

RELATING ORTHODOX PHARMACEUTICALS TO TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN AFRICA: A CASE OF EBONYI STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

For quite some decades, people have looked at orthodox pharmaceuticals and African traditional medicine as opposing medical systems. Orthodox pharmaceuticals have always taken the upper hand when it comes to comparison of these isolated remedies relegating traditional medicine to almost a state of nothingness. This is partly because strides in orthodox medical practice trailed the industrial revolution which was seen as the overhaul of the world system of action. Any system not following this trend is widely regarded as obsolete and neglected. African traditional medicine falls into this category. But, there is something that keep it, making it resist change or transformation. It calls for investigation. This work examined these elements in Ebonyi State of Nigeria and related the findings to that of Orthodox Medicine. The result show that both systems are efficacious varying mainly in method. While African Traditional Medicine is deeply embedded in culture, Spirituality, and unverifiable techniques which the people cannot easily jettison, the Orthodox medical practice utilized scientific method that is more appealing and universal. Since both systems have been observed effective in healthcare, the authors suggest collaboration using both systems in spite of glaring challenges of integration.

Keywords: Orthodox medicine, Traditional medicine, Sickness, Collaboration.

Introduction

Pharmacy or Pharmaceuticals has been an integral part of human life. Thought of medicine came as soon as man started making effort to preserve his life and maintain his health. Pharmaceutical or Pharmacy refers to drugs or anything related to drugs, its production, and uses. The *Oxford Languages Dictionary* states that pharmaceutical relates to medicinal, drugs, or their preparation, use or sale. It extended the meaning to include compounds manufactured for use as a medicinal drug (www.google.com). The *Cambridge Dictionary* on the other hand defined pharmaceutical as relating to the production of medicine, or medicine (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>). Pharmaceutical can be regarded as substance or substances used in diagnoses, treatment, or prevention of disease or diseases. It is also used in the restoration,

correction, and modification of organic functions (<https://www.brittanica.com>). Orthodox pharmacy or pharmaceutical is part of Orthodox medicine otherwise known as: Conventional medicine, Allopathic medicine, Biomedicine, Mainstream medicine, and Western medicine.

Orthodox medicine is a pattern where medical doctors and other health professionals treat symptoms and diseases using drugs, radiation, or surgery ([google.com](https://www.google.com)). It is posited as a widely acknowledged system of healthcare, mainly based on scientific evidence and principles. Orthodox medicine has different areas of specialization such as: Pharmacy, Medicine, Radiography, Nursing, Midwifery, etc.

Traditional or herbal medicine on the other hand utilizes plant-based remedies for cure. It sometimes incorporates other elements such as divination for diagnoses and prevention of ailments. Herbal or traditional medicine is embedded in African culture and more so in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. The people lived with it before the advent of Western medicine. The native doctor or traditional medicine man was taken as a semi-god. He was consulted for almost all life's challenges including ailments. His diagnoses are most often mixed with divination which encompasses common sense, consultation with spirits and deities, invocation of the forebears and their assistance, incantations, etc. The native doctor or "dibija" is believed to see what the natural eyes cannot see and to comprehend beyond the natural mind. He is regarded as very wise, and indeed he is very wise because without wisdom, he cannot convince the people and carry them along.

The native doctor does all the health work with little or no assistance. In other words, he does the work of the medical doctor, the pharmacist, the nurse, the radiographer, etc. alone. He manufactures the drugs, carries out diagnoses, and does the medication. He establishes a personal attachment with the patient who in turn develops much confidence and trust in him. Though, women become native doctors, more men are associated with the profession. In African traditional medicine, drug production and administration is not based on scientific evidence as it is the case with Orthodox medicine, but on personal experience of the herbalist or native doctor and the outcome of "afa" (divination). After carrying out his diagnoses and applying his medicine, the native doctor and the patient experience healing outcome which is also the target of Orthodox medicine. It is this meeting in healing outcome of orthodox therapy with the traditional mode of healthcare that produces the challenge of integration. This challenge is on how to combine African Traditional Medicine with the Conventional Pharmaceuticals to produce the best result.

Historical foundation of pharmaceuticals can be traced to Chinese, Hindu, or Mediterranean civilization. It should be noted that records of medicinal plants and

minerals date back to these civilization (<https://www.brittanica.com>). Egypt, however, is regarded as the cradle of modern medicine and embalmment.

Classification of Orthodox pharmaceuticals is generally done by chemical groupings and by the way they work in the body which is referred to as pharmacological effect. Orthodox pharmaceuticals and traditional pharmaceuticals co-exist in many countries, regions, and states. The same applies to Ebonyi State of Nigeria which is the focus of the study.

Traditional medical practices have been an integral part of the cultural heritage of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, for centuries. These practices have been passed down from generation to generation and are deeply rooted in the cultural and social context of the people. However, with the increasing influence of modern pharmaceutical practices, there is a need to examine the relationship between traditional medicine and modern pharmacy practices in the state. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the relationship of traditional medicine and modern pharmacy practices, with a focus on the cultural perspective in the post-colonial Nigeria, and Ebonyi State in particular.

Background

Ebonyi State is one of the states in the South East Region of Nigeria. It has boundaries with Benue State in the north and northeast, Enugu State in the west, Crossriver State in the east, and Abia State in the southeast ([wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)). Ebonyi State was created out of Enugu and Abia States of Nigeria in 1996 with its capital located at Abakaliki. Its population was estimated at 2.9 million in 2016 ([wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)). Ebonyi State is located in the South Eastern Region of Nigeria. The People speak Igbo Language which belongs to the KWA group of languages (a sub-Congo family). The KWA group of languages is spoken around West Africa and Sudan. One of its distinguishing features is tonality. Igbo Language is significant to the study because most of the healthcare interactions in Ebonyi State, especially those involving African Traditional Remedy are done in Igbo Language.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people with few engaged in trading, and employed as civil servants. Among the citizens are Traditional healthcare providers and Orthodox medical practitioners. They attend to the health needs of the populace. Among the Orthodox medical practitioners are medical doctors, pharmacists, nurses, midwives, laboratory scientists, radiologists, etc. On the side of Traditional healthcare providers are: native doctors, bone setters, snake bite healers, anti-poison makers, etc. Some of them are full time traditional medical practitioners, while some engage in healthcare issues on part-time basis. Such individuals are the ones that specialize in particular types of curative therapy like: treatment of snake bites, bone setting, curing skin infection, etc. This set of individuals, though, not

native doctors are consulted for the above or similar ailments. They provide effective cure to those sicknesses of which treatment they specialize. Most of these specialists'/healers claim that they inherited the art from their father, mother, or grandparents. Some others link their curative ability to the gods or deities. A good number attribute their healing ability to revelation from the spirit world. The Orthodox health workers acquire their skill through training in healthcare institutions or universities.

In spite of the impact of Christianity in Ebonyi State, many of the inhabitants still practice African Traditional Religion. In many communities or sub towns, one could notice a number of shrines, trees, and bushes solely reserved for the gods and for sacrifices. Some of the shrines are located near rivers and thick forests. The traditionalists and those deeply involved with African Traditional Religion constantly visit these shrines for worship and consultation. In most of the towns and villages are also located Churches where Christians of various denominations worship God especially on Sundays and Holy days of obligation. Few mosques also exist for the few numbers of Moslem adherents in the state. The Moslems go to pay homage to Allah at the Mosques especially on Fridays. It will be surprising to observe in Ebonyi State that in spite of the inclination to religious observances, most of the adherents of those religious sects still attach strong belief in the African Traditional Religion and rituals. Quite surprising also is the fact that most of those who swell the number of attendants to Churches every Sunday, still return to their traditional worship system and consult the native doctors and oracles at the least need. For them, attendance to Church is a social action that identifies one with Western civilization which portrays a kind of wisdom, education, and accords one some dignity. This is why majority of Church attendees are the educated. Some of these educated folks still resort to the African traditional medical therapy when they are confronted with serious medical needs.

In Ebonyi State as in most part of Africa, the native doctor serves as the physician, the pharmacist, the laboratory scientist, the radiographer, the nurse, and other medical functionaries. In other words, unlike in orthodox medicine where different experts take up different responsibilities in diagnoses and treatment, the native doctor does it all alone. He produces or manufactures his drugs by putting together herbs, roots of trees, leaves of plants, body parts of some animals, etc. These he either grinds, cooks, roasts, pus in water bowl or pot for a long time before use. The process is normally accompanied with prayer, and consultation with the gods. The drugs are made according to need and purpose. Some may be for stomach upset, headache, pains, worm dispel, ulcer, etc. Dosages are not as strict as that of Orthodox medicine where over dose or under dose could be so harmful and, in some cases, may lead to death. In Ebonyi Traditional Pharmaceuticals, measurement of drug and its dosage is by estimate rather than by scale or composition as it is the case with

Orthodox pharmaceuticals. There are also rare known cases of drug reaction or discomforts/allergies ascribed to overdose of traditional drugs. This may be because most of the drugs are made from natural ingredients that are fresh and less synthetic.

Orthodox pharmaceuticals apply more scientific approach to drug production. The process of production is more sophisticated with the use of chemicals and synthetic ingredients. Compositions and quantity of substances used are dependent on the kind of drug and its required function. Nothing is left to chance, imagination, or guess work. A note accompanies the medicine which states the production company, drugs' qualitative and quantitative composition, clinical pharmacology, indications, contraindications, dosages, pharmacodynamics effects, precautions, allergic reactions, adverse effects, resistance and recrudescence, storage, etc. This is to aid the consumer, the doctor, and other producers.

The above facts do not accompany Traditional pharmaceuticals. In recent times, however, some Traditional drug producers have been including some information about their advertised drug. The detail, however, is minimal compared to the ones accompanying orthodox medicine. In spite of the inadequacy of the information, it is an improvement on the usual oral information given by the seller or maker of the drug.

Scholars such as Aniago (2015) have observed that the problem of African Traditional Medicine has been the challenge of documentation. In all, both systems of drug production and administration have their merits and demerits. In recent times, African Traditional Medicine is gaining more attention and recognition.

MAP

Map of Ebonyi showing some orthodox medical clinics in the study area.



Source: google.com. (Retrieved 01/07/2025).

Traditional and Modern Pharmaceuticals

Many scholars and professionals have written and commented on the relationship or differences between traditional and modern medical practice. Some patients and individuals have also expressed their views on what they perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of each scheme. Commenting on the difference between modern and traditional medicine, Houghton (2025) said that in Europe, the difference lies in the fact that orthodox medicine has to prove consistent quality when manufactured, adequate safety when considering the condition to be treated, and efficacy in treating or alleviating the condition for which it is approved. On the other hand, the European Herbal Directive, according to Houghton, requires that quality and safety must be shown in the same way as that of Orthodox Therapy but that evidence of efficacy against the condition to be treated may be replaced by a statement that product (xyz) is traditionally associated with treatment/alleviation of condition (abc). Any herbal medicine or drug that meets the stipulated standard requirements for efficacy is regarded as medicine. Herbal or traditional pharmaceutical, especially, that of Africa makes use of plants, plant leaves, plant roots, bark of plants, bone of animals, teeth, animal parts, mud, etc., for drug production. Like many traditional activities, production and use of herbal medicine is linked with Spiritual elements and invocations. In Ebonyi State, the herbalist is believed to be possessed by an herbal spirit that reveals and exposes curative plants and elements to the herbalist or native doctor. The voice of that spirit must be obeyed, otherwise mistakes will be made. It is the same spirit that gives the vocation to become herbalists or native doctors. Any resistance to this invitation may lead to something catastrophic to the individual, the family, or the entire community. The most common of such tragedies is abnormal behavior and, in some cases, outright madness. In most Igbo communities of Eastern, Nigeria, this spirit is called "agwu."

Some people believe herbal or traditional pharmaceuticals has some advantages over modern medicine or synthetic drugs. In comparing the two drug patterns, Tom Von Deck said that antibiotics are overprescribed in conventional medicine and bacteria become resistant to it. According to him, that is not the case with many herbs. A number of times, all you may need is some garlic and oregano oil. The duo has strong scientific backing as antibacterial and antifungal herbs (www.quora.com). Michael Abernathy opines that Orthodox medicine surpasses Herbal remedies in terms of efficacy. He supported his claim by stating that orthodox medicine has clinical studies to prove that they work or that they cure. In contradistinction to Western medicine, he said that some herbal medicine work, but others do nothing at all. According to him, some herbal drugs are dangerous. Abernathy also distinguished Orthodox remedy and Herbal medicine by stating that the medical doctor gives specific doses of the active ingredients, which is hardly obtainable with traditional drugs. Dosages in Traditional therapy are estimated, and

are not specific as in conventional medicine (www.quora.com). Tracy Kolenchuk sees no difference in the two healthcare systems since they all have curative lapses (www.quora.com).

Traditional Medical Practices and Ebonyi State Culture

Traditional medicine practices in Ebonyi State are deeply rooted in the cultural and social context of the community. These practices are closely tied to the Spiritual and social beliefs of the community and are an important part of the cultural identity of the state. Nwachukwu et al. (2017) stated that "traditional medicine practitioners in Ebonyi State have a deep understanding of the cultural and social context of the community, and are well-positioned to provide healthcare services that are sensitive to the needs of the community." According to a study by Ugwu et al. (2018), traditional medicine practices in Ebonyi State are characterized by a strong Spiritual component, which is reflected in the use of rituals and Spiritual practices to diagnose and treat various ailments.

A critical look at the Spirituality of the Ebonyi people will reveal a strong belief in spirits, gods, deities, oracles, ancestors, etc. and their power and influence on human life and destiny. It is the people's view that every calamity encountered by man including sickness has an origin with the god's, spirits, ancestors, oracles, or deities. When a man dies, a post-mortem is carried out through the native doctor to determine the cause of death. The native doctor does this through divination, consultation with the spirits, oracles, gods, and the spirits of the dead (necromancy). Oftentimes, one's death is linked to poisoning by an enemy, mistake in the affairs concerning the spirit world, need of appeasement by the gods, etc.

As a result of his or her role in the daily life of the people, the native doctor is highly revered both in Ebonyi State of Nigeria and the entire African Continent. The people approach the gods through the native doctor for every event or misfortune encountered in life. If a man for instance, falls sick suddenly, his first port of call will be the native doctor/diviner who will perform divination and rituals to reveal the cause or causes of the ailment. If the sickness is as a result of evil done against the ancestors or an abomination committed by the family, appeasement and sacrifices will be made to bring the situation to normalcy. It is only when this is done that healing could be achieved. Certain illnesses may require a sacrifice of fowl, goat, cow, etc. to calm the spirit of the ancestors or to appease the gods. What will take place will be dependent on what the diviner encounters during the act of divination or consultation with the oracles. Drugs administered by the native doctor can only become effective when the gods and spirits are adequately settled. This scenario is predominant in Ebonyi State, and greater number of the citizenry is enmeshed in it.

The role of the medicine man or native doctor does not end with individuals, it extends to families, kindred, communities; etc. Traditional healthcare practitioners in Ebonyi State are respected and feared in their various communities for the prominent role they play not only in the healthcare system of the state, but in almost all the state affairs. Apart from being consulted by individuals and families, for their wellbeing, communities, villages, and kindred, etc. solicit their assistance for solution to matters of war, epidemics, and disasters. Here, all the people will abide by the injunction of the native doctor and other healthcare providers and meticulously adhere to their instructions. The above scene has existed with the Ebonyi people till date. The advent of Christianity has not made major shifts either in the mentality of the people or in their Spiritual or ritual practices. Most of the Christian adherents practice their faith still believing in the potency of the traditional customary, ritual, voodoo, and religious rites. On the other hand, the believers in African Traditional Religion see the native doctor as the agent and servant of the gods who can elicit their favor or unleash their harm. This favor may be towards a healthy life, and the harm could be to affliction.

The Native Doctor and Traditional Pharmaceuticals in Ebonyi State

Traditional medical practitioners in Ebonyi State are highly respected and play a significant role in the healthcare system of the state. The native doctors, as they are sometimes called, combine their medical practice with Spirituality. They invoke the gods and the spirit of the ancestors during drug administration and treatment of the patients. The native doctor acts as both the medical doctor, and the pharmacologist. He does the diagnoses, produces the drugs, and administers it. A man or woman goes through apprenticeship of one, two, or more years before qualifying to practice as a native medical doctor. His or her teacher teaches all he or she needs to learn. The student apprentice is not given a written certificate but is simply declared to have graduated, and in a minor ceremony given some traditional items especially the "ọfọ." and the calabash as a symbol of certification. If he stayed peaceably with his teacher during apprenticeship, his master the teacher invokes the help of the gods to assist him or her in the job of healthcare. The new "medical graduate" begins with treating minor illnesses and minor spiritual attacks. Gradually, with practice, he or she begins to handle serious matters. If he or she grows much, individuals and groups will be inviting him or her for treatment, exorcism, and cleansing. Some may even invite him to carry out a serious devilish spiritual, and destructive attack on their perceived enemies.

Apart from one offering directly to be an apprentice native doctor, it is widely believed in Ebonyi State that some persons are called by the spirit called "AGWU" to be native doctors. In that case, the person has no option other than to accept and answer the call. Any other choice of career outside this could be harmful to the individual as it is generally alleged by the people. There have been instances of

people who suddenly developed abnormal behaviours or became mad and it is attributed to defiance to invitation to become native doctors or herbalists. For an effective and good work, the native doctor is rewarded or paid with yams, cock, goat, money, and in rare cases with maidens.

In Ebonyi State, there exists three kinds of native doctors operating as traditional health providers and guardian of the society. One group is referred to as "DIB!A." The native doctors in this group diagnose sicknesses and treat them. They may make charms or amulets of different purposes for their client or patient. The second group is called DIB!A AFA" (diviner native doctors). Doctors in this group diagnose, treat and manage sicknesses. In addition, they perform divination, which is equal to finding out the hidden causes of ailments or other problems of life using spiritual mechanism or divination. The 3rd group of specialists' traditional medical practitioners is called "DIB!A MGBOROGWU NA MKPA AKWUKWQ" (herbalists). This group of traditional medical doctors specialize in identification of herbs and production of herbal medicines. In Ebonyi State, people who profess varied faith can belong to this group because it is believed that apart from production of drugs, prescription, and administering of healing remedies, they do not indulge in fetish activities which the neo religious groups hold against the first two groups. The herbalists go about searching for herbs that will help them cure ailments. It is generally believed in Ebonyi State that the herbalist is sometimes inspired to pick certain herbs to produce drugs that can cure certain diseases. Many see the herbalist as the medical practitioner or healthcare provider who hears the voice of the spirit and gets revelation about drugs and how to use them. Because of this, they are much trusted and their prescription is almost adhered to religiously. The pharmacopoeia of the herbalist is for almost all ailments, for hardly there is any sickness he or she dares not try to manage. He or she, like other native doctors in Ebonyi State is highly respected. He trains would be pharmacists with diligence. It is to be noted that apart from the regular native doctors, there are some individuals gifted in managing some kind of illnesses. Some have such knowledge handed over to them by their father or grandparents. Some also, may develop the attitude to cure by ascribing it to revelation or inspiration.

The curriculum of instruction for the apprentice native doctor or herbalist is not formal or written. The medical knowledge of the master/teacher forms the bases of instruction. There is on the spot learning which forms the practical aspect, and then, common instructions outside the scene of drug administration or treatment which forms the theoretical facet. In other words, the medical practitioner teaches by action and words. The apprenticeship fees are good character. Any other thing is secondary and minimal. The duration of apprenticeship is dependent on the intelligence quotient of the learner and the professional charisma of the teacher in imparting his or her knowledge of medicine and surgery to the "student."

Orthodox Pharmaceuticals and Traditional Medical Practices in Ebonyi State

Despite the influence of traditional drugs and pharmaceuticals in Ebonyi state, the orthodox medical practices continue to thrive in the state. This may be as a result of efficacy or influence of other cultures that already hold orthodox medicine in high esteem because of its scientific approach. As a result, the two medical schemes are in high competition of followership. This might be why some scholars and individuals advocate for an integration of both medical patterns. This fusion has for some time now being a subject of discuss (Kumar et al., 2017). Some studies have highlighted the potential benefits of integrating traditional medicine practices into modern pharmacy which include improved patient outcomes and increased cultural sensitivity (Boeddeker & Kortenbergh, 2002). However, some other studies have raised concerns about the safety and efficacy of traditional medicine practices, particularly in the absence of standardized regulation and quality control (WHO, 2013). For example, a study by Ernst (2002) found that many traditional herbal remedies were contaminated with heavy metals and other toxins. Despite these challenges, many researchers have argued that traditional medicine practices can provide valuable insights into the development of new pharmaceuticals and therapies (Farnsworth & Soejarto, 1991). For example, a study by Cragg et al. (2012) found that many modern pharmaceuticals were derived from traditional medical practices.

In terms of cultural perspectives, many studies have also highlighted the importance of understanding the cultural context of traditional medicine practices (Hellman, 2007). For example, a study by Klein man (1980) found that traditional medicine practices were often closely tied to cultural and spiritual beliefs. For one to reap the full benefit of traditional pharmaceutical in Ebonyi State, an understanding of the people's culture and their belief system has to be clearly exhibited. It is in the appreciation of the people's way of life that their interest in new information and novel discoveries will be elicited. For instance, as the people's culture is interwoven with spirituality, the healthcare provider is most likely to evoke more confidence and trust from the patient if he or she begins with prayer, emphasizing that all healing comes from God and that man is merely an instrument of healing. Coupled with the above, the native doctor takes time to express the efficacy of the drugs and the treatment citing examples with those that had similar ailments that he or she cured. Such can inspire more confidence and hope in the patient or the sick. Confidence and hope are psychologically vital for healing outcome. The modern health practitioner, by employing this *modus operandi*, will be incorporating traditional medical practice into orthodox medicine. It is good to observe that many orthodox hospitals in Ebonyi State now begin their day's activity with general prayer that involves the hospital workers and the patients. This activity delights the patients because it touches their cultural affinity which is Spirituality.

As language is part of the people's culture, effort should be made to understand and appreciate the dialect of the Ebonyi State indigenes who form the majority of the people residing in the state. This is necessary in order for the healthcare provider to be well positioned to get at the root of the people's values, and by extension their pharmaceutical needs, knowledge, and activities. Since acquisition of knowledge is not easy to get by, the modern health provider can make use of interpreters as he or she gradually learns and acquires the people's language. Patients in Africa get more relaxed and happier when they encounter healthcare providers who understand and speak their language.

In all, it is not an easy scheme to integrate traditional medicine into the conventional medical system because of certain challenges. It is a wide acknowledgement among many authors of extant literature that the incorporation of traditional medicine into modern pharmaceuticals is a complex and multifaceted issue, requiring careful consideration of the people's culture, safety of life, and efficacy of drugs. This is more glaring in African Traditional Societies where cultural diversity is a major contributing factor. Nwachukwu et al. (2017), identifies some of these challenges especially in Ebonyi State of Eastern Nigeria. According to them, these challenges include lack of understanding and respect for traditional medical practices among orthodox pharmaceutical practitioners as well as a lack of standardization and regulation of traditional medicine. Other factors may include lack of proper documentation and keeping of case history.

Notwithstanding the above challenges of integration of the two medical schemes, orthodox pharmaceutical practices have continued to influence the citizen's traditional healthcare provision. Some traditional healers are known to have been combining their practices with the orthodox medical remedy in order to identify with the patients' needs. This pattern, leaves the patient or individual with a difficult option of seeking medical attention any other place. In fact, many patients in Ebonyi State are satisfied with it because the combination takes care of their cultural, social, health, and psychological concerns.

Puzzle in African Traditional Medical Practices

There are certain issues about African Traditional Medicine that revolve around the native doctors which sound as puzzles but yet contain some fundamental truths that one finds difficult to explain. Some of them are found within Ebonyi State cultural life. Aniago (2015) wrote that one of the problems of African Traditional Medicine is lack of documentation. One may also add to the identified problems, absence of scientific explanation. It should, however, be noted, that the fact that something is not yet verifiable either scientifically or otherwise, does not disprove its truthful components. There are fundamental things not known many years ago scientifically, but can scientifically be proved in the modern times. Light from the moon, evolution

of days, nights, and seasons, lightning, and thunder, etc. are phenomena difficult to explain some centuries ago, but which pattern and causes can today be understood scientifically to a high extent. They were there before their scientific unravelling as true phenomena that lacked explanation. In the same way are puzzles in African traditional life, African Traditional Medicine, African Traditional Religion, etc. The same incomprehension is the myth surrounding the activities of the native doctors and their paramedical colleagues.

For one to be talking of African medicine in the midst of the verifiable gigantic progress of Orthodox medicine shows that there is something that is fundamentally truthful and mysterious sustaining it. It is difficult for one to deny his or her personal experience even when he denies every other thing. People's personal experiences persevere even when they cannot explain the chemistry or the physics. One can opine that this is exactly what is happening with African medicine and activities of the "medicine man" as Chinua Achebe described him in his *Things Fall Apart*.

Many people attest to have received cure through African Traditional Medicine from illnesses or ailments that have even defied orthodox treatment. One thing that is clear is that the native doctor does not disclose his activities even to his patients. Some of them die with their knowledge without revealing them to their children. The reason is not farfetched. They use it to preserve their economic advantage. A more curious aspect is when the native doctor reveals some aspect of his formula to his child or children, informing him/them that he will not reveal some others to him/them so that he/they will not spoil things. A native doctor from Igboland, when probed further, said that the children of these days are somehow careless and may not control themselves in causing harm when they encounter the powers in charms. The question and puzzle is, what is this power he is talking about? According to the native doctor, himself and some others entertain the fear that the young people of the present age may use the powers at the least provocation and may in the process cause havoc or destroy innocent lives. This revelation shows that there still some secrets known only to the native doctors concerning the making and use of charms.

This power in charms is another mystery surrounding the native doctors. Some people attest how charms caused them a lot of fortune or how unexplainable sickness suddenly afflicted them when they matched on an object suspected to be charm made by the native doctor to cause harm or injury. They also complain about how they lost a relation as a result of an incurable sickness that was an effect of the native doctor's manipulations. Some others narrated how they lost part of their body or a relation to a motor accident set for them through the manipulation of the native doctor. This kind of claim that persists for centuries may not be dismissed with a wave of the hand. How does one explain this type of claim? It is part of the native doctor's puzzle.

Another poser following the above is the claim that one can contract a native doctor to inflict harm on a person he wishes to punish through a remote means and it will take place. There have been alleged cases of native doctors sending lightning to neighbouring towns for destruction as a revenge or retaliation for a misdeed. There are other cases of humans turning into elephants to destroy farmlands of enemy communities. The native doctor's divination is another enigma. Here the native doctor discloses the cause or causes of sickness, sometimes, even without any probing question. At other times, he can disclose to the patient certain hidden aspect of his or her life. Some that go through the process attest to this. These are just few of the yet to be demystified part of the African Traditional Medicine and the enigma of the native doctor. It calls for further investigation.

Conclusion

Traditional medicine and Orthodox pharmaceuticals co-exist in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. Both have their peculiar ways of practice and promotion of healthcare. While Orthodox medicine applies more scientific approach, traditional medical system is more embedded in experience, spirituality, and culture. Traditional healthcare was first practiced by the Ebonyi people before the advent of Orthodox medicine. Through this traditional medical system, the people took care of their health needs. The average person in the society knew the herbs that cure common illnesses such as: headache, malaria, fever, etc. More severe sicknesses were referred to native doctors and other traditional health providers.

The evolution of Orthodox medicine and its coming to Ebonyi State created a kind of conflict in the mind of the people about healthcare systems. Orthodox medicine appeared with more refined scientific and neater approach to healthcare which appealed to a good number of people especially the educated. There was a division between those who preferred the traditional system and those who make use of Orthodox remedy. Many, through education and Christian principles embraced the Orthodox medical practice, while a lot of other members of the society-maintained affinity with their accustomed traditional mode. There are others who combine the two medical systems. They attend to each according to the type of illness and its severity. Ailments suspected to have spiritual undertone or linked with issues of appeasement of gods or deities are directed to the traditional healers or health providers. Other sicknesses regarded as manual or natural are preferred being handled by orthodox medical experts. In Ebonyi State, the two systems are in serious contestation of clients with Orthodox medicine having an edge over Traditional medicine probably because of Christian Belief System. Experts, scholars, and researchers are advocating the integration of the two medical approaches with its attendant challenges. Though. Some have suggested some routes out of those challenges; they remain a major setback.

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