

Perceptions and Use of Herbal Remedies among Patients with Diabetes Mellitus in Murang'a North District, Kenya.

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Abstract:

Diabetes mellitus is a chronic disease with a world wide distribution. According to World Health Organization its prevalence ranges between 1% and 6% with the prevalence in developing countries being on the increase. In Kenya Epidemiological surveys conducted gave the estimated prevalence of diabetes mellitus at 3% in 2003, and above 6% in 2007. In some rural parts of Kenya such as Nyeri in central Kenya and Kilifi in the coast province the prevalence is as high as 11.6% and above 20% among the richer families in the major urban centers. In Murang'a District where the study was conducted the prevalence rate of diabetes is 8%. There are several modes of treatment of diabetes mellitus including use of diet, insulin, use of oral hypoglycemic, use of herbal remedies or their combinations. Use of herbal remedies has been on increase with World Health Organization estimating that 80 percent of the world's population presently uses some form of herbal medicine for some aspect of primary health care. Studies carried out so far indicate that this increase in use of herbal remedies for management of health conditions could be as a result of people perceiving them as natural and therefore safe, increase in cost of contemporary medicine and increase in advertisement of herbal remedies. Objectives of this study were therefore; to determine the perceptions people with diabetes mellitus have towards herbal remedies, to determine the extent to which they use herbal remedies and also to establish whether there is any association between the perceptions people have on herbal remedies and use of herbal remedies. The study was carried out in Murang'a District, in Mathiyoia and Kangema Constituencies where five community health units were purposively selected to participate in the study based on their level of establishment in community health strategy. Participants for the study were selected conveniently from community health units and snow balling method was also used. Data was collected using interview schedules. SPSS was used for data analysis. Chi-square was used to find out the significant association between categorical variables. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used in comparison of age means between males and female and measures of central tendency were also used. Significant findings from this study were; a significant number of the respondents (15%) were diagnosed with diabetes mellitus when already admitted in the wards prior to which period they had no idea that they were diabetic, over 86% of those interviewed were given information on diabetes management on diagnosis and they attend hospital clinics for follow-up regularly and therefore this means that the reason for seeking alternative modes of treatment is not due to lack of information on diabetes but due to other reasons, 12.4% of those interviewed admitted using herbal remedies as part of their management of diabetes. In terms of perception 23% of those interviewed had no problem with herbal remedies and among those using herbal remedies, 45% were using them on trial basis. It was also found out that among those using herbal remedies 7% of them were combining herbal remedies with contemporary drugs. Factors found to be associated with use of herbal remedies were level of education ($\chi^2=156.49$, d.f=S, $P<0.05$) and perceptions ($\chi^2=51.31$, d.f=I, $P<0.05$) while factors found to have no relationship with use of herbal remedies were gender ($\chi^2=1.09$, d.f=1, $P>0.05$) and clinic attendance ($\chi^2=0.259$, d.f=1, $P<0.05$). Recommendations

made following the study were; The government of Kenya through Ministry of Health should encourage rigorous screening of clients and population in general for diabetes to ensure diabetes is diagnosed early and put under appropriate management and that the government of Kenya through Ministry of Health should put up a campaign educating diabetic patients on the potential dangers associated with combining herbal remedies with contemporary medicines due to their interactions. Based on the findings of the study the researcher felt that there is need for further research to be carried out to find the potential efficacy and side effects of the various herbal remedies being used and there is also need to do a longitudinal study on patients combining herbal remedies with conventional medicine to find out the eventual impact of combining on these patients.