

XVII. COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (CAM)

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) defines CAM as “a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine. Complementary medicine is often used in conjunction with conventional medicine, and alternative medicine is used in place of conventional medicine” (<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam/>). CAM incorporates a variety of therapies and modalities.

Types of complementary and alternative medicine include the following:

- **Manipulative and body-based therapies** (e.g., acupressure, Alexander technique, chiropractic medicine, Feldenkrais method, massage therapy, neuromuscular therapy, osteopathy, reflexology, rolfing).
- **Alternate systems of medical practice** (e.g., acupuncture, ayurveda, community-based practices, environmental medicine, homeopathy, Native American medicine, naturopathic medicine, past life therapy, Shamanism, Tibetan medicine, traditional Oriental/Chinese medicine).
- **Biological therapies** (e.g., antioxidants, cell treatments, changes in lifestyle, chelation, diet, megavitamins, metabolic therapy, botanicals and herbs, nutritional supplements).
- **Energy medicine** (e.g., blue light treatment and artificial lighting, electroacupuncture, electrostimulation and neuromagnetic stimulation, magnetic therapy, magnetoresonance spectroscopy devices, reiki, therapeutic touch).
- **Mind/body interventions** (e.g., art therapy, aromatherapy, biofeedback, dance therapy, humor, hypnotherapy, meditation, music therapy, prayer, psychotherapy, relaxation, support groups, yoga).

There is much about health and healing that we do not yet know. Some evidence is available to support the use of some CAM therapies, for certain conditions. However, for the majority of such therapies the evidence is limited or lacking. The NIH funds multiple centers for CAM research in an effort to provide evidence or refute claims of various therapies.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use in Diabetes

Egede et al. (2002) showed that individuals with diabetes were 1.6 times more likely to use CAM than individuals without diabetes. Among people with diabetes, older age (≥ 65 years old) and higher education were independently associated with CAM use. Bell et al. (2006) further showed that CAM use was higher for people with diabetes than those without the disease. Female gender, higher education, western U.S. residence and having at least two chronic conditions were associated with a greater use of CAM. Except for diet-based therapies, most CAM use by people with diabetes was related to non-diabetes conditions. According to Garrow and Egede (2006), 48% of adults with diabetes use some form of CAM and the use of CAM appears to be associated with increased use of preventive services, emergency care, and primary care visits. Thus CAM use may not be a barrier toward using allopathic medicine in adults with diabetes. The most common CAM therapies used were nutritional and lifestyle advice, prayer, herbal remedies, massage, and mind-body techniques.

Health Care Team and Complementary and Alternative Medicine

The health care team has a responsibility to be aware of all forms of therapies that patients are using. It is important to try to understand different approaches to health and help patients in making informed and safe choices. Patients will often not tell about CAM therapies they use. It is up to the health care team to ask about CAM as part of the history taking process. Points to keep in mind in order to discuss CAM effectively with patients:

- Ask about use; be specific about the different therapies.
- Avoid dismissing CAM, which may discourage the patient from discussing the actual use; patients can be concerned about the response from the health care team.

- Understand the rationale for the health care choices the patient makes as this may provide insight into the health goals for the patient.
- Be aware of and explain to patients that information on the Internet is varied and can be unreliable.
- Be prepared to discuss the different therapies including risks and benefits.

A common misconception is that a “natural” product will be safe. Encourage patients to obtain information about a particular therapy regarding efficacy, safety and potential harmful effects. Determine where biological therapies were purchased (over-the-counter, from a naturopath, etc.). Determine if Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) were used to make a product. The GMP label is used by the FDA and European Union as a label that is recognized worldwide for the control and management of manufacturing and quality control testing of foods and pharmaceutical products.

It is well known that there is a lack of reliable science-based information about nontraditional therapies and their effect on the human condition. It is difficult for the health care provider to be knowledgeable in all aspects of CAM. Thus, education and an open mind will benefit health care providers in learning more in assisting their patient to best practices.

Resources

For further information on CAM, visit the following websites:

NCCAM - <http://nccam.nih.gov/>

The Diabetes Unit to NCCAM - <http://nccam.nih.gov/research/intramural/diabetes-unit.htm>

National Institutes of Health Office for Dietary Supplements - <http://ods.od.nih.gov/index.aspx>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition: Overview of Dietary Supplements - <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/supplmnt.html>

The University of Michigan Integrative Medicine Program - <http://www.med.umich.edu/umim/research/cam.htm>

Columbia University Rosenthal Center for CAM - <http://www.rosenthal.hs.columbia.edu/>

Purdue University and University of Alabama-Birmingham Botanicals Research Center - <http://www.cfs.purdue.edu/fn/bot/>

University of Arizona Program of Integrative Medicine - <http://www.integrativemedicine.arizona.edu/index.html>

North Carolina Consortium on Natural Medicines - <http://www.naturalmedicinesofnc.org/>

Facts and Comparisons: The Review of Natural Products - <http://www.factsandcomparisons.com/Products/index.aspx?id=1053>

Herbal Medicine: Expanded Commission E Monographs - <http://abc.herbalgram.org/site/PageServer>

Natural Medicine Comprehensive Database - [http://www.naturaldatabase.com/\(S\(neqhonixjia3ep55jr2jppzj\)\)/home.aspx?cs=&s=ND](http://www.naturaldatabase.com/(S(neqhonixjia3ep55jr2jppzj))/home.aspx?cs=&s=ND)

The Center for Mind-Body Medicine - <http://www.cmbm.org/>

American Nutraceutical Association - <http://www.ana-jana.org/index.cfm?cfid=809349&cftoken=35454439>

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