



What's in a name? Homeopaths battle for recognition in traditional communities

The lack of the correct term for a homeopath in vernacular languages confuses both patients and practitioners.

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Health and healing in African communities (or *eKasi*) is varied and is attuned to Africans' continuing belief in indigenous and spiritual ways of healing. Holistic ways of treatment, such as homeopathy, are often thought of as being similar to traditional healing, as they both focus on the holistic healing of a person on a mental, emotional and spiritual level.

The term "homeopathy" is often a barrier for practitioners to grow their businesses in these communities, as the word does not form part of the community's language. Homeopaths are often mistaken for traditional healers.

"When seeing the medicines dispensed to them, patients who consult homeopaths regard the homeopath as a medical doctor who is also an indigenous healer," says Tebogo Kgope.

Homeopaths themselves have trouble in describing their occupation in their own indigenous languages. When asked for a name to describe themselves, homeopaths come up with various words, which often contradict each other. One has even used the term *igqirha* in Xhosa, which means "indigenous healer".



Caption: The right language can promote the practice of homeopathy.

"If the proper terms for occupations such as homeopaths could be developed, practitioners would be able to grow their businesses effectively in traditional communities," says Kgope. "It is also

important to keep in mind that it is not a bad thing for a homeopath to be trained as an indigenous healer as well."

