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Visualization of traditional medicine from the perspective of indigenous Kichwa of Napo - Ecuador

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Abstract

Traditional medicine (TM) has been used to maintain health, prevent and treat diseases both acute and chronic. The aim of this investigation is to visualize TM from the perspective of indigenous Kichwa of Napo, Ecuador. A research was carried out for three years implementing surveys and interviews to a population of 250 inhabitants of traditional indigenous medicine men. As a result conceptualizations were made from the responses obtained by making reference to their own definitions of TM. Moreover, quality and quantity of knowledge between those highlighted in ascending order the following categories: Pajuyuks, Samayuks, Yachacks, Bancuks and Kuragas.

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1. Introduction.

The traditional medicine in the world is still being considered as the prism or its complement on healthcare services. The World Health Organization (WHO) mentions that in many countries, the traditional medicine is not conventional as is denominated complementary medicine (World Health Organization; 2013). In the year 2013 the WHO says that this type of traditional either millenary medicine is important, but generally in the formal health services is underestimated along with its practitioners or with those involved in its practice; historically it has been used to stay healthy, prevent and/or treat chronic and acute illnesses (World Health Organization; 2013). Different publications

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make reference that in the American continent, specifically 70% of Chileans; 40% of Colombians; 57% of Peruvians and a 75% of Bolivians, nowadays are practicing or making use of traditional medicine in any of its ways (Peña & Paco 2007).

In Ecuador the traditional health systems through thousands of years have formed and perfected specialists of this type of medicine, who have mastered a group of knowledge, practices and technologies to prevent, diagnose and treat different types of illnesses (González & Corral, 2010). The Constitution of Ecuador in the year 2008 (National Constituent Assembly; 2008), in its first article refers to this country as an intercultural and multicultural nation, also the Art. IV makes reference to the legacy of the forefathers and ancestral peoples and the most important is mentioned in the Art. LVII, where among others is mentioned, the traditional health systems, recognizing its sciences, technologies, and ancient wisdom (National Constituent Assembly; 2008). In the Ecuadorian indigenous world-view from the Andean region as well as from the Amazon region the actions performed to prevent illnesses and recover health involve rituals to heal the body and the spirit, these are done under parameters that are beyond the scientific reasoning, where are used elements such as rocks, herbs, fire and potions made with plants and animals. This symbolic act, is performed by an agent or representative of the traditional medicine who through body movements, songs, rituals and other actions, generate a physical and/or spiritual cure (Alomoto Cumanicho, 2013).

2. Objective

To show the traditional medicine from the Kichwa indigenous perspective in the Napo region.

3. Methodology

It is about a research with a qualitative design, not experimental, of participative actions when interiorizing and interacting in the everyday events of the ancient wisdom, which allowed to closely see the real facts, collect information and process it for its later interpretation. Besides it is a study of exploratory type, descriptive and ethnographic, which was made during three years with the application of deep surveys and interviews, applied to a sample population of 250 men and women with ages around 29 and 75 years old, recognized as agents of the traditional indigenous medicine in the communities of Tena and Archidona.

4. Results

To understand how the kichwa indigenous people from Napo see the traditional medicine, it was necessary to share, connect and get into the communities with the healers, to gain their thrust and then to accede to conversations, tales and fables, that make reference to the importance of respecting life, the Pacha Mama, and the natural events and how to correlate healing activities with at the same time mystic and magic rituals. The application of research instruments was not an easy task, but were obtained answers, criteria, and conceptualizations of the wisdom, which later were unified in a series of definitions and in a schematization of hierarchies where different representatives of the traditional indigenous medicine are located, which is recognized and respected among the Kichwa communities and that now will be detailed:

4.1. Self-Definition

The Kichwa indigenous of Napo are self-defined as NAPORUNAS, most of them are bilinguals, they speak kichwa, and their second tongue is Spanish, they have developed and kept their own medical system, mostly known as traditional or natural medicine, same that is own to their culture; it is the result of accumulation of empirical and practical knowledge thorough thousands of years which are related to myths, legends, tales, and religious and magic rituals at the same time.

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