The patient relationship and therapeutic techniques of the South Sotho traditional healer

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Objectives
- To investigate the characteristics of the relationship between the South Sotho traditional healer and his/her patients;
- To explore the therapeutic techniques used in the South Sotho traditional healing process;
- To investigate the views of the South Sotho traditional healer regarding the South Sotho healing process;
- To investigate the views of the patients regarding the South Sotho traditional healing process;
- To formulate guidelines for possible incorporation of the South Sotho traditional healers in the National Health Care Delivery System.

Design
The research design used for this research is a qualitative survey within the context of three rural areas of Maokeng, Ikageng and Sebokeng in South Africa.

Population and sample
Two populations were identified. Population one consisted of South Sotho traditional healers practicing in Moakeng, Ikageng and Sebokeng in South Africa. Population two consisted of patients of each of the mentioned traditional healers, staying in the mentioned areas. A non-probability purposive voluntary sampling method was used for both populations. The sample size was determined by means of data saturation.

Method
Data collection was achieved by video recording of the South Sotho traditional healers in interaction with their patients as well as when they use their therapeutic techniques. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with both the traditional healers and their patients re their views on the healing process. A pilot study was conducted to test the applicability of the questions. After the video recordings and the interviews field notes were recorded. The video recordings were translated to English and a checklist set to analyze these recordings. The audiotapes were transcribes verbatim and analyzed using content analysis.

Findings and conclusions
From the findings it can be concluded that the process of interaction between the traditional healer and the patient is built on a relationship consisting of various phases and based on mutual respect and understanding of each other’s cultural views and beliefs. It is mostly the traditional healer that initiates the greeting. Consultation is always done in a sitting position with the traditional healer facing the patient. During consultation the fees to be paid are negotiated prior to resuming divination. The manner in which both the traditional healer and the patient perceive illness is strongly cultural based. The traditional healer becomes more authoritative while the patient adopts the attitude of following and becoming more submissive. The process of divination is an important part of the healing process and the traditional healer becomes active, while the patient becomes more passive. Clarification of the problem occurs as part of the divination process whereby the patient has to agree and confirm the findings. Various medicines and techniques are used e.g. oral administration, enemata, steam inhalations, steam baths and bathing. Home protection occurs by means of spraying as well as burning of incense. Other techniques include eye, ear and nose installations as well as application of oily medicines to the body. Conclusions re the views of the traditional healers included definite role expectations about self. He also sees himself as able to heal people by giving medicines suitable for their illnesses. The patient perceives traditional healing on the same principles upon which the traditional healer basis his views.
Implications
Guidelines were formulated for the possible incorporation of traditional healers in the Health Care Delivery System by focusing on facilitating changes in the perceptions and attitudes of both the traditional healers and the biomedical personnel, developing a more committed relationship between the healers and the biomedical personnel and to establish negotiations between these parties. Guidelines for facilitating a comprehensive community based health care delivery service were also formulated.