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# Bridging the Gap

Collaborating with  
Traditional Health  
Practitioners

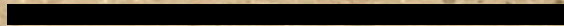
*Dr Gaynor Grace*

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# Outline

- Background
- Worldview differences
- Overview of Traditional Health Practitioners
- Projects
- Principles



# Indigenous herb workshops



# Health Practitioner Workshops





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# Worldview

A framework to interpret and make sense of reality



# Epistemology

*How do we know what we know*

## Western

- Visible reality
- Discounts spiritual realm
- Research and logic
- Written materials

## African

- Supernatural dimension
- Intuition
- Dreams and divination
- Oral tradition



# Traditional African Worldview

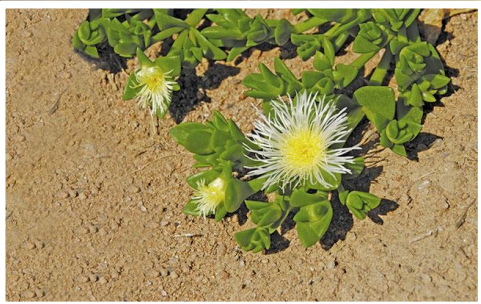
- *The world is full of persons, only some of whom are human*
- Soul/spirit can exist in animals, plants, minerals
- Everything is interconnected
- The spiritual realm can affect the physical realm
- Good person in respectful relationships with other persons



(Harvey 2006)

Self-identity is based on your  
relationship to others rather than any  
distinctive features of the self

***– I am because we are***





- Holistic - physical, mental, social, spiritual
- Illness – disruption of the balance in these areas
- Supernatural forces can impact on health
- Spiritual contamination – cleansing



*Why me? Why now? Who has sent this?*

*(Wreford 2009)*

# THPs in South Africa

- Estimated 200 000 – 300 000 THPs
- 72% of African population consult THPs
- Patients - range of ages, education levels, religions, occupations
- Highly respected by community



*(Mothibe and Sibanda 2019)*

*(Mander et al. 2007)*



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# Isangoma

- Predominantly women
  - Calling
  - Apprenticeship
-

# Core Competencies

## 1. Consultation skills

- Empathetic and patient-centred discussions
- Open, unbiased, honest communication
- Non-judgemental behaviour
- Identifying and observing ethical dilemmas in patient care
- Observing confidentiality



*(Nompumelelo et al. 2019)*

# Core Competencies Continued

## 2. Holistic patient care and treatment

- Ensuring complete wellbeing of patients
- Cultural, physical, emotional and psychological wellness

## 3. Integrative healing

- Integrate family into the healing process
- Conduct family counselling





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# Diagnosis by divination

- Throwing the bones
- Dreams
- Trance



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# Inyanga

- Predominantly male
  - Calling or choice
  - Herbal pharmacists
  - Focus on plants
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# Bush Doctors

- Predominantly male
- Western Cape
- Khoisan tradition “Bossie Dokters”
- Rastafari
- Nature is good, modernity is bad
- Previous gangsters



*(Philander 2012)*



# Definitions

## Co-operation

Promotion of better  
working  
relationships

## Collaboration

Co-operation  
between equal  
partners

## Integration

Formalising and  
incorporating into  
national health  
systems

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*(Leclerc-Madlala, Green, and  
Hallin 2016)*

# AIDSCAP 1992 Programme



- 28 THPs recruited nationwide (First generation)
- Weeklong workshop on HIV-related topics
- 630 second generation THPs trained by first generation THPs
- Second generation as well-trained as the first
- Condom demonstrations, educated patients about safe sex and HIV
- 229 320 estimated beneficiaries

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*(Green, Zokwe, and Dupree 1995)*

“...they only believed what they heard about HIV and AIDS when they heard it from their traditional healers.”

*(Leclerc-Madlala,  
Green, and Hallin 2016)*

**ANCIENT REMEDIES,  
NEW DISEASE:**



*Involving traditional  
healers in increasing  
access to AIDS care  
and prevention  
in East Africa*



**UNAIDS**  
UNICEF • UNDP • UNFPA • UNDP  
ECHO • UNESCO • WHO • WORLD BANK

**UNAIDS  
Case Study**  
**June 2002**

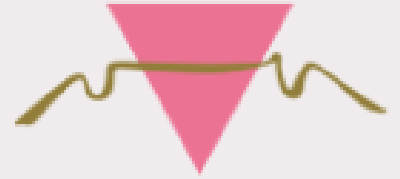
UNAIDS Best Practice Collection

# Tanga Aids Working Group

- Training
- Herbal medicines
- Research
- Joint home visits

*(King 2002)*

# Triangle project



*Thuli Mbete performs a ritual to help a gay patient (Toto 2023)*

*(Triangle Project 2021)*

“The *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (1998)* is based on the view that humans are rational beings.

An ethic of care, on the other hand, is based on the view that humans are relational beings.

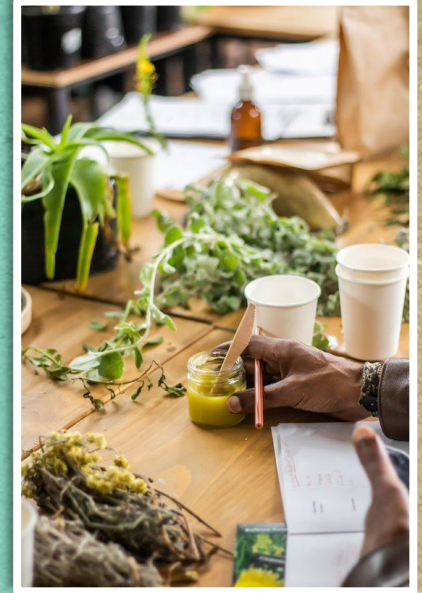
Being relational means that, at the forefront of decisions about what is right, are caring relationships with others.”



(Stuart 1998)

# Principles

- Building mutual respect
- Complementarity of the two systems
- Humility and transparency
- Adopting a comprehensive “training” approach
- Finding common ground
- Including monitoring and evaluation
- Intellectual property rights for indigenous knowledge holders



*(King 2006)*



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# THANKS

Do you have any questions?  
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