

Aspects of Indigenous Medicine in South Western Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The Yoruba people are one of the most popular ethnicities in Nigeria. This is with respect to culture and general education. Their relatively recent ancestors contributed significantly to the evolution of facets of the socio-cultural landscape of the New World. Most aspects of the ethnomedicine of the Yoruba are deeply rooted in spiritualism – reflecting the dual character of culture. The activities of *babalawo* – *Ifa* divination priest/medical man represent to a great extent, the spiritual component of the Yoruba indigenous medicine. On the other hand, those of the *onisegun* (the medical expert that relies almost exclusively on herbs and animals for preparing medicines) have to do with observational or empirical evidence. This is measurable! However, both categories unlike Western medical experts put more emphasis on illnesses than diseases (embedded in biological disorder). Training in indigenous medicine, is rigorous and time-consuming especially the *Ifa* divination system. But there is a great assurance of patronage after graduation. Indeed, many Yoruba people including those belonging to the Western medical fraternity still patronize the indigenous medical experts when faced with chronic health problems. Some diseases and the plants used for combating them are listed here. It seems to us that significant insights can be gained by closely embarking on an elaborate and long-term anthropological research on this ancient knowledge system. This would enable the Yoruba ethnomedicine to rise to a considerable rung of the ladder of health care on a global scale.