

Abstract

In Africa, the number of traditional healers far outnumbers Western-trained doctors by as much as 10:1. In fact, it is estimated that 80% of rural health needs in Kenya are met by traditional healers. This is due in part to long-held traditions in African communities and in part due to the lack of Western-trained medical practitioners. Given the low physician:patient ratio, it is important for Western-trained practitioners to understand and collaborate with traditional healers. With the onset of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, there is even greater utilization of traditional healers. Recognizing this fact, the World Health Organization published a traditional medicine strategy proposing national policies to ensure quality care by traditional healers.