

A study on the palm leaf manuscripts containing indigenous medical systems (with reference to Anuradhapura District).

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Abstract

The principal aim of this study was to explore the original Knowledge of Indigenous Medicine, which avails in the Palm leaf Manuscripts (PMs) in order to clear out what are indigenous medical systems practiced in Sri Lanka. History indicates that there was a prosperity in the Indigenous Medicine, which spread through popular usage, orally, as well as through PMs. The research problem of this study is the investigation of how and whether there existed an Indigenous Medicine in the PMs.

The objectives of this paper are to examine the indigenous medical systems practiced in Sri Lanka conventionally, to identify the diagnosis methods in indigenous medicine and to explore the reasons for dwindling use of this valuable medical method. Method of the study was the historical method. Population was the PMs, which contained Indigenous Medicine in Sri Lanka. Sample of the study is 104 PMs which contained Indigenous Medicine that were available in the Anuradhapura district. Primary sources were the study of PMs, interview technique and field observation. When focusing on the Indigenous Medicine, main indigenous medical systems related to the medical subject like pathology, ophthalmology, pediatrics, gynecology, treatment of cancer, veterinary medicine, mystical medicine, science of healing and organ treatment revealed including the treatment of abscess were found. The methods of diagnosis were messenger method, care and treatment including use of certain medicines, pulsology, and

venomology. The factors related to dwindling use of indigenous medicine and medical systems were the ignorance of the validity of this medicine, undue recognition, found including the deviation of the indigenous medical practitioners and their generations owing to socio-economic and familial factors. The youngsters of indigenous medical practitioners were very reluctant to learn and use this practice instead, they prefer joining other employment. This has affected very seriously the propagation of this noble profession.

Keywords: *Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous Medical Systems, Indigenous medicine, Palm leaf manuscripts, Traditional medicine, Manuscript studies*