

Constructing Practice knowledge of herbal medicine: Complementing Empirical knowing

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This presentation reports the findings of a qualitative research study of herbal practitioners. Thirty-nine interviews revealed that expert herbal practitioners use multiple ways of knowing herbal medicines to inform practice decisions. In addition to rational, scientific knowing, herbal practitioners engage in intuitive, haptic, and relationship-based knowing. Multiple ways of knowing complement scientific knowing and are essential for traditional knowledge. Ways of knowing will be discussed in relationship to the implications for herbal medicine practitioners.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion the learner will be able to:

1. Define multiple ways of knowing that inform decision-making processes for herbal practitioners.
2. Discuss multiple ways of knowing in relationship to traditional knowledge and as complementary to scientific or empirical knowing.
3. Differentiate rational, empirical knowing from knowing outside the rational domain such as intuitive, spiritual, and relationship-based knowing.

What this presentation represents is:

- Moving beyond either/or and if/then to both/and thinking
- The coexistence of multiple ways of knowing herbal medicine and applied healing approaches
- Shifting research priorities to the whole plant and the whole person within context.
- Acknowledging the role of empiric knowing and the dominant evidence-based practice paradigm in relationship to multiple ways of knowing
- Valuing the contribution of multiple ways of knowing herbal medicine.

Multiple Ways of Knowing: A brief history

1800 Pierce: *Intuition, Tenacity, Authority, Science*

1927 Whitehead: *'the sole reliance on logic alone [is] insufficient'*

1978 Carper: Empiric, Esthetic, Ethical, Personal,

Later Chinn and Krammer added: Emancipatory, Praxis

1983/1999 Gardner: Logical-mathematical, Linguistic, Musical, Spatial, Bodily-kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist, Spiritual, Existential

Multiple patterns of knowing

How we know.

Different sources of knowledge provide holistic and dynamic perspectives of persons within their personal contexts, and help guide decision-making in the design and application of herbal medicines fitted to the unique person.

Herbal Practitioners embracing complexity, plurality of thinking, integration, and wholism should be cautious in deference to a single pattern of knowing.

The Study:

Demographics N= 39 interviews		
Age:	29-64	Mean: 50
Education: 2 PhD 2 MS 7 BS/BA 5 some college 1 high school (1 NP, 1 PA, 2 RN, 1 DTCM)		Herbal Education: 1 MS 8 apprenticeships Certification and/or informal herbal education programs
Herbal Medicine Experience:	7-40 years	Mean: 20.5
Client encounters per week:	2-30	Mean: 12.7
17 practitioners formulated a mean of 93% of the medicines they recommend		

Aim of this study:

Questions asked participants:

Study Findings:

Different ways herbalists know:

- **Intuitive:** preconscious, non-rational, deep visceral
- **Haptic:** touch and somatic or deep sensation
- **Aesthetic:** artful, creative, story
- **Relationship-based:** Personal-Plant
- **Experiential**
- **Spiritual**
- **Traditional**
- **Empiric:** science (rationale)

Multiple Ways of Knowing: Examples and relationship

Experiential
Scientific
Traditional
Aesthetic
Relationship based
Intuitive
Haptic
Spiritual

Content of knowing for herbal practitioners: (what we know)

Plants, people, relationship, context
Healing trajectories
Natural environment/bioregionalism/medicinal plants, parts, care and harvesting, preparations,
Plant story, lore, DO signatures,
Uses, actions, affinities, indications, energetics, qualities, safety profiles and sources of profile, interactions
Traditions of use and current history of use
Research pertaining to plants (laboratory, 'evidence')

Traditional knowledge Defined:

A body of knowledge built by a group of people through generations living in close contact with nature.

Traditional knowledge-holding individuals:

"...culturally distinct tribal peoples as well as traditional rural communities that are not necessarily removed from the cultural mainstream..." (Dutfield, 2003)

Traditional Knowledge: (Johnson, 1992)

Recorded and transmitted orally (narrative knowledge)
Learned through observation and hands-on experience
Based on understanding that matter has life-force
Views all life-forms as interdependent with *spiritual* relations between all.
Holistic, Intuitive, Qualitative, Moral,
Self-generated data
Diachronic rather than synchronic data
Explanations are derived from collective experiences and are dynamic (empiric observations and 'trial and error')

Traditional Plant Knowledge is: (Dutfield, 2003)

Knowledge of current use, previous use, or potential use of plants...
Knowledge of preparation, processing, or storage of useful plants
Knowledge of formulation involving more than one ingredient
Knowledge of individual species, ecosystems, and conservation
Plant classification system of knowledge

Traditional knowing defined:

Empiric Knowing as rationale science-based knowing

Evidence-Based Practice as dominant paradigm defined

A case against reliance on evidence-based practice application

A case for herbal practitioners constructing what constitutes evidence for the practice of WHM.

What did the study show regarding herbalists' empiric knowing?

What was the value placed on empiric knowing in relation to traditional knowing?

What is the relationship of empiric knowing to other ways of knowing?

The challenge of science as a way of knowing:

WHM is a dynamic integration of multiple ways of knowing in the application of whole complex herbal medicines to whole complex persons to promote self-healing, integration, and complexity or to 'put the person in the best condition for nature to act upon'.

What are the consequences of not intersecting WHM science and tradition?

Marginalization

Loss of social value

Failure to grow

Failure to preserve

Hybridization with pharmaceutical model resulting in a new science of herbs or botanical medicines.

What is the risk of losing our diversity of ways of knowing?

- **What is at risk if we fail to preserve the accumulated knowledge of traditional herbal medicine and to thoughtfully and skillfully evolve the practice using multiple ways of knowing?**

Moving Forward: Using multiple ways of knowing within the practice of herbal medicine to document practice and sustain what is unique to Western Herbal Medicine:

- Constructing a model of evidence for herbal medicine.
- Phenomenological approach to practice:
Getting to know each individual patient, from their point of view. What is meaningful for them and what is their life experience.
- Intersecting Science and Tradition.
- What are the variables and conditions of practice?
- Patient profiles (physically, attitudes, beliefs, social) will start to emerge and we can maybe see what herbs work with what people.

- Practitioner style and relationship factors that contribute to positive outcomes.

- The language of WHM and the evolution of tradition

Language of indications: alterative, adaptogen, anodyne, galactagogue, vulnerary, tonic, demulcent, cholagogue,

Language of intention: balance, tonic, support, move, cleanse, perturb

- Polyherb formulations.

What is the formula, How did we come to that formulation for that individual and why are we using these herbs.

- Outcomes:

Immediate, over time, global, local. Symptoms, root of problem, ground, subjective, objective, and constitutional.

What we don't know: time scales for outcomes, what does fit look like? How do we determine patient 'shift' or change? Is the client's perception of healthful outcomes the same as the practitioners?

- Building a collection of Case studies/reports

Case reports are professional narratives that outline the diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes of the problems of one or more patients. Information from case reports can be shared for clinical, scientific, or educational purposes. They provide the framework for early signals of effectiveness and harms. This is data—and can be integrated with the data from trials and other research.

Case Studies:

- Builds theory
- Communicates tradition
- Provides insight into state of the practice
- Provides meaningful, real-time, data-driven insights about what does or does not work, and for which patients.

In conclusion:

We don't want loose knowing diversity or the multiple ways of knowing used by herbal practitioners in the application of herbal medicine. By not constructing our own intersection with science we risk failing to preserve the accumulated knowledge that emerges from tradition, aesthetic or story, intuition, haptic, relationship, and spiritual knowing. Likewise, we don't want to fail to thoughtfully and skillfully evolve and grow the practice of WHM. This mandates finding, constructing, and intersecting common and shared ground between multiple ways of knowing. This is not the periphery. It is not the boundary. It is not a tangent. It is not a fleeting or temporary presence. It is the center of WHM.