

Discover News-sheet

April 2015



Many greetings from Germany where we are enjoying spring sunshine and showers. The world here is bursting into life again with beautiful flowers, blossom and birdsong.

I sincerely hope that you and your families and communities are also enjoying life to the full, in spite of the many challenges you all have to face.

News from the regions

In **Uganda and Kenya** a total of five training courses have been held recently, led by our local colleagues. The training included nutrition, hygiene, medicinal plants and organic farming. The participants have returned to their families and communities ready to pass on their new knowledge and skills.

In **Uganda** in an area of tension and conflict, the same kind of training event has been held, but combined with training in peace-making. The participants worked together in the garden or kitchen, read the Bible together and talked with each other about love and forgiveness. Gradually, the tensions fell away and they began to draw closer

In **Ghana**, Jutta Kraus, from Germany, and Dani Dobrot, from the USA, are about to visit colleagues for a few weeks to provide support and encouragement.

Take care of your anti-malarial plants!

There is more evidence that resistance is developing to Coartem in the Far East. There is therefore the danger that Coartem may become less effective in treating malaria, even in Africa. In the history of medicine, resistance has never developed to any whole plant treatment. Take care therefore of your neem, pawpaw, bitter leaf, artemisia and any other plants you use to treat fever and malaria.

Training tip

In my last newsletter I commented that people remember more of what they say than what they hear.

Thus I recommend that, before starting to teach any new topic, you ask the group what they already know.

**“Knowing the right questions to ask is just as important
as having the right information to give!”**

If you are discussing a health problem, ask what treatments members of the group already use.

If a plant, ask what they already know about the plant.

If a topic such as maintaining and improving soil fertility, ask the group what they already know about this topic.

If discussing diarrhoea, ask about the causes of this problem. If nobody mentions toilets, then ask whether all people in the community use toilets. If they do, are they kept clean? Do they have running water (at least a tippy-tap) under which to wash their hands?

Phyllanthus niruri (English: stone breaker)

This plant is very well-known and grows in many countries of Africa. It is widely used for treating many health problems, in particular kidney stones, hepatitis B, problems with the liver and high blood pressure. It is anti-bacterial and helps to reduce fever.

Rehema Namyalo uses *phyllanthus* extensively in her herbal clinic in Kirimya, Masaka, Uganda. She recommends the following:

Prepare phyllanthus powder: wash and thoroughly dry the above ground parts in a solar drier, pound them and sieve them.

*Make a decoction by boiling one handful of powdered *Phyllanthus niruri* in one litre of water for 3 to 5 minutes, An adult patient then takes ½ cup 3 times daily at 8 hourly intervals, and continues for 10 to 14 days, depending on the illness.*

Depending on the response of patients, for example with kidney problems, back pains, bladder infections and urinary tract infections, this treatment may be continued for up to 28days.

Please share your experience of ***Phyllanthus niruri*** with me. Then, together, we can prepare a more detailed paper on this plant.

Contribution from Kenja Thomas in Uganda: “The History of Traditional Medicine”

Since the Europeans arrived in Africa many traditions are in danger of being lost.

Some traditions were very good. Others were not good. But even the good traditions are disappearing because of our modern way of life.

Of particular importance in our field of work are the knowledge of medicinal plants, of nutritious vegetables, especially wild vegetables, and of how to maintain soil fertility. Of course there were many other important traditions, for example regarding child care, dealing with offenders and local decision-making. It was also the case that trees were never cut down in such numbers as they are today, rivers and streams flowed with sparkingly clear water and no land was over-grazed.

Please read this contribution of Kenja Thomas on the next two pages. I look forward to receiving your comments. I would like to include your comments in a future edition of this article.

And finally, I wish you a blessed Easter

Whether you are Christian or Moslem, or belong to a traditional religion, may you be touched by the celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We all suffer times of darkness. God will not desert us at these times any more than he deserted Jesus at his time of suffering.

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(Discover-src stands for “discover skills and resources in the community”)

If you are on Facebook, visit the page “Tropical Natural Medicine”.



THE HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

By Kenja Thomas, Kasese, Rwenzori, Uganda

A traditional medicine is any natural substance that can heal a sickness that is obtained from a plant, tree, animal, bird, stone, rock, mineral, water, soil or air.

EXAMPLES OF SUBSTANCES TRADITIONALLY USED IN HEALING.

Plants or trees: Leaves, fruits, roots, bark, sap, secretion, flowers, seeds, pollen, nectar, wood, spores, plant, hair etc.

Animals: Bone, skin, fur, flesh, blood, urine, dung, brain, milk, scales

Birds: Bones, feathers, flesh, eggs, brain, droppings

Soil Particles: Clay soil is used for making “Mumbwa” which boosts iron to pregnant mothers.

Others: Rock particles, mineral particles, stone particles, water, air

BIBLICAL TEXTS CONCERNING HEALING WITH TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

1. Exodus 12:7-9. God tells the Israelites to eat a fatty lamb with bitter herbs in preparation for a very long journey. The fats were to act as a source of energy for the long walk, and the bitter herbs were to build immunity against sicknesses that would attack them in the wilderness.
2. Tobit 6: 1-9: The Angel Raphael advises the young boy how to use parts of a fish; the heart and liver for expelling demons/ evil spirit and the gall for removing white scales from blinded eyes.
3. John 5:1-9. Healing at the water pool (hot spring)
4. Jesus healing the blind man with mud and saliva

THE CHURCH AND TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Our society today lacks understanding of natural healing methods.

Many Christians and many preachers consider traditional medicine to be a pagan practice. They confuse the negative practices with the positive aspects.

It is important to differentiate between the following “healers”:

Sorcerers, who are believed to do magic by using the power of evil spirits.

Witches (women) or **Wizards** (men) have, or are believed to have, magic powers. They cast spells which cause people to have an illness or accident.

Female Wizards are women who have unusual power in attracting men.

Witch craft is the practice of magic to make bad things happen.

Witch doctors are men who are believed to have magical powers.

Traditional healers are people who heal people using the knowledge, beliefs, practices, customs and blessings which have been handed down from past generations to the present.

Herbalists are people who cure sickness or disease with medicines made from plants or trees.

Jesus says that his followers shall be known by their good works. We believe in God who gives us the power to heal.

Any society or community that has lost touch with its culture and traditions lacks discipline. Culture and tradition give people and society structure.

HOW TRADITIONAL MEDICINE DEVELOPED IN AFRICA

(This information is based on conversations with the elders)

In African society the knowledge of healing plants was discovered by various means.

- (a) Inspiration from God through dreams.
- (b) By observing plants eaten by animals and birds.
- (c) By observing the features and characteristics of different plants, e.g.
 - Thorns are a protective measure against invasion, thus thorny plants may be used for strong pain, preventive medicine or skin diseases.
 - Plants with slippery or slimy leaves may treat intestinal disorders like diarrhoea or ulcers.
 - Brownish leaves which give dark juice may work like iodine for wounds
 - Red-leaved plants may boost the iron content of the blood.
 - Plants that remain green throughout the hot dry season may be used as temperature regulators.

Herbal Medicine is not only for people and animals. Plants too can be protected from pests and harsh weather by the use of herbs. For example, see the table below.

TABLE SHOWING HOW TO CONTROL SOME CROP PESTS USING NATURAL SUBSTANCES

CROP	PESTS /DISEASE	ORGANIC /HERBAL REMEDY
Tomato	Red spider Mite	Spray with juice from leaves of Mexican Marigold
Cabbage	Cut worm	Spray with juice from neem leaves.
Maize plants	Termite	Urine (Urea) whether from humans or animals. Dilute 1 cup of urine with 5 cups of water, i.e. 1:5 ratio
Stored Maize grains	Large grain borer	Put eucalyptus or <i>Lippia javanica</i> leaves into the bag of grain.
All crops of the Brassica family	Aphid	Sprinkle wood ash after watering or soak rue leaves in water and spray.

WAKE UP! RE-DISCOVER THE LOST KNOWLEDGE!

Dear brothers and sisters of the African Society and the world at large, let us be realistic and understand ourselves as a people loved and blessed by God. He created us with a unique and wonderful culture and many traditions.

Our ancestors DISCOVERED a lot of our traditional knowledge with the wisdom that comes from God. Tragically recent generations have lost track of this wisdom. People sang a new song and play a new tune and this valuable knowledge that had been known for generations was lost.

I now call upon us all to wake up, to RE-DISCOVER the LOST KNOWLEDGE of Medicine, Farming, Nutrition, Socialization and Simple Technologies, and to discover what we ourselves are able to achieve for ourselves, our families and our communities.

It is up to us to go back to our roots now!!!