

## Abstract

### Introduction

Holistic integrated community palliative care services remain a mirage to cancer patients. Nonetheless, a number of cancer patients are jamming traditional medicinal places seeking therapy. The results of these visits are undocumented. This study explored healthcare seeking behaviors and perspectives on cancer indigenous palliative care among patients visiting traditional health practitioners in Kenya.

### Methods

A cross-sectional study was undertaken through client exit survey. Face to face interviews were conducted using semi-structured questionnaires with all consenting cancer patients exiting mapped outlets. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science Version 22.0.

### Results

A total of 433 respondents were interviewed and the majority were female 59.6%, Christians 97.2%, married 89.8% and educated 85.7%. Their mean age was  $48.25 \pm 15.58$ . Education, sex and religion were significantly associated with perceived improvement. The predominant cancer types were breast cancer (22.4%); throat (14.8%), prostate (12.9%), bone (12.5%), cervical (9.9%), stomach (6.0%) and skin cancer (5.1%). The most frequently used traditional medicine was herbal medicine that was driven by unresponsive conditions (42.2%), inaccessible biomedical services (18.8%) and yearning for second opinion (18%) over a condition. Seventy six percent of the respondents reported improved and prolonged quality of life. 78.2% reported improved eating, drinking, standing, walking and doing light duties alone. Patients felt healthier, hopeful, happier, confident and bonded to their families.

### Conclusions

Use of indigenous palliative care is predominant to all major cancer conditions and driven by the quest for cure, successful stories, trustworthiness and beliefs, previous experience and avoiding medical procedures such as surgery.