Attitudes, Practices, and Beliefs about Illness and the Cameroon Health Care

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Photo by Moki E. Kindzeka for VOA news and by 1stdibs
Musical Animation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tf9WTgxhA0k
Work Background

- Worked in rehabilitation center called SAJOCAH in Bafut, NWR Cameroon.
- School Nurse Bishop Rogan college, SWR.
- Worked as a nurse/midwife in health centers in villages across the northwest and southwest provinces.
- University of Ibadan for Nursing Education
- Worked at Yemetu hospital, Ibadan; and taught at school of Hygiene, Eleyele, Ibadan Nigeria.
● Worked with the Catholic health services
● Nursing Instructor at the school of nursing Shisong and health relief missions.

Photo by rbairdpccam
Started an Organization called LIRD

- This is the Laveba Initiative for Rural Development (LIRD), often called the Nkuv project;
  - It is a self help initiative with no external funding.
  - It seeks to stimulate the people to use their own initiative to build capacity, raise funds, and support themselves in order to change their socioeconomic and health predicaments.

I provided the initial funds for the project and the rest of the funding is from the community.
  - The goal is self reliance
  - and self-determination
  - for this community.

Photo by Empower Women in Rural Cameroon
Country Location

- Cameroon is a Central African nation.
- Central African Economic zone (CEMAC).
- Located in the “Armpit of Africa.”
- Described as Africa in miniature because of its geographical and cultural diversity;
  - deserts, forests, beaches, mountains, and more than 200 linguistic groups, more than 200 linguistic groupings
- 2 Official languages: French and English
Religious Beliefs

- Indigenous (Traditional) beliefs: 40%
- Christianity: 40%
- Islam: 20%

World Factbook, 2015

Picture by Camerounweb, L’Effort Camerounais, and Travelo Cameroon
African Map
Historical Perspective

- First Explored by Portuguese by the 15th century, who named it “Rio dos Camaroes” (River of Shrimps or Prawns), thus the name Cameroon.
- First Colonized by the Germans in 1884 and ruled till the end of the first world war
- French took over 80% and the English 20% after the Versailles Treaty in 1919
- French Cameroon independence 1960
- South British Cameroon voted to join in 1961

Political Leadership

-Cameroon is a Republic
-Two Presidents since independence.
  ● Ahmadou Ahidjo from 1960 - 1982
  ● Paul Biya from 1982 - Present

Pictures by RJC Patriote and Emmanuel Buchot
Population

Population: 22,254,000 (WHO, 2013)
Age Structure:
0-14 years: 42.78%
15-24 years: 19.58%
25-54 years: 30.53%
55-64 years: 3.96%
65 years and over: 3.15%

(World Factbook, 2015)
Age Structure (cont.)
• Population growth rate: 2.59%
• Birth rate: 36.17 births/1,000 population
• Death rate: 10.11 deaths/1,000 population
• Mother's mean age at first birth: 19.7 but note that the Median age at first birth among women is 25 - 29
• Fertility rate: 4.76 children born/women

(World Factbook, 2015)
Mortality

- Maternal mortality rate: 596 deaths/100,000 live births
- Infant mortality rate: total: 53.63 deaths/1,000 live births

(World Factbook, 2015)
Life Expectancy

- Life expectancy at birth:
  - total population: 57 years
  - male: 56 years
  - female: 58 years

Photo by SOS Children services
Health care financing

- Health Expenditures: 5.1% of GDP (WHO, 2013)
- Physician density: 0.08 physicians/1000 people (WHO, 2009)
- Hospital bed density: 1.3 bed/1000 people (World Factbook, 2010)
- For mental health in Cameroon:
  - Total psychiatric beds per 10 000 population is 0.08
  - Psychiatrists per 100,000 population is 0.03,
  - Psychiatric nurses per 100,000 population is 0.2, Social workers per 100,000 population is 0.1.
  - WHO Mental Health Atlas (2005)
Drinking Water

● Better water situation compared to some African countries:
  ○ However, Water sources dry out in the dry season leading chronic seasonal water shortages.
● 75.6% of water from improved water sources
● 24.4% is from unimproved water sources.
● Severe water shortages:
  ○ Northern semi-arid regions, cities like Douala, Yaounde, Bafoussam, Bamenda etc.
● Villages use;
  ○ Unprotected streams and rivers: with water-borne gastrointestinal disease implications.

(World Factbook, 2015)
Infectious Diseases

The common infectious diseases include:

- **Food or waterborne diseases:**
  - bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever
- **Vector borne diseases:**
  - malaria, dengue fever, and yellow fever
- **Water contact disease:**
  - schistosomiasis
- **Respiratory disease:**
  - Tuberculosis, meningococcal meningitis
- **Animal contact disease:** rabies (in dogs, bats, and other mammal)

(World Factbook, 2013)
Solutions for Infectious diseases

- General improvement in
  - Sewage disposal
  - Refuse disposal
  - Urban drainage systems
  - Sex education
- Commitment and funding for the above
- Sustained health education efforts
- Accountability
- Good governance
HIV/AIDS Prevalence rate: 4.7 (14th in the world), the worst in rate in West Africa.
HIV/AIDS Deaths: 34200 - 7th in the world.

(World Factbook, 2015)
(WHO, 2013).

Photo by Education Fights AIDS Cameroon
World Distribution of Malaria in 2014

Confirmed malaria cases per 1000 population:
- >100
- 10–50
- 1–10
- 0–0.1
- No ongoing malaria transmission
- Not applicable

Source: National malaria control programme reports
Malaria in Sub-Saharan Africa

Number of reported Malaria deaths for Cameroon: 4,398 (WHO, 2013).
Number of confirmed reported cases of malaria: 26,651 (WHO, 2013)
Number of reported leprosy cases: 441
Prevalence of HIV/AIDS among 15-49 yr old: 4.3% (Factbook, 2015)

Photo by Education Fights AIDS Cameroon
Attitudes and Practices

- Consultation of traditional leadership:
  - the Fons (or chiefs), Fais, chindas, Sheys in Cameroon, or
  - Igwes (Igbo in Nigeria),
  - Oba (Yuroba land).
  - Etc

- Consultation of ancestral spirits
  - making ritualistic incantations,
  - seeking of guidance from the ancestors and the underworld,
  - appeal to ancestral spirits in times of trouble.
Practices and Taboos that impact health care

● Divination (Nggàm) and Traditional healing or prognosticators who claim to have the ability:
  ○ To predict the future,
  ○ To foresee evil/impending witchcraft,
  ○ To use charms or talismans and other traditional artifacts

● Turning children head down over the latrines to treat convulsions

● Widow take over by a sibling when the brother dies or by a newly enthroned traditional ruler (with STDs and HIV/AIDS implications)

● Seeking traditional medicine first and hospital last
Divination or Nggam is sought by so many people who seek to harness more powers from the underworld:

- politicians
- business people
- athletes
- students
- church preachers
- Health care workers

Photos by Himalayan Arts, Pinterest, & David Norden
Attitudes/Beliefs and Mental health Constraints

- There is a paucity of epidemiological data on mental illnesses in Cameroon
- Mental health stigma:
  - For many tribes, mental health is generally viewed as a spiritual curse on the family or individual.
- Lack of mental health facilities:
  - So far I know of 1 facility in Cameroon
- Lack of funding for mental health: Only 0.01% of GDP (WHO, 2005)
- Ignorance about mental health etiology
West and Central African Regions
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Conclusion

Thanks for your attention. And enjoy the North West Cameroon Njang Dance below

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFAU_VqqJEI

by Africa Wonderland