

Abstract

There is a widespread use of herbal medicine which has been viewed as an alternative source of medication from conventional medicine for different illnesses and diseases especially among developing nations including Uganda. However, the use of herbal medicine is directly linked to self medication using these herbs without proper diagnosis of the diseases that these herbs are meant to be treating. There is no scientific or evidence based information to prove whether these herbs contain the exact curative elements necessary for the treatment and curing of diseases. Therefore, this study was set out to examine the factors influencing the use of alternative medicine among adults in urban areas with a case study of Kiggaga zone of Makindye Division in Kampala district.

A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out involving 352 respondents from Kiggaga zone selected by simple random sampling. Data was collected from this research study using a questionnaire tool. The data was then analyzed using a computer program called Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 16.0.

The results of the study showed that the use of local herbal medicine in the study area was high at 5.45%. The study also revealed that 58% of the respondents were using non-purified local herbs while 41% used purified local herbal medicines and only 1% were using both. The factors that influence the use of herbal medicine included; age, marital status, cost of herbal medicines, distance and transport means involved to get to the source of local herbs, personal preference and attitude towards the use of local herbs. ($p=0.032, 0.000, 0.029, 0.044, 0.021, 0.000$ and 0.019 respectively)

In conclusion, the study revealed that the use of alternative local herbal medicine was high in Kiggaga zone despite the lack of clinical evidence to prove the effectiveness and efficiency of the local herbs being used. Also, the practice of self medication normally used, creates a health risk with using local herbs since the dangers and resulting side effects of such practices are well documented. Therefore, proper clinical diagnosis of diseases before using local herbs to treat them is more important rather than self medication with herbs that do not have standard doses. Policy makers need to ensure quality, safety and consistency of herbal medicines as well as regulate the licensing and use of herbal medicines