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Traditional healers practices within western model hospitals

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Abstract

Similarly to the ancient Chinese and Indian civilizations, in Mexico was also developed and consolidated traditional medical practices based on a wide variety of herbal resources, animals and minerals. Rituals and different healing practices were also used.

Upon arrival of the Europeans in the sixteenth century, western model hospitals were introduced. Its success spread throughout the territories conquered by the Spanish and Portuguese. They initially allowed the presence of local traditional healers but few years later, the academic medicine prevailed. Thus, traditional medicine practices within those hospitals was banned.

It was not until the second half of the twentieth century, with the decisive influence of the World Health Organization (WHO), when the incorporation of native healers was accepted within the health care system.

During the nineties several medical experiences flourished, which nowadays prevail. The first one, the “mixed-hospital”, was built in the town of Cuetzalan (state of Puebla). Then, the system was replicated in other areas of Mexico such as Nayarit, Veracruz, Campeche, and recently, in Chiapas (2010).

In this paper are described and analyzed the most significant experiences of mixed-hospitals, highlighting not only the achievements, but also the shortcomings of this system in order to propose some solutions to it.

Biography

Roberto Campos Navarro has been professor of medical anthropology at the School of Medicine of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) for 25 years. As physician and surgeon, he specialized in Family Medicine. He holds a Master and PhD degrees in Anthropology.

He is the head of the postgraduate studies (Master and PhD) in Medical Anthropology (UNAM). He has published books and articles on mexican and latinamerican traditional medicine, especially on popular diseases and intercultural health