

**ALTERNATIVE MEDICINES AND PRACTICES IN THE PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY
HEALTH CARE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

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ABSTRACT

The study of folk medicine in our country can be a ground of research and documentation. Presently, there is good number of folk medicine in almost all parts of the Philippines. In response to this, the present study attempted to gather information and data in the municipality of Baggao about the use of alternative medicines and practices in promoting health care. Descriptive design was used in the study. Results revealed that the people of Baggao, Cagayan accept the use of various herbal plants as alternative medicines in treating different illnesses. Also, alternative medical practices are widely used in Baggao, Cagayan. And finally, alternative medicines and practices have helped to a large extent in promoting health care in Baggao, Cagayan.

Keywords: *alternative medicine, alternative medical practices, Baggao, Cagayan*

INTRODUCTION

Mankind of all times and cultures have been very resourceful and creative with regard to utilizing plant materials for their various needs. Plants have been considered as a source of food, shelter, clothing fuel., but importantly as medicines.

In all parts of the world, the plants cultivated in the backyard, propagated in gardens and greenhouses or obtained in the forests, are sources of medicines for treating varied diseases.

In the Philippines, medicinal plants are found everywhere. Some are collected in the forests, while others are domesticated. Acedillo (1998) pointed out that prior to the introduction of medicinal tablets, capsules and syrups, early people inhabiting the islands were already familiar with medicinal plants as alternative medicine. They knew by memory hundreds of the plants. Individuals who applied medicinal plants in curing illnesses were called *arbularyo, tambalan, herbolario, hilots, palteras*, or quack doctors (a popular Western term). These nature healers utilize their own preference of medicinal plants and they have their own way of administering them to patients.

The existence of herb practitioners in the Philippines is much older than written history. Prior to the coming of the Great traditions of Asia, herbs were already utilized by the early inhabitants of the country. No one knows how herbalists were institutionalized, however; the practice is as old as mankind.

The study of folk medicine in our country can be a ground of research and documentation. Presently, there is good number of folk medicine in almost all parts of the Philippines.

There is a growing concern over the health needs of indigenous peoples among the policy makers and service providers throughout the world. These policy makers and service providers recognize the necessity and moral imperative to develop services appropriate to multicultural communities. The Philippines, a home to more than four million indigenous peoples

belonging to more than 60 distinct ethno linguistic groups, majority of the indigenous Filipinos throughout the arhipelgao live in the mountains or near the sea. They comprise a range of cultures, languages, religions and lifestyles.

There are various approaches in relieving symptoms and treating diseases in the Philippines. These include food supplements and vitamins, herbal medications, special teas, massage and magnet therapy, and spiritual healing. Alternative medicine consistently benefits those who patronize it. However, despite the increase in international trade in herbal medicine and other types of alternative medicines, the potential of alternative medicine is far from being fully utilized in the Philippine national health system.

The dynamic community model of health care delivery allows the interference of western and eastern medicine. While it is true that there are several attempts in the past to document the highlights of traditional medicine, no baseline study has been undertaken regarding traditional medicine and its practices in promoting community health care.

Definitely, there are no researches about alternative medicines and practices in promoting health care in Cagayan Province, more so, in the municipality of Baggao. In response to this, the present study attempted to gather information and data in the municipality of Baggao about the use of alternative medicines and practices in promoting health care. This research likewise tried to determine the attitudes of housewives regarding alternative medicines and practices in promoting health care in the community.

METHODS

The study used both quantitative and qualitative types of research since the study sought to gather information about the use of alternative medicine and practices in treating health problems and promoting health care in the community. The study was conducted in the different eastern barangays of the municipality of Baggao, Cagayan, namely: Agaman, Alba, Daluin, Remus, Pallagao, Sta. Margarita, Tallang, and Taguntungan.

The respondents of the study were the 288 housewives who made use of alternative medicines and practices in promoting health care in their family and community and some respondents who were residing in the different eastern barangays of Baggao.

Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents by Household

Barangay	Frequency	Percentage
Agaman	48	16.78
Alba	29	10.15
Dalun	32	11.02
Remus	35	12.20
Pallagao	29	10.15
Sta. Margarita	33	11.51
Tallang	53	18.34
Taguntungan	28	9.85
Total	288	100.00

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Alternative Medicines Used by the Respondents in Curing Illnesses

Medicinal Plants	Illnesses Healed
Sambong	Kidney Trouble Colds and Fever Cough
Bawang	Asthma High Blood Rabies Skin disorders
Ampalaya	Colds and fever Cough Diabetes Skin disorders
Oregano	Asthma Rheumatism Colds and fevers Cough
Pomelo	Colds and fever Cough
Lagundi	Asthma Colds and fever Cough
Luya	Rheumatism Colds and fever Cough
Sampalok	Colds and fever Cough
Kutchay	Colds and fever Cough Boils
Banana	Colds and fever Rabies Diarrhea
Avocado	Colds and fever Cough Diarrhea
Pansit-pansitan	Kidney trouble Rheumatism Colds and fever Cough High blood
Papaya	Kidney trouble Colds and fever Cough High blood Rabies

Gumamela	Rheumatism Boils
Aloe vera	High blood Boils Baldness
Guava	Asthma Colds and fever Cough Rabies Boils Diarrhea
Akapulko	Rheumatism Boils Skin diseases
Cactus	Eabies Boils
Herbaka	Kidney trouble Colds and fever Cough Rabies Anemia
Atis	Kidney trouble Asthma Rheumatism Colds and fever Cough Diarrhea
Buko	Kidney trouble Cough
Yerba Buena	Colds and fever Cough
Makahiya	Kidney trouble Asthma Colds and fever Cough Diarrhea
Alugbati	Rheumatism Rabies Anemia
Mango	Kidney trouble Rheumatism Colds and fever Cough Diarrhea
Tanglad	Rabies
Talong	Colds and fever Cough
Kamias	Colds and fever Cough
Malunggay	Colds and fever

	Cough High blood Anemia
Tsaang gubat	Cough

The table shows that there are 30 medicinal plants used as alternative medicines in treating various illnesses. These plants thrive on the fertile soil of the eastern barangays of Baggao. Sambong, bawang, ampalaya, oregano, and pomela are the most preferred alternative medicines. These plants are readily available in the localities and are planted in the backyard or any vacant lot available in the community.

Sambong is known to cure kidney trouble, colds, fever, and cough. It grows abundantly along the sides or boulders of the houses. Others plant or propagate them for future uses. Bawang is popular as an alternative medicine for high blood and rabies. This is attributed to the strong and effective constituents of this plant. Ampalaya, on the other hand is commonly used in treating forms of skin disorders, diabetes, colds, fever, and cough.

For people with cough, fever and cold, pomelo ranked first owing to the belief that vitamin C and increase intake fluids aid for treating such. Alugbati is used as an alternative medicine for treating rheumatism while gumamela is very popular for curing boils. Fruits, leaves and roots of avocado, guava, banana, and atis are used for treating diarrhea.

Malunggay is used in treating anemia, fever and colds, and cough. The extracts from the leaves are used to cure such illnesses. On the other hand, kamias is not used as a common alternative medicine. This plant is used to cure fever and colds, and cough in the family. Tsaang gubat is not a popular alternative medicine in the different barangays and that this plant does not readily thrive in the place. Based on the interview, the respondents are not so much aware of the use of tsaang gubat in treating illnesses.

Table 2. Medical Practices Used by the Respondents in Curing Illnesses

Medical Practices	Kidney trouble	Asthma	Rheumatism	Colds & Fever	Cough	High blood	Rabies	Boils	Diarrhea
Atang-atang			x	x	x	X			
Banyos			x	x	x		x	X	
Gul-gul			x	x	x				X
Hilot		x	X	X	X		x	x	x
Hinahampas		X		X	X				
Masahe		X	X	X	X	x		X	
Pinasuban		X	X	X	X				
Poli			X	X	X				
Talado				X	x				
Tapal-tapal	x	X	x	x	x		x	x	X

The table shows that there are ten alternative medical practices in Baggao, Cagayan which may cure kidney troubles, asthma, rheumatism, colds and fever, cough, high blood, diabetes, rabies, boils, diarrhea, anemia, baldness and skin disorders. Among these alternative medical practices, tapal tapal, banyos, and hilot are three most commonly administered practices in treating illnesses in the family.

Tapal-tapal ranked first in the list since it is easy to apply and simple to follow. Leaves of alugbati, kutchay, aloe vera, cactus, and atis are used to cure illnesses such as rheumatism, colds, and fever, cough, rabies, boils, and even kidney trouble. For instance, when a person is suffering from colds or fever, the leaves of these plants are placed in the forehead of the person. The bud of the gumamela is grinded and is placed on the areas where there are boils or wounds.

Likewise, banyos is commonly used to patients with fever and colds, rheumatism, cough, rabies, and boils. One kind or combination of leaves, barks, or roots of medicinal plants such as pomelo, mango, avocado, or sampalok are boiled until the water becomes colored and aromatic. A sponge towel or cloth is soaked in the water and it is placed to the head or the entire body of the person with such illness is wiped with sponge. The person after having been sponged perspires.

Hilot is an alternative medical practice that is used in all ages. It is very popularly administered to person with headache, muscle pain, asthma, rheumatism, cough, rabies, boils, and even diarrhea.

CONCLUSION

The people of baggao, Cagayan accepted the use of various herbal plants as alternative medicines in treating different illnesses.

Alternative medical practices are widely used in Baggao, Cagayan.

Alternative medicines and practices have helped, to a large extent, in promoting health care in Baggao, Cagayan.

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