

"Availability of Alternative Medicine in Africa Today"



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For many years, the dire lack of readily available, adequate medical care has been a fact of life for the people of Africa. The situation has been brought to public attention by organizations worldwide, from the World Bank to the World Health Organisation (WHO), yet a clear, easily accessible solution applicable for a wide variety of needs has not yet been found by these concerned parties, who mostly operate under the assumption that conventional medicine is the only answer to Africa's population of over one billion people. In fact, the African people, along with much of the world's developing population, are more open than ever to what may be called "alternative medicine."

For conventional medicine to be developed (or imported), prescribed and distributed, state governments and public organisations face many challenges, from a lack of funds and reliable proof of accountability to poor transportation and infrastructure. The growing populations of communities in African nations suffer not only from poverty, but from a dwindling population of conventional doctors educated and practicing in their own countries, who often move abroad, seeking higher wages and a better standard of life. As South African doctor and TED Speaker, Mitchell Besser has stated, "Sub-Saharan Africa has 24 percent of the global disease burden, yet only three percent of the world's health care workers."

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) simply cannot address the number of those in need of medical attention nor the wide disparity in types of care required. Standards in medical care vary from country to country as well, limiting the viability of these services. Chad, Somalia and Ethiopia were found among the worst in healthcare, among developing countries, [one study](#) by a U.S. based charity reported. In 2013, the World Bank reported that nearly 80% of Africans, middle income and below, rely on conventional public health facilities, but today more and more individuals are turning to alternative medicine for answers.

There is now a growing trend, stemming from Germany to Africa, along with other emerging markets worldwide, in the exploration, belief, use and trust in alternative healing methods. Already established in most [European countries](#), in France, 75% of the population used complementary medicine at least once; in Germany, 77% of pain clinics provide acupuncture; and in the United Kingdom, complementary or alternative medicine has reached over US \$2300 million per year.

Africa is joining this trend. Especially in close communities such as tribes, more traditional, yet considered “alternative” healing methods, such as the use of herbs continue to be revered methods of healing. These communities may be more open in general to alternative remedies. According to a [2018 research paper](#) by the World Health Organisation, “a considerable number

of people in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) rely on traditional, complementary and alternative medicine (TCAM) to meet their primary healthcare needs...”



Just as [traditional medicine](#) refers to the knowledge and practises based on the theories and experiences indigenous to different cultures, for the prevention and treatment of physical and mental illness, new alternative methods are based on experiential and holistic theory, integrating the physical with the psychological. The concept of “natural healing” is a comfortable idea to most Africans, who are well-aware of the unique relationship between body, mind and spirit.

Add to this, the impact of the mobile phone, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be underestimated. As a chart from [The Economist](#) shows, in much of the region, mobile phones are more common than access to electricity. Besides helping farmers

get their produce to the market on time thanks to SMS, developments in healthcare abound. And this impact is still at an early stage. It's estimated that by 2023, mobile subscriptions in the region will grow by an average of 6% annually to just under 1 billion from 700 million today, according to a report from telecommunications supplier Ericsson. Mobile broadband subscriptions are to grow by 16% annually to 880 million by 2023 from 350 million today. This grand scale adoption of mobile phone access and use has the potential to usher in with it a revolution of access to alternative health as well.

One possible solution, is [Q-Health](#), a mobile phone app providing a personal, functional QR code or "Qode" generated specifically and automatically to treat any patient who has supplied just 3 symptoms of a health issue. This innovative treatment for the prevention and cure of physical and mental illness was discovered and developed by an esteemed German team of scientists.

A full one third of the entire African population lacks access to essential medicines, however safe and effective alternative remedies such as Q-Health, could become an important way of increasing access to health care services for all, at any time, day or night. The unprecedented 24-hour, daily access offered by a mobile phone app could prove to be the single greatest health contribution of our time.

(Photo above of mother and child by [Jordan Rowland](#) on [Unsplash](#))