Use of Traditional Botanical Medicines During Pregnancy in Rural Rwanda

January 25, 2015 · Original Research
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Abstract

Objective: To evaluate the perceptions of healthcare and traditional medicine providers regarding the type, indications, side effects, and prevalence of traditional medicine use amongst pregnant women in a rural Rwandan population.

Methods: Six focus groups with physicians, nurses, and community health workers and four individual in-depth interviews with traditional medicine providers were held. Qualitative data was gathered using a structured questionnaire querying perceptions of the type, indications, side effects, and prevalence of use of traditional medicines in pregnancy.

Results: The healthcare provider groups perceived a high prevalence of traditional botanical medicine use by pregnant women (50-80%). All three groups reported similar indications for use of the medicines and the socioeconomic status of the pregnant women who use them. The traditional medicine providers and the healthcare providers both perceived that the most commonly used medicine is a mixture of many plants, called Inkuri. The most serious side effect reported was abnormally bright green meconium with a poor neonatal respiratory drive. Thirty-five traditional medicines were identified that are used during pregnancy.

Conclusion: Perceptions of high prevalence of use of traditional medicines during pregnancy with possible negative perinatal outcomes exist in areas of rural Rwanda.
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