

# Indigenous knowledge during a pandemic

February 3 2021, by David Bradley

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The COVID-19 pandemic caused by the emergent coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 has forced nations to radically overhaul their healthcare systems in order to cope with the new pressures of millions of sick people. Innovation is still needed, especially in Africa. New research published in the *International Journal of Technological Learning, Innovation and*

*Development*, suggests that indigenous knowledge could assist in this regard.

Olawale Olaopa of the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in Dammam, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has explored and examined the role of traditions and practices in influencing community and individual perceptions of health and illness, prevention, cure, and management of COVID-19. The main conclusion is that [indigenous knowledge](#) can benefit the community and might even reduce the impact of the pandemic. This will be especially true if the indigenous knowledge is used synergistically with scientific understanding and undertaken in an environmentally aware manner.

"Indigenous knowledge remains a fundamental aspect of social culture and inheritance communicated and transferred verbally from one generation to the next," writes Olaopa. This tradition has for countless generations played a vital role in the life of the community. It has a potent effect on the socio-economic conditions and political situations in which the community lives as well as affecting the spiritual lives of people. It is more than forty years since the World Health Assembly (WHA) first recognized and supported indigenous knowledge in traditional medical practices and it is to this day seen as a critical component of primary health management at the level of local communities.

Olaopa suggests, based on his ethnomedical, explanatory, and health promotion model, that students of health-related disciplines and related fields should be encouraged to study indigenous [knowledge](#) and the associated traditional medicine. They might also benefit from an internship in a rural community where traditional medicine is used. This, he suggests, could help "remove the various misgivings, misconceptions, and prejudices against traditional medicines and practices."

**More information:** Olawale R. Olaopa. Harnessing African indigenous knowledge for managing the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa, *International Journal of Technological Learning, Innovation and Development* (2021). [DOI: 10.1504/IJTLID.2020.112744](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTLID.2020.112744)

Provided by Inderscience

Citation: Indigenous knowledge during a pandemic (2021, February 3) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-02-indigenous-knowledge-pandemic.html>

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