

ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Health in South Africa has launched massive campaigns to try and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, South Africa still has more people infected with HIV/AIDS than any other country in the world. This has led to government and health care planners re-evaluating neglected traditional health systems as potential contributors to health care delivery. This report highlights some areas where traditional healers can play a role in the prevention of HIV/AIDS as told by traditional healers themselves. In discussing these roles, the report raises the need for supportive government policy. Up to now government policies on HIV/AIDS have relied largely on biomedical explanations of illness and ignored other popular explanations. This poses a serious problem in a country like South Africa, where a large proportion of the population consults traditional healers first before consulting the medical sector. Such policies also impact on collaborative measures between the two sectors. Thus far, almost all prevention programmes are run by clinics with very little interaction with other sectors. The report then goes on to discuss the perceptions on HIV/AIDS as discussed by traditional healers. In so doing, the report begins to touch on the role of traditional practices that relates to sexual behaviour in HIV/AIDS prevention. As custodians of traditional culture, traditional healers have a huge role to play in re-inventing such practices in a manner that raises awareness about HIV/AIDS and at the same time preventing the spread of the disease.