy

Abbreviation

EPHI: Ethiopian Public Health Institute; EIPO: Ethiopian Intellectual Property; EBI: Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute; EFDA: Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority; GCP: Good Clinical Practice; GMP: Good Manufacturing Practice; HSTP: Health System Transformation Plan; MOH: Ministry Of Health; PHEM: Public Health Emergency Management; PPT: Power Point; SERO: Scientific and Ethical Review office; TM: Traditional Medicine; TMP: Traditional Medicine Practitioner; TOR: Term of Reference; TAMMRD: Traditional and Modern Medicine Research Directorate; WHO: World Health Organization

Introduction

According to the WHO, traditional medicine (TM) is the total sum of knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures that are used to maintain

health, as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve or treat physical and mental illnesses [1]. Like many other African countries, the majority (over 80%) of Ethiopian population rely on traditional medicine for primary health care [2]. This represents the majority of the rural population and sectors of the urban population where there is little or no access to modern health care. Traditional medicine has a significant contribution to the health care of the public, animal's health and crop pest's control. As it is more accessible, affordable and acceptable to local populations and can, therefore, contribute to the attainment of health coverage [3].

Due to the widespread use of traditional medicines, there is a need to promote the safety, efficacy, and quality of traditional medicine through expanding the knowledge-base on TM and through providing guidance on regulatory and quality assurance standards. Great emphasis also needs to be given for the research and development of traditional medicine through community based, pre-clinical and clinical studies as a means to promote the production of scientifically validated traditional medicines in industries thereby registration for commercialization [4]. The traditional medical practitioner (TMP) plays a pivotal role in the health care system. TMP provides services

that are challenged by modern health care systems. They treat diseases like wound, inflammation, herpes zoster, hemorrhoids, fracture, paralysis, back-pain, liver diseases, cancer and eczema. As they are influential in reaching and changing the behavior of the society, they are often integrated and accepted in a community [5].

While TMPs are rendering some useful services, in many cases, their practices are not up to expectations. There is also a feeling among TMPs that they are not being accorded the needed recognition by OMP [6]. Thus, there is resistance to integrate with the allopathic health care system. There is also lack of adequate education and training for practitioners. There are no established institutions for training TMPs and their trainers in the Ethiopian context. Therefore, by designing and implementing a comprehensive training for the TMPs to upgrade their knowledge and skills will expand the ministries effort for the prevention of diseases which one of the core components of the health policy. It also improves the performance of the health care system, conservation of indigenous knowledge, and facilitates the integration of the traditional health care systems to the current health care system of the country.

The goal of the training was to improve the Ethiopian health care systems through participation of the TMPs in the health care systems. The training package covered topics relevant to health policy, regulations, HSTP agendas, and progress of the health system, Ethiopian traditional Medicines, Intellectual property rights, Conservation of traditional medicines, research methods on traditional medicines, regulation of TM/TMP, medical ethics, WHO guidelines on good manufacturing practices (GMP) for herbal medicines and health education. The audiences were traditional healers from various regions of Ethiopia. The training methods include; Lecture, Case Studies, Demonstration, practice, Group discussion to capture the knowledge, skill and value areas of each training course.

Literature Review

The training for traditional medical practitioners held at Dire International Hotel, Adama, Ethiopia from January 23 to February 1, 2020 was organized by Traditional and modern medicine research directorate (TMMRD), The Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) in collaboration with Ministry of Health (MOH). The purpose of the training was to improve the knowledge and attitude of traditional medical practitioners through providing a basic knowledge on the Ethiopian health care systems, policies, proclamations and other regulations; The Ethiopian traditional medicines, types, prone and cones, TMPs contributions; herbal medicine preparations, GMP/GLP; medical ethics/aligning traditional healing and human rights; and on quality assurance in the manufacture of herbal medicines. It also aims to improve TMPs abilities of good herbal medicine preparations, teaching their patients on the health care, preventions of infectious and noninfectious diseases, health emergencies, and also to provide standardized health care practices throughout the country. The training was given for 10 consecutive days for traditional medical practitioners from various regions of Ethiopia. The training methods includes; Lecture, Case Studies, Demonstration, practice, and Group discussion to capture the knowledge, skill and value areas of each training course. The training documents (ppt) were Prepared in Amharic Language to be understandable by the traditional healers.

Proceeding of the training

Opening: A welcoming speech and keynote addresses were given by Director of Traditional and modern medicine research directorate, Ethiopian Public Health Institute. She welcomed all the training participants and gave an overall insight on the purpose of the training. Then The Public Relation office of EPHI give a chance for all traditional medical practitioners and training coordinators to introduce their names, where they came from, their profession and what they expected from the training.

The training coordinator gives a direction on how the training will continue and what's expected from the trainees. He advises them to be active participants, and to create a good relation and collaboration between each other. Training facilitator, energizer and timekeeper were also selected from participants to make the ten days stay more satisfying. There were some issues raised by some healers about a problem on traditional medical practitioners association but the organizers stress there should not be another issue and misunderstanding other than the training objectives and the participants must respect each other.

The training session was started at about scientific and ethical review office (SERO), EPHI with "Medical ethics; human codes of ethics and standards of ethics" the media of communication was Amharic language thus the participants can understand the training without difficulty. The training content includes health and being healthy, codes of ethics, respecting individuals as a human being, drug control authority proclamations related to codes of ethics, prohibited advertising on traditional medical practice. He explained what's expected from traditional medical service on patient's safety and treating patients fairly. Moreover, he tries to relate religious thought with the code of ethics by mentioning some phrases from the holy bible and the holy Quran. The healers were actively participated by telling their real lifetime experience as an example for violation of the code of ethics; they also suggested there should be some control mechanism by the government to punish dishonest traditional medical practitioners. The trainer also recommends a national TMP ethical guide to be prepared. At the end of the lecture, the trainer give 30 second for meditation to evaluate what they learned and to promise for themselves to follow the code of medical ethics.

Health education: The Federal Ministry of Health (MOH) gives half day training on "Health education". The training manual describes about communicable and non-communicable disease; what are the most common communicable diseases, mode of transmission and prevention and control mechanisms. The teaching method was lecturing with questions and answers. The training module doesn't address TMPs input; it seems it's prepared for the general patients. There was an argument between healers and the trainer on the use of anti-tuberculosis medicine, the healers thought the trainers didn't acknowledge their effort on disease management. In the afternoon session from Federal ministry of culture and tourism teaches TMPs on "Indigenous knowledge and traditional medicine" after tea break there was a dictation between participants and the presenter, the participants raise their questions and ideas on the topic, they got a substantial answer from the presenter.

Ethiopian traditional medicine past, present, and future

On the third day from TMMRD, EPHI give a half day lesson in titled with “Ethiopian traditional medicine past, present, and future”. The teaching-learning process was more participatory, important ideas were raised from both directions as a discussion. She tries to cover what was done in the past concerning traditional medicine rules and regulations, ministry of health role on establishing TM office and research directorate. She also explains MOH plans and expectation on TM in the near future. TMPs were satisfied with the descriptions and governments concern on their profession and signify their opinions what’s to be done next; on documentation of medicinal plant, conservation mechanisms of endangered medicinal plants, on secrecy issue, when working with researchers. The healers think even though some books on medicinal plants were written and published in Ethiopia their prescription and formulation is still unidentified, therefore the researchers have to work with TMPs to document the recipes it have to be scientifically studied and delivered to the society as a product.

After lunch another trainer from TMMRD, EPHI gives a lecture on “Good clinical practice for traditional medicine”. He explained how clinical trials performed based on WHO guidelines and how TMPs can take part in clinical trials. There were some difficulties in translating the training materials (ppt) to Amharic language and it creates bit confusion on the trainees. However in general, the training was very educative it initiates the TMPs to participate in clinical trials in the future.

Conservation of natural product/medicinal plant

On the fourth day of trainer was from Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute (EBI) give training on “Conservation of natural product/ medicinal plant”. In the morning session trainer give general explanation about the Institute’s mission and achievements on conservation of plants and the effort that has been done to support traditional medical practices. The teaching method was giving lesson by power point presentation. At the end of presentation there was different questions raised from TMPs and discussed with both trainers.

After tea break the second presenter, give a lesson on the conservation and sustainable use of Medicinal plants in Ethiopia. The training was interactive and some questions and idea were raised from TMPs, and discussed in detail. Finally the trainers ask the TMPs to list out endangered medicinal plants those are found in the area where they live and work. The trainers analysed and ranked the most endangered MP listed by the healers and then discussed how to work in collaboration to give information to regional biodiversity institutes and safeguard those medicinal plants.

Documentation of traditional medicinal plants

Trainer from Addis Ababa University, give his training on “Documentation of Traditional medicinal plants”. The training content include traditional medicine knowledge, importance of medicinal plants, Ethiopian medicinal plants and methods of traditional medicine data collection and documentation. Teaching method was with question and answer, and the teaching material PPT is supported with pictures which makes the session more interactive and participatory.

The trainers also ask questions and give time to TMPs to discuss and change ideas of each other on different questions in group.

The training was continued in the afternoon and TMPs were revealing their satisfaction on the training. The trainers also explain that it needs strong collaboration of healers and researchers to develop traditional medicine practice and to be fruitful. At the end of the session TMPs suggests that to have Ethiopian endangered medicinal plants planting day.

Overview of the Ethiopian healthcare system and Intellectual property right protection for traditional medicine development

The presenter of the morning session program was on Public health emergency management by from PHEM, EPHI. But unfortunately, he was unable to be there at that day due to his engagement on Corona virus outbreak. Due to unavailability of the first presenter the second presenter, Ato Ashenif Tadele took the stage to give his lecture on “An overview of the Ethiopian healthcare system” the training content includes current government policy on the health care system, Ethiopian health tier system, missions of health transformation plan, health transformation mechanisms starting from higher to lower, an overall health care delivery performance and indicators, current healthcare system plus infrastructure and the future direction of the ministry of health. The training was interactive and more participatory mostly discussing with participants. There was a group discussion on two titles (1-what did traditional medicine contribute so far and 2 what will be the future direction of TM). TMPs list out and present their thoughts on what they did so far and their opinions on the future direction of TM in detail.

Regulation of traditional medicine

Ethiopian Food and Drug Administration (EFDA) spent the half day with TMPs on “Regulation of traditional medicine” he explains the purpose of the training is to give more emphasis on development and regulation of traditional medicine. He tries to create a basic understanding on traditional medicine policies and strategies, TMPs registration and controls by EFDA, trade registration and licensing for TM products, right and responsibilities of TMPs, actions taken by EFDA, responsibility, and authority of EFDA.

The afternoon period was on “Intellectual property right protection for traditional medicine development” by The Ethiopian Intellectual Property Office (EIPO). He highlights what indigenous knowledge means and categories of indigenous knowledge. He points out the purpose of traditional medicine knowledge development and protection. Moreover, he describes the meaning of Intellectual property rights and its relation with traditional medicine, as well as the role of TMPs and research institutes on traditional medicine knowledge development and protection.

Proper medicinal plant collection, processing, and quality control mechanisms

TMMRD, EPHI present his slide on “Proper medicinal plant collection, processing, and quality control mechanisms” he tries to deliver a basic knowledge for TMPs on how to collect and handle medicinal plants properly, how to process collected medicinal plants and control their quality, necessary requirements needed to improve

the plant quality before and after collection, WHO guidelines on good herbal processing practices for herbal medicines.

In the afternoon the training continued with a new trainer from TMMRD, EPHI entitled with "Human anatomy" by giving a general idea on parts of the body, organs and their functions. Then also from TMMRD, EPHI gives a lecture on efficacy and safety studies of traditional medicine. After a while, there was a group discussion between TMPs on the role of TMPs association role and future direction, also when national traditional medicine day shall be celebrated in Ethiopia.

Introduction of Ethiopian tradition medicine road map and experience sharing

At the last day TMPs watch the recorded video of the former minister of MOH opening speech on TM road map launching workshop to give a general idea of MOH commitment and support for traditional medicine development, also to clear TMPs biased idea towards the budget given by MOH. Then, a healer and consultant on herbal medicine and complementary homeopathy treatment from Christina herbal therapy clinic share his experience with the audience and give his advice on how the healers can develop their profession as well as how they can strength their healers association for mutual benefits.

The healers also fill training assessment questioner prepared by the organizers to evaluate the training content, method, trainers and organizers attitude as well as to comment the hotel accommodation, training hall and other related facilities for further improvement.

Within the ten day stay although there were some issues raised by the healers about an administrative problem on traditional medical practitioners association, all of the participants agreed to work together to strengthen their association. Similarly regional TMPs associations also need to be established in each region of the country as well.

At last, the participants reflect their opinion on the overall training; they were very satisfied with the training content and way of teaching and learning process. The participants also raise their thoughts and queries, they suggest the government to facilitate and host international and continental platform for experience sharing to improve their knowledge and healing technique. The trainees emphasize this kind of training and support from the government in recent years will make their profession to be more respected. This will also improve participation of the Traditional medical practitioners in the health care systems.

The training creates an opportunity to perform a training needs assessment by keeping Adult learning principles in mind. It also gives a chance to redesign and develop learning objectives and training

materials by evaluating the current training performance and trough assessing the participants' need. The training also creates a venue for discussing Ethiopian TMPs associations' pros and cons and for setting their future direction as well.

Conclusion

Based on the participant evaluation the training was very important to strengthen the knowledge, attitude and practice of practitioners to improve the service of alternative/traditional medicine. Also, we conclude that regular training program are essential for healers at nationwide level up to taking TOT training, dubiety and responsibility we'll be taken over by regional health bureau. Although National and regional traditional medicine practitioner association must be strength for effective communication and even for fare selection and participation of participants in the trailing from respective region. Finally, conclude for the first time over all training program was very good.

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Evaluating the trailing material, Preparation of completed trailing manual for traditional practitioners and call for participants attaining third round traditional practitioners trailing.

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