

EVOLUTION OF MEDICINE IN CAMEROON

Before Cameroon became a German protectorate, a number of tribes occupied the territorial space known as Cameroon today. The practice of medicine was non-conventional. In fact, this is generally referred to as traditional medicine as it is practised today but which has evolved tremendously. If someone fell sick, the first thing he or she did was to try to heal his or her self through the use of concoction from herbs and barks of trees that could be found in the surrounding area of the places where they lived. Then, if they could not cure themselves, they would first turn to a traditional healer nearby.

Before the establishment of science-based medicine, traditional medicine was the dominant medical system for the local people in Cameroon but the arrival of the Europeans was a noticeable turning point in the history of this ancient tradition and culture. Herbal medicine was generally not adequately researched, and was weakly regulated. There was a lack of the detailed documentation of the traditional knowledge, which was generally transferred orally. Serious adverse effect resulted from misidentification or misuse of healing plants.

After the Berlin Conference in 1884, Germany declared Cameroon a German protectorate and this lasted until the World War I. Under the German colonial health system (1884-1916), traditional medicine was “weakened” and became informal due to stigmatization, discouragement, and repression by colonial and religious masters, even though their western health care system was only made of urban health structures with access initially limited to the latter. Traditional divinerhealers were outlawed because they were considered by the colonial master to be practitioners of witchcraft and magic, and declared illegal by the colonial authorities, creating a war against aspects

COLONIAL HEALTH SYSTEM IN "BRITISH AND FRENCH CAMEROONS

After World War I, the League of Nations gave the British charged over the Cameroons. But when the British took over the territory, they passed over this responsibility to the Native Authorities to sponsor the training, to supply the services of Sanitary Inspectors, and to buy the equipment while the Government acted as a guide and adviser.

Colonial Health System in “French-speaking Cameroon”

The health policy in this part of the country was geared at building health infrastructures, reinforcing health regulation and reorganizing health services. The French colonial administration oriented its health strategy more toward hygiene and sanitation activities in urban settings, in addition to disease specific prevention interventions at community level.

HEALTH SYSTEM IN CAMEROON FROM 1960 TO PRESENT DATE

Based on the studies provided in 1959 by a French contractor (Societe Generale d’Etudes et de Planifications), the government designed its first quinquennial plan for 1961-65, with the major health objectives being to reinforce preventive medicine and health promotion (school health, nutrition), health workforce, vertical and horizontal equity in the distribution of health services, and the development of vertical programmes for Malaria control, and maternal and child health.