

## **Challenges Faced by Traditional Healers When Treating People Living with HIV and AIDS: The Case of Intsika Municipality, Eastern Cape Province of South Africa**

**Ziboneleimba\* and Pius Tangwe Tanga\*\***

*\*Department of Social Work/Social Development, University of Fort Hare, PB X1314, Alice 5700*

*E-mail: \*<zibonele.zimba@yahoo.com> \*\*<ptangwe@ufh.ac.za, tanga8\_2000@yahoo.co.uk*

**KEYWORDS** HIV and AIDS. Traditional Healers. Patients. Healthcare. Sexual Transmitted Infections

**ABSTRACT** The aim of the present study was to examine the procedures followed by traditional healers treating people living with HIV and AIDS in the Intsika Municipality and the challenges faced by them during this endeavour. Using the qualitative research method, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with twenty traditional healers. Among the significant findings were the hardships encountered by traditional healers in terms of finance, the transport needed to collect medicinal plants, the shortage of medicinal plants, the lack of co-operation from the formal health care sector and the discrimination and abuse suffered at the hands of members of the community, with Christians and members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) being among the chief antagonists. It is also acknowledged that traditional healers have been trained by the Department of Health concerning issues of hygiene and that traditional healers have knowledge of the symptoms of HIV and AIDS. It is concluded that traditional healers have a significant role to play in preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS if they employ preventative measures such as the use of protective gloves and limiting the use of a blade to one patient only. However, traditional healers are not supplied with safety kits or condoms to distribute to patients who consult them for treatment of STIs.