

ARE HOME REMEDIES RELATED TO AGE, CULTURE, AND EDUCATION?

Our project focuses on determining if the use of home remedies is related to age and education. We interviewed 107 primary caregivers of children <2 years of age at a general pediatrics clinic in Michigan. We found that use of home remedies increased with increasing age but was not associated with level of education.

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INTRODUCTION

Although home remedies are of dubious efficacy, a large percentage of people use them.¹⁻³ Many physicians and health officials believe that patients prefer home remedies over prescribed medications because of costs. However, only a small portion cited the low cost of the treatment as the most important factor.¹⁻⁴ The use of home remedies is believed to be more common in minority communities.³

We hypothesized that home remedies would be predominantly used by older, less-educated minorities.

METHODS

Structured interviews were conducted in the General Pediatrics Clinic at Children's Hospital of Michigan. Participants were caregivers of healthy African American children, aged 0-2 years, who were in the clinic for routine physical exams. The data were collected over a six-month period and analyzed to determine patterns of home remedy use for fever, teething, colic, diarrhea, constipation, and rashes within different age groups and levels of education. The literature was reviewed to study the use of home remedies in other cultures. Descriptive analysis of the responses to these questions was performed by examining the frequency of responses with SPSS statistical software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, Ill).

RESULTS

One hundred seven of 117 caregivers agreed to participate in this study,

for a response rate of 92%. Most participants were high school graduates or held general equivalency diplomas and were between the ages of 20-29 years. Most of the participants were from Michigan.

The results of the survey showed a relationship between the age of the parent and the use of home remedies. Older caregivers were more likely to use home remedies in their children as compared to younger caregivers ($P<.05$). No statistically significant difference was seen between the use of home remedies and level of education in our study population.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that older caregivers are more likely to use home remedies in their children than younger caregivers. However, no relationship was seen between the caregiver's level of education and home remedy use. This difference suggests that home remedy use may not only be related to low income but may be due to a tradition in this community in which elders use these remedies as part of routine child care.

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