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Commentary

Comparing the herbal and naturopathic medicine curricula in Ghanaian tertiary education: A commentary

Raphael Nyarkotey Obu^{1,*}, Lawrencia Aggrey Bluwey²

¹Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine & Technology, Ghana

²Dept. of Health Administration and Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana



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ABSTRACT

About 80% of Ghanaians rely on Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicines for their health needs. However, Complementary and Alternative Medicine was not factored into Act 575 in 2000. The government of Ghana has nonetheless taken some steps to provide recognition for CAM with ministerial directives. To date, no tertiary program exists in Ghana to train experts in Complementary and Alternative Medicine, unlike Herbal Medicine. In 2021, the Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine provided a roadmap in this area. The first National Occupational Standard was further developed at the Higher National Diploma (HND) and Bachelor in Naturopathy and Holistic Medicine approved by the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) for training Naturopaths. This paper compares the Herbal Medicine and Naturopathy curricula in Ghana.

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1. Introduction

Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine and Technology (NUCHMT) is devoted to higher education in Competency-Based Training (CBT) in the field of Naturopathic and Holistic Medicine.¹ This is the first College in Ghana, and Africa, dedicated to CBT education in Naturopathy and Holistic Medicine. This Competency Standard defines the minimum required stock of knowledge, skills, and attitude for medical and non-medical healthcare professionals and workers in the area of Naturopathy. The University started as a distance education college housed at Dodowa-Akoto House in 2016 recruiting students for a College in Cyprus naturopathic programs where Dr. Raphael Nyarkotey Obu, as he then was, was then a faculty member and promoted the school in Ghana and the West African region. Due to the interest of the Ghanaian students in pursuing Naturopathic Programmes

that are accredited, recognized, cost-effective, and stand the test of credibility, the college was officially registered as Dr. Nyarkotey College of Holistic Medicine in 2018, received Professional certificates accreditation from the Traditional Medicine Practice Council- Ministry of Health and renamed Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine & Technology (NUCHMT) in 2021 to seek tertiary accreditation to pursue Higher National Diploma (HND) and Bachelor of Technology Naturopathy and Holistic Medicine accreditation. The college is the first in Ghana to start the promotion, education, and advocacy for Modern Naturopathic Medicine.

For the Department of Herbal Medicine at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, K.N.U.S. T, Kumasi-Ghana, the aim is to graduate experts in the field of Herbal Medicine to champion modern herbal practices in the delivery of primary healthcare.² The academic part takes place at the faculty level for 4 years and the professional level takes place at the Centre for Scientific Research into

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: collegeofholisticmedicine@gmail.com (R. N. Obu).

Table 1: Outline of course content forherbal and naturopathic medicine

Herbal Medicine Programme At Knust		Naturopathic Medicine Programme At Nuchmt	
Course Title	Course Title	Course Title	Course Title
Year 1 semester one	Year 3 semester one	Year 1 semester one	Year 3 semester one
Introduction to Herbal Medicine Botany of Medicinal Plants Plant Morphology Laboratory Basic Chemistry Basic Chemistry Laboratory Microbiology Microbiology Lab Communication Skills Post SSS Maths Informatics (Computing)	Nutrition, Health foods and Health Diagnostic Skills I Clinical Training I Phytotherapy I Crude Drug Production and Evaluation Crude Drug Evaluation Lab	Anatomy I Physiology I Pathology I Medical Terminology Healing Systems I Naturopathic History, Philosophy Principles and Theories I African Studies/ICT	Public Health & Health Promotion Laboratory Investigation I Clinical naturopathy II Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Internal Medicine I Clinical Nutrition I Applied Nutrition
Year 1 semester two	Year 3 semester two	Year 1 semester two	Year 3 semester two
Human Physiology Human Anatomy Biochemistry Biochemistry Laboratory Basic Organic Chemistry Communication Skills II	Poisons of Natural Origin Research Methods Clinical Training II Phytotherapy II Complementary Medicine Chemical Pathology	Anatomy II Physiology II Pathology II Chemistry & Biochemistry I Naturopathic History, Philosophy Principles and Theories II Healing Systems II First Aid & Emergency Medicine	Internal Medicine I Clinical Nutrition I Homeopathy I Herbal Medicine I Naturopathic Physical Medicine I Detoxification, Hydrotherapy and Toxicology Clinical Training I Nutrigenomics & Nutrigenetics
Year 2 semester one	Year 4 semester one	Year 2 semester one	Year 4 semester one
Human Physiology Human Anatomy Gross Pathology Dispensing Theory Dispensing Laboratory Pharmacology Statistics Literature of English	Diagnostic Skills II Herbal Medicine Policy, Laws & Reg. Clinical Training III Chemical Pathology Entrepreneurial Management I Phytotherapy III Project	Health Communication and lifestyle counselling Microbiology & Parasitology I Clinical Examination/doctoring skills Chemistry & Biochemistry II Naturopathic History, Philosophy Principles and Theories III Medical humanities Traditional Chinese Medicine/Acupuncture	Internal Medicine II Clinical Nutrition II Homeopathy II Herbal Medicine II Naturopathic Physical Medicine II African Naturopathic Pharmacy Ayurveda Clinical Training II
Year 2 semester Two	Year 4 semester Two	Year 2 semester Two	Year 4 semester Two
Pharmacology Laboratory Organic Chemistry II Phytochemistry Phytochemistry Lab Statistics Literature of English	Professional ethics Entrepreneurial Management II Clinical Training IV Public Health Phytotherapy IV Project Mental Health Pregnancy	Microbiology & Parasitology II Pharmacology & Pharmacotherapeutics Neuroscience Naturopathic Assessment and Diagnosis Applied Nutrition Clinical Naturopathy I Entrepreneurship and Health Administration	Pharmacognosy Research Methods/project writing Bach Flower Remedy Mind Body Medicine Functional and integrative Medicine Medical Law and Ethics Therapeutic Exercise and Massage Clinical Training III

Plant Medicine (CSRPM), Mampong-Akuapem, Ghana.

For those at KNUST, graduates undertake a mandatory 2 years internship of which the first year is a national service at health institutions that provide herbal medicine services and the 2nd year at the Centre for Plant Medicine Research (CPMR) and Tetteh Quashie Memorial Hospital (TQMH) both at Mampong-Akuapem.^{3,4} There has been criticism of this approach to the mandatory 2 years internship as a requirement to write the professional qualifying exams (PQE).^{3,4}

2. Comparison of the Herbal and Naturopathic Medicine Curricula in Ghana

The Naturopathic program is broader in terms of contents as compared to Herbal Medicine. Herbal Medicine is one unit treated under the Naturopathic Medicine program. Most of the subjects also in the KNUST Herbal medicine programs are treated in the Naturopathic Program. Besides, the Naturopathy program is based on a Competency -Based Curriculum, whilst the Herbal Medicine program is based on the traditional system of education. Competency-based Curriculum (CBC) is an education system that focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to use in the future in society.⁵⁻⁸ It is centered on competence in each

subject, instead of focusing on writing and passing exams to get good grades in a formalized and structured yearly curriculum schedule.^{5–8}

This means that students can only move forward when they can demonstrate mastery. Traditional education places emphasis on the semester and students just move to the next semester whether performing or not. Competency-based education scores are based on the performance levels of each student, without bias. It is either achieved or not achieved.^{5–8}

Additionally, the National Occupational Standards were developed to provide more information for the prospective Naturopathic student to understand the profession. The Naturopathy program also allows students to major or specialize in any Complementary and Alternative Medicine trade. The Herbal Medicine program limits the student to the herbal trade area. This is not the case in Naturopathy, the student has eclectic natural therapies to choose from.

Due to the changing trend in Naturopathy and medical education, the curricula per the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET), mandate that the occupational standard has to be reviewed every five years. This, we believe would allow other experts to make input in the future to place Ghana on the global map of naturopathic education and practice.

3. Conclusion

It has been widely documented that a large proportion of Ghanaians rely on Complementary and Alternative Medicine, including Naturopathy, as their source of primary healthcare. However, CAM was not factored into Act 575 in 2000, making it difficult for CAM to be streamlined and in effect, pursued formally at the tertiary level, unlike Herbal Medicine. In 2021, the Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine provided a roadmap in this area, with the first National Occupational Standard was further developed at the Higher National Diploma (HND) and Bachelor in Naturopathy and Holistic Medicine approved by the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) for training Naturopaths. This paper has revealed that the Naturopathic program is broader in terms of contents as compared to Herbal Medicine. Herbal Medicine is one unit treated under the Naturopathic Medicine program. Most of the subjects also

in the KNUST Herbal medicine programs are treated in the Naturopathic program, making Naturopathy a more comprehensive venture.

4. Source of Funding

None.

5. Conflict of Interest

None.

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Author biography

Raphael Nyarkotey Obu, Professor  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7478-7884>

Lawrencia Aggrey Bluwey, -

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