
PREFACE

Traditional healers are plentiful and culturally accepted health care providers throughout Africa and much of the developing world. Until recently, few traditional healers have been involved in primary eye care activities. Findings from existing collaborative programmes suggest that healers can be a positive force for community-based prevention of blindness.

The intent of this publication is twofold. Section 1 gives brief background information on traditional healers and explains why they should be involved in prevention of blindness activities. Section 2 gives specific recommendations for working with healers and may serve as a training manual.

This publication is a result of review of existing programme activities in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Nepal, and the September 10–12, 1997 International Symposium on Collaboration with Traditional Healers for the Prevention of Blindness (Blantyre, Malawi), organized by the British Columbia Centre for Epidemiologic and International Ophthalmology and the Lilongwe Central Hospital WHO Collaborating Centre for the Prevention of Blindness. The statement of consensus and recommendations arising from this symposium are given in Appendix A and a list of the participants is provided in Appendix B. The symposium was supported by the NGO Task Force for the Prevention of Blindness and co-sponsored by the World Health Organization. The editors would like to thank the NGO Task Force and WHO as well as the International Eye Foundation for their support of the symposium.