

Exploring the Infection Prevention and Control Measures Taken by Traditional Healers in Rwanda

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Background

80% of African population seek care from traditional healers (THs)¹.

- 31% of THs in Rwanda have not undergone any formal schooling²
- There is Limited regulation and standardization of TH practice, safety and efficacy is unknown³

Objectives

Understanding infection prevention and control (IPC) measures employed by THs in their practice.

Methods

- **Setting:** Bugesera (East), Musanze (North), Nyabihu (West), and Muhanga (South)
- **Design:** Cross-sectional qualitative study
- **Sample:** 50 participants were included in study, following the Principle of saturation. *Exclusion:* those who are under 18 years old
- **Data collection tool:** 10 interview questions with multiple probing questions
- **Ethical approval:** UGHE IRB, reference number 213

Prospective plans

Presentation of findings to MOH, AGA Rwanda Network, Academic institutions, international health organizations

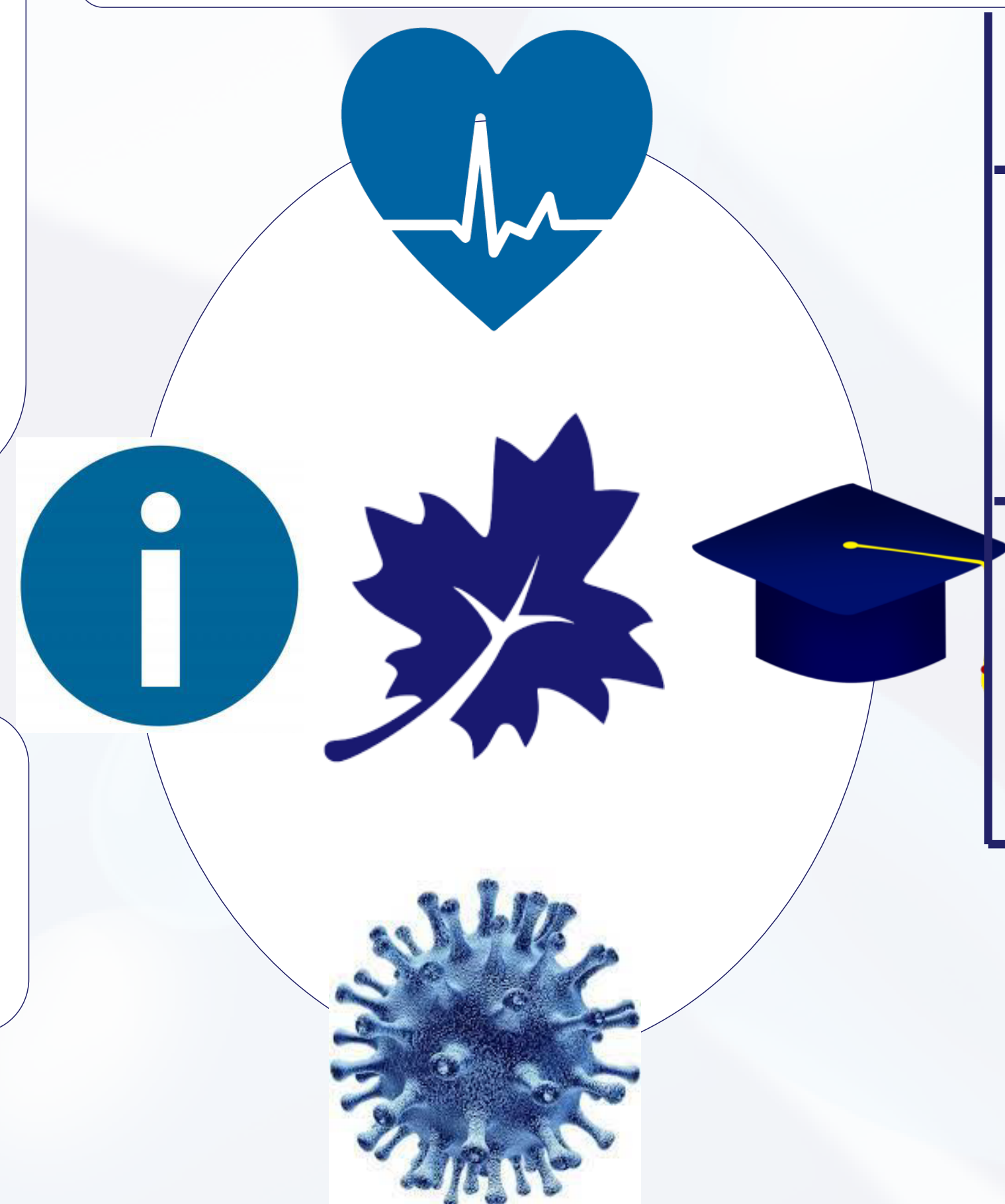
Expected outcomes: Development of focused interventions aimed at enhancing IPC efforts within TH practice, to improve healthcare outcomes.

References

1. Rwanda FDA, Policy of Traditional Complementary Alternative Medicine.pdf.
2. AGA Rwanda. (PDF) AGA RWANDA NETWORK CENSUS. dokumen.tips. Published 2011.
3. Demeke H, Hasen G, Sosengo T, Siraj J, Tatiparthi R, Suleman S. Evaluation of Policy Governing Herbal Medicines Regulation and Its Implementation in Ethiopia.

Results

4 Themes emerged from the interviews



Theme 1

Many day-to-day procedures posed risks of infection to THs.

[40-year-old Male]
“We use razors [to cut their skin] for patients who are bewitched.”

Theme 2

THs' understanding of IPC were often basic and not evidence based.

[38-year-old Male]
“I clean myself and never touch their blood, how can they affect me?”

Theme 3

THs' beliefs and attitudes toward IPC minimally prioritize patient-centered care

[33-year-old Female]
“The trainings we attended taught us that we must protect ourselves. The patients might infect you.”

Theme 4

THs employ various IPC measures, most of which were scientifically questionable.

[48-year-old Female]
“Most of the time I use a plastic bag. You might also use a cloth on your hands.”

Discussion

- Cross-infection or patients contracting infections from THs was not a primary concern.
- The findings underscore urgent need for interventions to mitigate the risks associated with TH practices, and to protect the health and safety of both THs and their patients.

Conclusion and recommendations

- IPC knowledge and practices among THs are poor, more extensive training is needed
- Risks of THs contracting disease from their practice is unknown, more research is needed

Funding

The Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene



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