

# Implications of herb-drug interaction: Concurrent use of herbal and prescribed medicine by patients attending Primary healthcare clinics, South Africa

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## Background

The use of herbal medicine (HM) as a self-management practice for treating various diseases has gained popularity worldwide. Consumers co-administer herbal products with conventional medicine without the knowledge of possible herb-drug interaction (HDI).

## Objectives

This study aimed to assess patients' perception and use of HM, and their knowledge of HDI.

## Methodology

Focus group discussions comprising a total of thirty ( $n=30$ ) participants were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. Participants attending primary healthcare (PHC) clinics in 3 provinces (Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and Free State), South Africa were recruited. Discussions were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Data was analysed using thematic content analysis.

## Results

Reasons for using HM, sources of information on HM, co-administration of HM and prescribed medicine, disclosure of the use of HM, PHC nurses' attitudes, and not having time to engage were frequently discussed. Respondents' lack of knowledge and perceptions about HDI and their dissatisfaction with prescribed medicine due to experienced side effects were also discussed.

## Conclusion

Due to the lack of discussions and non-disclosure about HM in PHC clinics, patients are at risk of experiencing HDIs. Primary healthcare providers should regularly enquire about HM use on every patient, to identify and prevent HDIs. The lack of knowledge about HDIs by patients further compromises the safety of HM.

**Advocacy message:** The results highlighted the lack of knowledge of HDI by patients thus assisting the healthcare stakeholders in South Africa to implement measures to educate patients attending PHC clinics.

**Keywords:** Herb-drug interaction; Primary Healthcare nurses; Herbal medicine