

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Herbalists in Kenya use self-taught processing practices which are inadequate. The objective of this study was to conduct an assessment of selected practices used by herbalists during drug processing and to identify knowledge gaps.

Method: Four long practicing traditional medicinal practitioners were identified using purposive sampling. An interview guide and field visits were used to gather data. Data analysis was done using content thematic approach.

Results: Sources of herbal knowledge were varied with the use of internet being a key finding. Regulatory compliance presented various challenges to the herbalists. The wild and cultivation of herbs were identified as key medicinal sources although the protection of biodiversity was a key concern of the herbalists. The facilities, area of practice and general hygiene were inadequate. Positive and negative practices were identified in processing of the herbal medicines.

Conclusions: Secrecy by the herbalists has resulted in limited innovation. More training of herbalists is required to improve on the quality of their drugs. It is however encouraging that they have adopted some modern methods in their practice.

Keywords: Herbalists, processing practices, herbal drugs