

PP 34 - Role of Traditional and Herbal Medicines in Mother Initiated Medication for Young Children-A Qualitative Study

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Background: Use of traditional and herbal medicines is continuously increasing around the world. WHO identified that the children are more vulnerable to receiving inappropriate, non-evidence based over-the counter, traditional and herbal medicines.

Objectives: The objective of the current study is to identify the reasons for using traditional and herbal medicines for mother initiated medications for young children aged between one to five years old.

Methodology: Study participants were mothers who have children between aged one to five years. Purposive sampling method was used to select the sample. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to explore reasons of the use of traditional and herbal medicines for mother initiated medication for young children aged between one to 5 years old. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results and conclusions: Twenty seven mothers between the ages of 28 to 42 years participated for three FGDs. This group consisted of working and non-working mothers. Mothers widely used traditional and herbal medicines for childhood illnesses due to several reasons. Participants perceived traditional and herbal medicines as a safe, nontoxic treatment option which did not cause harm to the body. Their natural origin and the misconception of “natural things are nontoxic” leads mothers to use traditional and herbal medicines for treating children. Mothers believe that herbal and traditional medicines work on the disease gently and slowly compared to the pharmaceuticals and the effects of these treatments last a long time. Mothers discussed that they tried to self-medicate their children with traditional and herbal medicines at the first sign of illness because they think that these medicines allow child’s body to recover by itself and thus increase body’s immune system. Mothers widely used traditional and herbal medicines for managing childhood illness. The misconceptions on traditional and herbal medicines may contribute to delay of proper treatment with masking the symptoms.

Keywords: Self- medication, children, traditional, herbal, medicines