

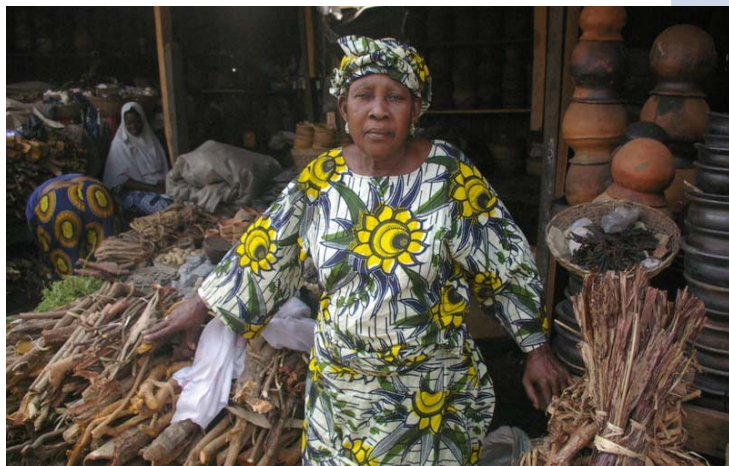
TRADITIONAL MEDICINE NEAR UNILAG



Traditional medicine near the University of Lagos

Between July 2007 and April 2008 I made 3 trips to Lagos as part of the MJoTA mission: to nurture the pharmaceutical industry in Africa. During the first trip MJoTA Managing Editor Pastor Egoro took me to visit the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Lagos. I had spoken with the then Dean, Professor Herbert AB Increase-Coker in March, and when we first met in July he made arrangements for me to return 2 weeks later so Pastor Egoro could film faculty and staff talking about malaria prevention and treatment. Some of that footage is included in the first MJoTA film: *Malaria: A Preventable Disease*. MJoTA published an article written by Professor Coker in volume 1: MJoTA vol 1(3)246-9.

My second trip to Lagos in January was to put together the video in Pastor Egoro's studio in Surulere, which is in the same town as the University of Lagos School of Medicine. During that visit Professor Coker took me on a tour of the traditional



medicines market near the campus. Here are some pictures.

My 3 trips to Lagos have completely changed my perception of prevention of disease and therapies. I grew up in a household dominated by university-educated practitioners of Western medicine. My mother's medical edu-

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cation was in Belfast, my father's in London, and they had different approaches to patients. My father was ready to prescribe antibiotics to my small children, which surprised me because I never once was given antibiotics as a child. My mother had a strong respect for Western medicines, seeing them as powerful therapies only to be used when sensible practices failed.

I now recognize that my mother was trained in some traditional medicine techniques which she passed on to me. Whenever my 4 now-grown children had eye infections I washed their eyes with tea; when they had skin infections I bathed them in hyperosmotic

salt water, which just means I poured a lot of salt into boiling water and waited until it cooled. Other things my mother did was prescribe oatmeal for me every morning when I developed symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome and peptic ulcers. These things are not supposed to work and the US market for pharmaceutical therapies treating these symptoms is huge, but I can assure you that the symptoms have not returned more than 30 years later.

My mother's non-pharmaceutical medical healing techniques are simple compared with those I saw at the market. Leaves, barks, seeds of indigenous plants are sold to be boiled, pounded, extracted, chewed, inhaled and some of their uses were explained to me. I asked for remedies for malaria and diabetes, and was shown, for malaria, a yellow bark, lemon grass, pawpaw and cashew bark, and for diabetes, some pods that are to be broken open and the seeds ground to make the pancreas increase insulin synthesis.

I also saw some dried animals that could have been reptiles, birds and mammals. Traditional medicine practitioners do not shy away from killing animals.

My walk through the market convinced me that plants and animals are a bountiful supply of pharmaceutical therapies. These pictures include one of the chief traditional medicine healers in Lagos, however, all the stall owners were healers. Professor Coker and I were accompanied by a young lady who is a law student, below, and a traditional healer who had an office and shop in the University of Lagos Faculty of Pharmacy for over a decade. This gentleman, shown to the left in a brown outfit and hat, was trained in film-making in Ghana but then spent his life learning about traditional medicines and was telling students about them, and selling them. When I returned in April to Lagos, his office and shop were being closed down, and he was grateful for the hospitality and respect he was given for all those years. The interest in traditional medicines at University of Lagos continues, a major part of Professor Coker's work is determining active ingredients in traditional medicines.

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