

The role of traditional medicine in Ophthalmology in Kenya

Kimani, Violet; Klauss, Volker

Abstract:

45 Kenyan traditional healers were interviewed with respect to the diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases. Traditional management of eye diseases is based on the healers' concept of the disease causation as well as their knowledge of the herbal, animal and chemical substances that possess (or are reported to possess) remedial effect on the disease. While many of the healers interviewed failed to give a clear distinction between the various eye conditions, diseases such as cataract, foreign bodies and injuries were recognized easily. In almost all cases the medicinal substances were first diluted in water before they were applied to the eyes. Human milk, blood and the white of the egg were the animal substances listed as medicinal to various eye conditions. A solution of sugar was one of the chemical substances used in the treatment of specific eye conditions. Given correct information, some of these healers could form a useful media through which the community can be reached regarding the health of their eyes.