

Community-Based Interventions to Integrate Traditional Health Practices in South African Medical Care

M. Mammen¹ and J. M. Frantz²

*¹Human Biology Department, Faculty of Health Sciences,
Walter Sisulu University, South Africa*

Telephone: +27475022503; Cellphone: 0822021150, E-mail: mammen2010@gmail.com

²Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of Western Cape, South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper assessed the effect of community-based interventions on a sample of South African first year medical students' attitudes towards Traditional Medicines (TMs) and their beliefs in traditional healers (THs), and gathered their views on THs' roles. A mixed method approach using concurrent triangulation design was adopted. All (n=324) students in three consecutive years (2010: n=98; 2011: n=108; 2012: n=118) constituted the sample. Before interventions, only fifty percent had positive attitudes towards TMs and there was no significant difference between their attitudes toward TMs and beliefs in THs. There was no significant correlation between Age/gender/population/religion/province with their attitudes or beliefs. After interventions, the change in attitudes was +78 (p <0.0001), +107 (p <0.0001), +51 (p<0.001) in 2010, 2011 and 2012, respectively. The roles of THs identified were: community health maintenance, alternative treatment givers, cultural role players and disease curers. Short educational interventions positively influenced student's attitudes and practices towards TMs and THs.