

Biographies of neo-traditional treatments for AIDS circulating in Benin

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Subject context (1)

- **Definition of the object: Syncretic treatments articulating tradition, science and nature**
- **Supply diversity**
Numerous expected effects: prevention, healing, alternative to ARVs, adjuvant to ARVs)
- **Different circulation network**
Self-medication, informal and formal therapeutic sector

Subject Context (2)

- **Africa, a fertile context:**
 - High prevalence of HIV/AIDS
 - Focusing on prevention to the detriment of treatment
 - Limited accessibility to ARVs
- **Complex therapeutic itineraries for PLWHA**
 - Maintaining the trend despite accelerated universal access to ARVs
 - Uncertainty and complex therapeutic itineraries

Theoretical framework

- Medicine as a social object:**
- "Social life" of the treatment, integration into the existing social fabric
 - Support from representations of the disease, health and care

Method

Qualitative and comprehensive ethnographic method:

- Three countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal
- Urban area
- Product inventory
- Semi-structured interviews
- Direct observations of situations

Medolémé (Cotonou/Lome)

Description: Powder in a bag and packaged in cardboard box, imitating pharmaceutical drugs

Indication: Virus

Expected effect: Recovery in 3 to 7 months and prevention

Course of action: Kills the virus

Managing the secret

- **Broad and vague therapeutic indications:**
 - Masking HIV -> enables taking a treatment without being identified as a PLWHA by entourage,
 - Maintaining the secret of seropositivity.
- **Preventive and curative treatment:**
 - Double action,
 - Response to a situation of refusal to share information with a sexual partner.

Hangbidi (Porto Novo)

Description: powder mixed with honey

Indication: HIV - any virus

Expected effect: Recovery in 10 months

Course of action: Elimination of the virus through the stools and urine

Perception of the medicine's effects

- **Uncomfortable effects interpreted as proof of therapeutic efficacy**
 - Diarrhea -> Elimination of the virus through the stools
- **No declared side effects**
 - Use presumed to be ancient and natural
 - Harmless treatments unlike ARVs

Globulos (Cotonou)

Description: Reddish-colored liquid

Indication: HIV/AIDS

Expected effect: Recovery (with no advertised time period)

Course of action: "builds blood, stimulates immunity"

Courses of action and representations of the disease

- **Similarity with popular stories about "lack of blood"**
- **Adequacy with popular theories about the disease (role of blood)**
- **Interpretations that combine biomedical and popular concepts about the cause of the disease**

Conclusion

- **Many facets from the social and cultural dimensions of these treatments**
- **Many cultural and social dimensions for these treatments**
- **Better understanding of these recourses needed to improve treatment**

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