

Original Research Article

Cultural Perceptions and Treatment of Prostate Diseases in the Bapa Socio-Culture of Western Cameroon

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Abstract: *Objective:* The objective of this article is to analyze cultural perceptions, care, and treatment of prostate diseases in the Bapa cultural universe. *Methodology:* Qualitative methods were used to collect data through individual interviews, focus groups, and photographs taken in the village of Bapa, located in the Bangou district of the Hauts-Plateaux department in western Cameroon. *Results:* The data collected was analyzed using content analysis techniques, yielding several findings, namely that traditional Bapa therapists specialize in treating prostate diseases and that, among the Bapa people, prostate diseases have traditional, mystical, or natural causes. These causes determine the different treatment paths for patients and their families. Traditional therapies for prostatitis depend on the cause and are based on divination diagnoses and specific rituals. *Conclusion:* Prostate diseases are known and understood by traditional healers in the Bapa sociocultural group. Their knowledge can be used to reduce the prevalence of these diseases as a public health issue.

Keywords: Culture, Perceptions, Care, Prostate, Bapa.

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INTRODUCTION

The prostate is an odd-shaped male exocrine genital gland located in the pelvic cavity. It surrounds the initial portion of the prostatic urethra, is located at the junction of the urinary and genital tracts, and is part of the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis. (Bostwick DG, Qian J, *et al.*, 2014). Prostatitis refers to all pathological manifestations of the prostate. It generally refers to acute or chronic inflammation of the prostate of infectious or functional origin. According to Magri V, *et al.*, (2019), prostatitis encompasses a group of syndromes characterized by pelvic pain and urinary disorders, with or without identifiable bacterial infection. In the anthropological approach supported by this article, prostatitis is considered to be a set of disorders which, beyond the biomedical dimension, impact quality of life, perceptions of masculinity and sexuality, and are influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which patients live.

Prostate diseases, due to their increasing prevalence, constitute a public health problem. They mainly affect men over the age of 50, with prevalence

varying from country to country due to genetic, dietary, environmental, and cultural factors. Globally, prostate cancer is the second most common form of cancer in men, after lung cancer (Sung, H *et al.*, 2021). In the United States, for example, prostate cancer accounts for 13% of all male cancers, with an estimated prevalence rate of 112.6 per 100,000 men (American Cancer Society, 2021). In Canada, it is estimated that nearly 1 in 9 men will develop prostate cancer during their lifetime, and in 2023, the country recorded 24,000 new cases (Canadian Cancer Society, 2023). In Brazil, the disease accounts for approximately 29% of male cancers, with an estimated 65,840 cases in 2022 (National Cancer Institute (INCa). 2023).

In Europe, prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men, with approximately 450,000 new cases each year (Ferlay *et al.*, 2021). In France, there will be approximately 71,000 new cases in 2023, representing 26% of male cancers. Treatments combine surgery, radiotherapy, and hormone therapy, but the use of alternative medicine is on the rise (Inca, 2024). Similarly, in Germany, the incidence rate is 112.4 per

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100,000 men, with mortality declining thanks to systematic screening (Robert Koch Institute, 2022).

In Africa, as elsewhere, prostate diseases represent a growing public health challenge due to an aging population and a lack of early screening. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, the incidence rate is estimated at 24.7 per 100,000 men, and traditional therapeutic approaches remain widely used (Yao & Kouadio, 2021). In Gabon, according to the Ministry of Health (2023), there is a high prevalence in urban areas, with more than 500 cases detected in Libreville between 2019 and 2022.

In Cameroon, more than 5,000 new cases are recorded each year. It occurs in 80% of men in advanced age. Prostate diseases, particularly benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) and prostate cancer, are major causes of urological consultations in men over 50. The World Health Organization's strategy document emphasizes that in traditional medicine, certain prostate conditions are not treated in modern hospitals because their causes are attributed to so-called supernatural origins. The mortality rate linked to prostate cancer was estimated at 18.6 per 100,000 men in 2021, with limited access to specialized care in rural areas. The general epidemiological overview shows that prostate conditions, particularly benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) and cancer, account for a significant proportion of male morbidity. In most sub-Saharan African countries, prostate cancer remains one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers in men and is a major cause of mortality. These figures reveal a continuous increase in prostate diseases worldwide, highlighting the need for therapeutic and cultural strategies tailored to different sociocultural contexts.

From a cultural perspective, representations of prostate disease in Cameroon are marked by a plurality of interpretations. For many cultural groups, such as the Bapa, prostate symptoms may be associated with natural, personal, or traditional causes. These perceptions influence how individuals perceive their condition and guide their care pathways (Raymond, Masse, 1995).

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative method was used to collect secondary data through documentary research and

primary data through individual interviews, focus groups, and photographs taken in the village of Bapa, located in the Bangou district of the Hauts-Plateaux department in western Cameroon. Between March 2022 and July 2024, these interviews were conducted with members of the cultural group under study, traditional therapists in the village of Bapa, health personnel in the Bangou district health area, and people suffering from any prostate-related pathology encountered in the field, as well as members of the community. The data collected was analyzed using content analysis and iconographic analysis techniques. The methodological processes carried out led to the following results.

RESULTS

Diagnosis of Illness in the Bapa Sociocultural Context

In traditional medicine, as in biomedicine, diagnosis is one of the first steps a therapist takes when consulting with a patient for a case of morbidity. This step is crucial for the management and administration of care to the patient. In Bapa sociocultural society, as is the case in many rural African communities, traditional medicine is always the first alternative for care when faced with a persistent illness. This is the case with diseases affecting the male reproductive system, such as prostatitis. The diagnosis is therefore divinatory in nature and often performed by specialists locally known as Kem-nsi. These divination specialists in the Bamileke region in general, and among the Bapa in particular, work in conjunction with traditional therapists when they are not administering care to patients themselves. Divination thus makes it possible to identify the causes and etiology of the disease. For these specialists, even when the disease has a natural or biological cause that has been diagnosed and treated in hospital, there are aggravating circumstances linked to tradition that act as catalysts for the disease. It can therefore be identified as a curse linked to the transgression of certain traditional norms, the wrath of ancestors, or the behavior of the individual in society or within the family circle. In such cases, diviners recommend remedying the cause of the offense before proceeding with any form of treatment.

Among the Bapa people, divination involves objects with strong symbolic significance, and only the divine, who is an expert in these artifacts, can master and interpret the information and messages they provide.



Fig. 1: Illustrative photos of cultural elements used for divinatory diagnosis.

Source : Nouwou Dzalli Hervé William (2023).

The two iconographic elements (A and B) presented here are the tools used by the divination specialist to investigate the origin of evil. With each tool, the diviner proceeds using specific techniques.

In photo A, we see an ox horn with three porcupine quills and a stem of an unidentified plant, all attached by a piece of black leather to the open end of the horn. The whole thing is called a Tchagan in the local language. During the divination process, after pouring water into the horn, the specialist passes the Tchagan over the patient's genital area, then draws a circle around the patient's head, letting drops of water fall onto the patient's skull. The practitioner accompanies this process with ritual words. At the end, he reads the information that appears in the water contained inside the horn. In this way, he reveals his diagnosis and the path the patient must follow to find healing or relief from their illness.

In photo B, we can see shells locally known as Beem. Used for divination, these shells, usually nine in number, have the distinctive feature of being open or pierced at the bottom or base. The specialist begins by reciting ritual words during which he questions the origin of the illness. He then throws all of the shells onto a piece of cloth used for this exercise. The information is interpreted based on the position of the shells when they fall on the cloth. This is how the master diviner reveals the diagnosis of the illness and, of course, the course of treatment to be adopted. These divinatory practices, which aim to diagnose the causes and etiology of illness among the Bapa, also feed into the population's representations and perceptions of the causes of illness.

Cultural Causes of Prostatitis Diseases in the Bapa's Socioculture

Illness or health varies depending on whether it is defined biologically or culturally. In the biological approach, it is a state of ill health that reflects a functional imbalance in the body. It can be generalized throughout the body or target specific organs, as in the case of prostatitis. Culturally, illness or its cause can have multiple explanations. It is generally perceived as being linked to a transgression of cultural or cosmic laws, a failure to respect tradition, a disregard for the demands and requirements of ancestors, or a failure to apply certain family instructions in terms of norms. It therefore appears to be a punishment or a call to order (Nsangou Moustapha Mohamed, 2015). Among the Bapa people, prostate diseases are no exception to this clarification. Several people interviewed associated the origin of their disease with cultural or traditional causes. Among the latter, their illnesses are believed to be linked to a failure to follow the recommendations of their ancestors or deceased parents. This results in a curse from which the only way to be freed is to submit to the 'Ndou' ritual. This curse can therefore manifest itself through prostatitis. One patient interviewed explained the origin of his prostate cancer in these terms:

The main cause of my prostate cancer problem is that before they died, my parents repeatedly told me that I must not abandon them after their death. I should regularly make offerings to them and carry on the tradition for them. But since they died, I have neglected all of that. I never respected their decisions, I always strayed from their wishes. When a clairvoyant asked me to make a sacrifice for my parents, I refused, I didn't think it was important. The truth is that I didn't visit the village often, and when I fell ill, I went from hospital to hospital, but nothing worked. When I arrived here, we consulted a psychic, who revealed that it was also a curse. I am ashamed to say that most of the traditional remedies I have taken so far from traditional healers have brought me no relief. So I had to perform the Ndou ritual, and we started the treatment and things are already calming down. (Interview conducted on 07/15/24 with a patient interned at a healer-clairvoyant in Bapa)

Between divination and ritual practices prior to treatment, this account shows that individuals in the Bapa community remain tied to tradition and are obliged to submit to its demands. The dead influence the lives of the living to such an extent that they subject them to punitive situations that manifest themselves in different and diverse ways. Mbonji Edjenguélè (2006) emphasizes that in African cultures, the dead are not simply "deceased" individuals devoid of any function, as indicated by the Latin etymology of the word. They have a real connection with the living and can influence their lives. It thus appears that this patient's illness is a punishment but also a reminder to behave. He must now submit to traditions and respect the wishes of his deceased parents to avoid any curse that could manifest itself through his health. These rituals therefore take precedence over any treatment, as indicated by the *Kem-nsi*.

Rituals of Expiation of Evil before Treatment among the Bapa

The practice of rituals in traditional therapeutic processes serves to break the evil bond and reconcile the sick person with the spiritual or cosmological entities responsible for the curse, of which the illness is a manifestation. Among traditional therapists and Bapa ritualists, after diagnosing and identifying the traditional cause of the illness, these rituals are performed before the patient begins treatment. They are expiatory in nature and there are several of them in Bapa socioculture. Their application depends on needs and circumstances. Here we describe in particular the most common rite encountered in the therapeutic processes for prostatitis. This is the *Tchidou* rite and the rallying chant ritual.

Tchidou Ritual and Expiation of the Ndou

The Tchidou ritual is an expiatory ritual among the Bapa people. It is practiced as part of the expiation of the *Ndou*, or curse. As such, its main purpose is to atone for the sins or illnesses that caused the patient's morbidity. In reality, in Bapa sociocultural society, the *Ndou* is a curse that can befall an individual as a result of transgressing taboos, disrespecting parents and the recommendations of ancestors, refusing to participate in traditional dances or rituals, refusing to wear the traditional hat or sit on a traditional chair. The *Ndou* can also strike individuals who commit injustices in the village, such as giving false testimony, misappropriating land, causing disorder in the family, etc. Individuals who engage in this type of behavior will then fall victim to the wrath of the founding ancestors, which manifests itself in men through infections or prostate dysfunction. When the illness occurs and the divinatory diagnosis reveals causes related to the presence of the *Ndou*, the *Tchidou* ritual must be performed before any therapeutic action is taken.

The *Tchidou* ritual then expiates the sins of the sick person and cancels the *Ndou*, the curse. It also cleanses and restores the relationship between the sick person and their ancestors, and between the sick person and their community. The practice of this rite involves a number of natural elements, namely red palm oil, cooking salt (which has not yet been used for cooking) and jujube. Once these elements have been gathered, the officiant of the rite goes to the skull hut of the sick person's family and performs the ritual. After the therapist has recited the ritual words, the sick person is asked to confess by reciting specific words as instructed by the practitioner. The oil and salt are then poured onto the skulls of the sick person's ancestors. Back at the therapist's home, these two elements, along with the jujubes, are poured onto the ground in a specific arrangement whose meaning and significance are known only to the therapist. The following iconographic element shows these components and their arrangement on the floor of the therapist's courtyard.



Fig. 2: Representative photo of salt, jujubes, and red oil poured during the Tchidou ritual.

Source : Nouwou Dzalli Hervé William (2023).

As can be seen in the image, the mixture of oil, salt, and jujubes is poured onto the ground in the traditional healer's compound as a sign of respect and mediation with the ancestors to implore their intervention in expiating evil and paving the way for the sick person's recovery. The sign of the cross that can be seen is evidence of syncretism between the church and traditional religion among the Bapa people, as in the entire Bamiléké region of western Cameroon.

Rallying Songs as a Purification Ritual

The rallying song is a form of appeal or reminder to the ancestors when faced with unfortunate or happy events in the community. In therapeutic processes,

it takes the form of lamentations during which the family calls on the ancestors to intercede with God for the healing of the sick person. A traditional therapist explains the importance of these songs in the therapeutic process.

We have the rallying song, which can be sung in happy situations as well as unhappy ones. The most important thing is the words that are sung in these songs. Some behaviors and mistakes in community life are committed out of ignorance. It is therefore important to assist the sick person with this ritual of supplication singing. It facilitates healing, and through these songs, the ancestors hear the cries and

intervene." (Interview conducted on February 5, 2022, with a therapist and kem-nsi in Bapa)

Kem-nsi maintains that there are therapeutic rituals performed using songs that must be sung by the family members of the sick person. These rallying songs are performed to alleviate the suffering of the sick. The principle behind performing these songs is to communicate with the ancestors so that they can have a positive influence on the lives of their descendants. Therefore, singing this song during treatment, whether biomedical or traditional, facilitates healing. Those who listen to it may feel that it is simply an admission of the wrongs committed by the sick person, but it is actually a call for the ancestors to intervene. The various rites and rituals thus pave the way for the application of care with certainty of healing. From then on, the ancestors are mobilized through these rites and treatments can be administered with complete peace of mind.

Traditional Therapies for Prostate Diseases among the Bapa

In the therapeutic process among the Bapa, the administration of hospital or traditional care is the final stage. It comes after divination or divinatory diagnosis and the performance of rites, as presented in the previous sections of this paper. In reality, it should be emphasized that this process is necessary when the disease resists the treatments that would have been administered once the disease was reported. In today's society, advances in biomedicine make it easy to identify disease in health facilities. Once the disease is diagnosed in the hospital, the patient is immediately put on treatment. It is only when the treatment is ineffective or unsatisfactory, or when the patient's condition continues to deteriorate, that the communities or family members of the sick call on the panel of traditional specialists (soothsayers, kem-nsi, traditional healers, guardians of the skull house, etc.) available in the village. This is when divination, rituals, and finally therapy or the resumption of therapeutic care come into play. Here we will present some of the plants used for traditional medicine treatments among the Bapa.

***Keepnouw* bark or Yellow Sticks**



Fig. 3:

Source : Nouwou Dzalli Hervé William (2023).

Keepnouw or Yellow Stick is used to treat cancer. It is also used to treat prostatitis, especially in cases of prostate cancer. According to traditional therapists, this bark acts quickly to destroy metastatic cells and inflammation caused by the disease. It should be noted that the use of this medicine is preceded by meditation exercises performed by the patient each time they are about to use their treatment. In this meditation, it is often suggested to meditate on the behaviors or transgressions that may have led to the curse manifested by their illness. As for the dosage, grind the bark in a

mortar, then soak it in 10 liters of water for a few hours. Next, boil the mixture and let it cool. Once it has cooled completely, divide the medicine in half and set aside one half for a purification bath that the patient will take every evening before bed for nine days. The other part must be filtered, and the patient must drink a glass morning and evening until complete relief. The process can be repeated several times until the patient recovers. However, if the patient's condition does not improve, the medicine can be changed and replaced with another.

Koukoukue or Twins' Cane



Fig. 4

Source : Nouwou Dzalli Hervé William (2023).

The plant known as *Koukoukue* in the local language, or Twin Cane, is a medicinal plant widely used in communities in western Cameroon. Used in various forms, it is renowned for its specific effects on pain associated with prostatitis. Its use is governed by specific traditional prescriptions. Among the Bapa people, its ingestion requires prior spiritual preparation, including confession or ritual accompaniment, under the supervision of a guide or an initiate in traditional medicine, or a kem-nsi. The use of this plant is prohibited in the presence of other treatments that only specialists are familiar with. For example, it can reduce or negate the effectiveness of other medications. Its use must comply with certain symbolic protocols, failure to observe which can have spiritual consequences. In the

treatment of prostatitis, the plant plays a purifying role by eliminating toxins accumulated in the diseased organ, which helps to strengthen its vitality. It is also associated with stimulating fertility by improving the quality and quantity of sperm. As for dosage, there are several methods of administration. In general, the stems are first cut into small pieces without removing the leaves. They are then boiled in a sufficient quantity of water (10 to 15 liters) and left to cool. The patient will use this for daily therapeutic baths. They will then drink a glass in the morning and evening for about ten days. Finally, using a bulb syringe, the patient will perform rectal purges one to three times a week.

Aloe Vera Harvested in Sacred Places



Fig. 5

Source : Nouwou Dzalli Hervé William (2023).

Aloe vera is known for its anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and healing properties, making it

particularly suitable for treating the symptoms of prostatitis (pelvic pain, urinary problems, general

discomfort). It helps to soothe inflammation of the prostate, improve urination, and support the immune system. Sacred places, meanwhile, play a symbolic therapeutic role. They allow for spiritual reconnection with ancestors, release of negative energies, and rebalancing of the body and mind. The treatment of diseases such as prostatitis among the Bapa is thus part of a holistic framework, where nature, culture, and spirituality interact coherently to produce healing. Among the Bapa people, aloe vera is used in the treatment of prostate cancer. It is best used fresh, as this preserves its active ingredients and vital energy in an

optimal way. In practical terms, the aloe leaves are cut, crushed, and then their juice is extracted, collected, and mixed with drinking water. The mixture is stored in a clean bottle to ferment for about 48 hours. The patient will drink one glass of this fermented mixture in the morning and evening. For optimal treatment, it is sometimes cooked with other plant barks to enhance its therapeutic effects, particularly in cases of chronic prostatitis.

Loungkree (Raffia Wine), Log (Yellow Cucumber), Sahloungree (Bétin)

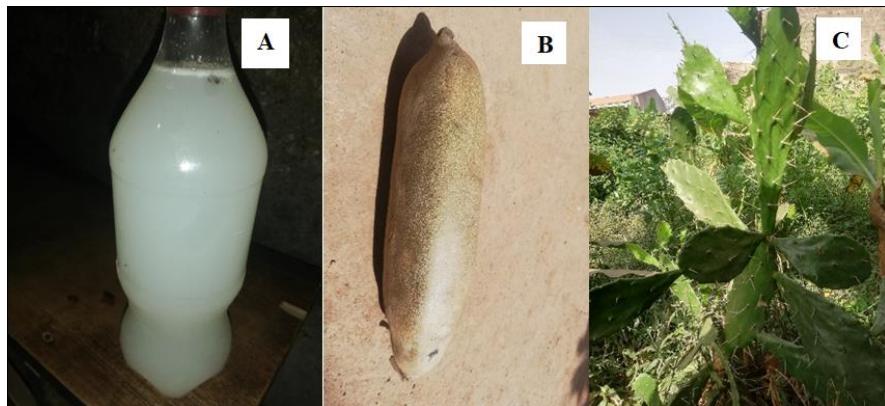


Fig. 6

Source : Nouwou Dzalli Hervé William (2023).

Plants, fruits, and remedies used in the treatment of prostate diseases among the Bapa people: Sahloungre (Bétin), log (yellow cucumber), and raffia wine (loungkree) play an important role in the treatment of prostate diseases. They can be found in the great sacred forest of the Bapa people. Each of these plants has specific properties for combating diseases due to their active ingredients, which take effect after cooking and consumption for at least three weeks to produce incredible results.

Raffia wine (image A), also known as "Loungkree" in the Bamileke region, is a key product in the traditional pharmacopoeia of western Cameroon. A white, odorless, alcohol-free liquid, it is made from the raffia palm, a tree native to the region. Its extraction requires a combination of technical skills, ritual prescriptions, and knowledge passed down through initiation. Harvesting Loungkree is recognized as a delicate operation, requiring not only extensive training but also strict adherence to the prohibitions surrounding the tree, its roots, and the conditions under which it may be felled. After cutting the raffia, the extraction specialist waits until nightfall to drill holes in the tree trunk and attach containers to collect the liquid. Before leaving the site, he covers the area with banana leaves, vines, and grass to prevent animals from entering. During this act, he recites ritual words for the protection, blessing, and healing of the sick person. He also throws jujubes, salt, and cola nuts to seek the approval of the ancestors, whose invisible signs validate or invalidate the continuation of

the treatment. Once the ancestral agreement has been established, the patient begins the raffia wine cure. One glass twice a day, in the morning after breakfast and in the evening before bedtime, for seven to nine days. In local medicine, Loungkree is renowned for its properties of cleansing the body, restoring physical fitness, reducing fatigue, and improving cognitive abilities. The treatment also incorporates a spiritual dimension, in that the patient must wash with a mixture of water, salt, and raffia wine for a specified period (3, 7, or 9 days). These baths, taken at specific times, are intended to erase curses, mystical attacks, or the effects of social transgressions.

The *log* or yellow cucumber (Image B) is a yellow fruit that comes from a fruit tree found among the Bapa people and in surrounding villages. This tree grows mainly on clay soils and in humid valleys. This fruit has medicinal uses and plays an important role in local therapeutic and ritual practices. It has three essential functions: eradicating internal infections, purifying the effects of rituals, and maintaining respect for taboos. These taboos structure the relationship between humans and nature. It is strictly forbidden to pick the fruit with bare hands, climb the tree, loiter around it at night, or harbor negative thoughts about it. To heal the sick, a stick, stone, or piece of iron is thrown as a sign of respect for the tree. The *log* is also surrounded by numerous social and sexual restrictions: pregnant women or women who are menstruating must not go near it, or they risk experiencing cycle disorders or difficulties during

childbirth. The fruit must remain outside homes because it protects dwellings from mystical birds and snakes. It is also believed to purify the negative thoughts of anyone who approaches it. Violating these prohibitions can have serious consequences. A man or boy who touches the fruit risks becoming sterile or giving birth to children with sensory impairments. The sick person is also not allowed to eat this fruit without first performing purification and meditation rituals. These practices aim to neutralize negative feelings such as jealousy, hatred, or malice, and to restore harmony with ancestors. Therapeutically, *Log* is boiled when fresh. When dry, it is reduced to ash or charcoal, mixed with water, and consumed at a rate of two spoonfuls per day for nine days. This treatment aims to regenerate cells, increase blood volume, improve digestion and urination, and promote urinary circulation. The patient must also maintain daily contact with their ancestors by offering jujubes and cola nuts.

Sahloungree (image C) is a rare plant found in the sacred forests of western Cameroon. It is recognizable by its green color mixed with gray and its thin, sharp white thorns, similar to needles. This plant has both physical and spiritual properties that distinguish it in the traditional therapeutic practices of the Bapa. Used exclusively when fresh, it cannot be dried or cut, as its dense and active internal sap prevents any process of

desiccation. Its therapeutic effectiveness lies in the immediate use of its freshness, which is essential for preserving its active ingredients. Among the Bapa, the handling of Sahloungree is regulated. The sick person is not allowed to touch the plant with their bare hands, except after performing a purification ritual. It may only be handled by an initiated member of the family or a recognized traditional practitioner or member of a secret society. Therapeutically, Sahloungree is used for its purifying properties. Its purifying function is expressed through the elimination of bodily waste via sweat, feces, and urine. At the same time, its power to break spells acts on curses and mystical attacks. Its whitish sap, often compared to human milk, is applied to the patient's body after bathing, particularly to swollen areas of the testicles in cases of prostate disease. This ritual promotes the regeneration of the body and the spiritual strengthening of the patient.

Dietary Habits and Prevention of Prostate Diseases in the Bapa Sociocultural Context

In Bapa socioculture, dietary habits are central to the prevention of prostate diseases. Here we present two foods that are commonly found in meals in Bapa countries: pistachio seeds and peanuts, which are part of the population's diet.

The Pistachio (*Djè*) and the Peanut (*Mbéyang*)



Fig. 7

Source : Nouwou Dzalli Hervé William (2022).

The pistachio, known locally as *Djè* (image A) in the Bapa community, plays an essential role in dietary and therapeutic practices related to prostate diseases. This white-fleshed fruit is part of a complex system where food, health, and spirituality converge. Before consumption, the seeds are shelled and their skins removed. Formerly reserved for the sick, particularly those suffering from prostate conditions, it was prepared by women but they were forbidden from eating it. It was used to revitalize the patient, restore their strength, and rebuild the balance weakened by the disease. Today, however, it is an integral part of the Bapa culinary and food system. This white-fleshed fruit occupies a central place in the dietary and therapeutic practices of the Bapa,

particularly in the prevention of prostate disorders. It is strongly recommended to consume pistachios raw. Considered a food derived from ancestral knowledge, pistachios have a strong symbolic value. In the past, its consumption was strictly reserved for sick people, particularly those suffering from prostate disorders. Although women were allowed to prepare it, they were not allowed to eat it. This dish is considered a sacred substance, dedicated to restoring patients and revitalizing their bodies. Nutritionally, pistachios contain protein, vitamins, and calcium, which are essential for male vitality and virility, particularly in relation to sperm production and motility. It is often prepared as a sauce or thick paste and incorporated into festive dishes or healing

rituals. Consuming pistachios helps cleanse the body's cells, support the nervous system, and strengthen erectile function. They also help regulate urinary functions, which is crucial for patients suffering from benign prostatic hyperplasia or prostatitis.

The peanut, locally known as *Mbéyang* (image B), is a fruit of great importance in the fight against prostate diseases. In culinary terms, peanuts can be eaten in all forms, raw, cooked, fresh, or dried, and require no processing. In cooking, they are pounded or crushed and used in a variety of dishes. This fruit is omnipresent in the diet of the Bapa people. In festive or ritual contexts, its consumption is associated with energy recovery, digestion, and the prevention of constipation and prostatitis. Nutritionally, peanuts are rich in protein, fat, calcium, and vitamins, particularly vitamins A, B, and C. These nutrients strengthen the body, revitalize sperm, and promote sperm production. In addition, they act as a natural cleanser of toxins accumulated around the kidneys, contributing to better blood circulation and slowing down metabolic disorders associated with prostate diseases. Beyond their nutritional virtues, pistachio and peanut seeds also have a mystical-therapeutic function. In certain spiritual treatments, they are roasted and then scattered around the concession or under the sick person's bed for two to three days, usually in the evening. The purpose of this ritual is to ward off harmful forces or mystical individuals who may harm the sick person. Thus, peanuts and pistachios become tools for protecting and purifying the living space of the sick.

DISCUSSION

Before discussing the results of this research, a summary of which is presented in this article, it is worth recalling the initial objective, which was to analyze cultural perceptions, care, and treatment of prostate diseases in the Bapa cultural universe. The subject of this article was formulated on the basis of data collected in the field, which was used to illustrate the points made throughout the paper. In other words, the results of this article are in line with our expectations. They provide new insights into the perception of disease by demonstrating how cultural representations of the causes of disease can influence the therapeutic approach for patients suffering from prostatitis in the Bapa cultural universe. The therapeutic approach in this cultural universe follows a linear process from diagnosis and rituals to therapy. It must be said that in a world where biomedicine and traditional medicine go hand in hand, medical collaboration becomes a necessity, an important factor in the fight against disease. In reality, cultural perceptions of disease inevitably influence therapeutic choices or the need for therapeutic combination. In the context of prostatitis among the Bapa people in western Cameroon, although the disease is initially diagnosed and treated in health facilities, it is clear that prostate diseases have a cultural origin. In this sociocultural context, the causes of the disease are explained by a set of factors related to culture and tradition rather than

biology. This requires a specific therapeutic approach based on local tradition. The patient is then taken over by traditional medicine specialists who make a divinatory diagnosis, perform appropriate rituals to break the ontological link with the evil, and then administer treatment. Based on the work of Nkouongnam Inoussa *et al.*, (2023) on the treatment of hemiplegia in the Bamoun cultural universe, we can say that the role of traditional medicine in the treatment and care of diseases remains relevant today. The place of this often-called alternative medicine should continue to be strengthened to improve the health of populations in line with the Alma Ata initiatives of 1978.

CONCLUSION

This article has presented perceptions surrounding the causes of prostate diseases. It has also presented a selected list of associated treatments in the Bapa cultural universe of western Cameroon. It appears that in this cultural group, prostate disease, despite having known biological explanations, is perceived as a punishment for transgressions of cultural and traditional norms in the community. As a result, the Bapa culture, through specialists in divination and traditional medicine, has developed treatments. Beyond the spiritual dimension, it should be noted that prostate diseases are known and understood by traditional therapists in the Bapa socioculture. These local therapists are actively involved in meeting the health needs of patients, whether they are from the village or elsewhere, according to their preferences and beliefs. Their knowledge can be used to reduce the prevalence of these diseases as a public health problem.

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