

ALTERNATIVE AND TRADITIONAL TREATMENTS FOR AIDS IN THE TIME OF ART IN RESOURCE-POOR SETTINGS

July 1st, 9:30 to 3:00, Aix-en-Provence (MMSH), Salle Duby

Satellite meeting organised by NAARPS (Network on the Anthropology of ART in Resource-Poor Settings) : CReCSS (Centre de Recherche Cultures, Santé, Sociétés, Université Paul Cézanne d'Aix-Marseille) + ASSSR (Amsterdam School of Social Science Research, Medical Anthropology Unit) + UMR "Sida et maladies associées » (Unité Mixte de Recherche de l'Institut de Recherche pour le Développement)

Contact: Pr Alice Desclaux, CReCSS adesclaux@free.fr, 04 42 52 49 34, Pr. Anita Hardon, ASSSR, hardon@pscw.uva.nl

In developing countries, biomedical treatments for AIDS have been introduced in settings where traditional medicine was prevailing. Though most AIDS programs managed to set up access to testing and biomedical treatment and developed information about these possibilities, many people go on turning to alternative and traditional medicines. Amongst other reasons, are the non specific character of AIDS symptoms at early stages, the lack of availability and accessibility of testing and biomedical treatments in some locations, and the stigma related to AIDS clinics. Moreover, when AIDS programs managed to increase access to efficient ART treatment with the support of international agencies, Global Fund and 3x5 initiatives, alternative treatments did not disappear. During the last five years, new treatments claiming to be alternative or complementary to ART were proposed to AIDS patients in Africa. Recent enquiries show that these treatments are used by patients that sometimes get tired of ART or have difficulties in taking this treatment, by other patients who know their serostatus but have not yet reached the stage of ART, or by patients that consider that alternative treatment gives them strength to put up with ART.

Enquiries about these treatments show that they belong to several categories and must be considered within the context of health seeking behaviours in pluralistic health systems. Some HIV+ patients attend local traditional healers in a way that is not specific of AIDS; some are proposed alternative treatments by PLWA support groups; some happen to know these treatments through international AIDS conferences. Various kinds of healing techniques and products may be used; many of them may be called "neo-traditional medicines" as they build their legitimacy on a combination of traditional and scientific references. Some healers and treatments are limited to local use, when others products are industrially produced and sold at international level. Some products are distributed through usual formal or informal systems, when others are distributed through specific social patterns such as multi-level marketing systems or PLWA networks. Some products may be considered as used as self-medication, when others cannot be considered independently from the participation of users to specific groups and organizations –more or less profit-focused. Much remains for socio-anthropological studies, about related concepts and practices, professional activities and patients uses, roles of institutions and the building of legitimacy for these treatments and their providers/healers.

Though important in terms of expenditure and persons involved, these uses have been seldom studied. Two groups of social scientists, from Amsterdam and Aix-en-Provence Universities, have developed studies on this topic. This satellite meeting, funded by ANRS, will allow these groups to exchange information on this subject in English and French-speaking countries in Africa and Asia, and to discuss these issues.

Program:

- 9h30 Introduction (Anita Hardon, Alice Desclaux)
- 9h45 Marc Egrot: An overview on neotraditional medicines for HIV/AIDS in West Africa (Burkina, Sénégal, Bénin)
- 10h15 Bernard Taverne (Sénégal) Working on a sensitive topic: issues of methodology and ethics
- 10h45 Coffee break
- 11h15 Margaret Kyakuwa (Uganda)
- 11h30 Paper 4
- 12h Georges Tiendrébéogo (Burkina) Users' perspective
- 12h30 Lunch Break
- 13h15 Erwan (Indonesia) users' perspective
- 13h45 Emmanuelle Simon (Benin, neotrad) On-going clinical trials on neotraditional treatments in West Africa and ethical issues
- 14h15 Mathilde Couderc (Sénégal) Spiruline trials in AIDS treatment in Sénégal
- 14h45 Roundtable
- 15h30 End of the meeting

The meeting will be open to people who do not belong to NAARPS only for listening.