

n-Allopathic Covid-19 Self-Management Practices Adopted by Rural Communities in Sri Lanka: Preliminary Findings from A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

COVID -19 pandemic is one of the biggest health crises the world has faced in recent years. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic communities had to rely mostly on public health preventive practices in order to safeguard themselves against the disease, particularly in the initial stages of the disease with limited therapeutic options. While the health authorities of Sri Lanka exercised evidence-based public health measures, we observed a tendency of the public to go beyond allopathic medicine. They adopted traditional knowledge, ayurvedic, and religious practices as preventative measures against COVID-19. The objective of this study was to explore non-allopathic self-management practices adopted by rural communities to safeguard physical and mental and social wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirty purposefully selected community members from Padaviya, Thalawa, and Nachchaduwa medical officer of health (MOH) areas of Anuradhapura District, Sri Lanka were invited to document their daily activities in a diary for a month, from May 2021 to June 2021 as a part of a larger ethnographic study (ECLIPSE). We received twenty-seven diaries from twelve male and fifteen female participants. We conducted a thematic analysis with a special focus on COVID-19 related content. Religious and health practices adopted by the participants were identified in the analysis. Health practices included traditional knowledge and ayurvedic practices. A total of eleven non-allopathic preventative self-management practices were recognized and categorized under these themes and subthemes. Numerous religious, traditional and ayurvedic practices for mental, physical and social wellbeing are adopted in rural communities in Anuradhapura. Generating scientific evidence on the physical and psychological impact of these practices will be beneficial.

Keywords: *COVID-19, public health, qualitative research, non-allopathic medicine, diary study*

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