

Traditional Healers and how the Formal Health Sector should relate to them

The situational analyses identified that the traditional healers are offering necessary healing services in their communities. The problem is that there are no stipulated guidelines or body controlling their practice leading to the non-recognition of their services by the formal health services.

Problems

- There is a lack of cooperation between traditional healers and formal health workers. In particular;
 - there is no referral system between traditional healers and formal health services; and
 - many formal sector health workers have negative attitudes towards traditional healers and their services.
- Traditional healers are not involved in preventive health methods in spite of the fact that they are community based, for example, AIDS/TB and STD education.
- Sick certificates from traditional healers are not recognised by employers.

The policy proposals generated by the conference to deal with the above are:

- Traditional healers should be encouraged to form a controlling body that will regulate their practice;
- Legislation should be amended in order to recognise traditional healers and to allow referral to them;
- Training of nurses, doctors, psychologists and social workers should include education about the role of traditional healers;
- Training in preventive health should be made available to traditional healers;
- Where appropriate, the resources of both traditional and formal health sectors should be used in the treatment of patients;
- Formulation of combined research particularly with respect to traditional medicinal remedies;
- Once there is a controlling body for traditional healers, sick certificates from such healers should be recognised by employers; and
- Payment of traditional healers should continue as it has in the past, that is, patients should pay their healers directly.

The NEC of SAHSSO/NPPHCN should consider convening a conference with all the traditional healers.