

Research Paper

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) on Physical and Mental Well-being: The Doctors' Perspective

Ms. Hebah Fathima^{1*}, Ms. Thea Mathias², Dr. Sandra Sunitha Lobo³

ABSTRACT

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) refers to a group of diverse healthcare systems that are not a part of conventional (allopathic) medicine. In India, there is a high degree of reliance and cultural acceptability of CAM in favour of traditional systems of medicine. Patients using CAM and its associated adverse effects may be encountered by medical practitioners in their practice. It is imperative to assess the perception of CAM and Integrative medicine among doctors and their need for the inclusion of CAM in education and training. The exploratory study used a qualitative method to explore doctors' views of CAM and the rationales provided for the same. Focus group Discussion (FGD) via a Google Meet was done on a sample of eleven willing medical practitioners – seven males and four females with experience ranging 12-30 years. The results were analysed using narratives. Despite having differences in opinion, 36% of the respondents had a positive approach towards CAM. 54% of the doctors expressed that there exists no scientific articles on the efficacy of CAM in pharmacopeia. A fairly large number of doctors expressed their need for education and training in CAM. A large majority of the respondents expressed an integration of CAM with allopathic medicine.

Keywords: *Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), Focus Group Discussion (FGD)*

The National Policy on Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy, published in 2002, is an Indian policy on traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM). The National legislation on T&CM includes the Indian Medicines Central Council Act of 1970, the Homeopathy Central Council Act of 1973, and the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940. (amended in 2009). In 2014, a nationwide effort to integrate T&CM into national health service was launched. T&CM receives financing from the government and the public sector for research.

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) refers to a vast range of medicare, treatment regimen which has not been included with standard (allopathic) Western regimen.

¹Student (BA), School of Social Work, Roshni Nilaya, Mangaluru, Karnataka, India

²Student (BA), School of Social Work, Roshni Nilaya, Mangaluru, Karnataka, India

³Head, Department of Psychology, School of Social Work, Roshni Nilaya, Mangaluru, Karnataka, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: March 07, 2022; Revision Received: June 13, 2022; Accepted: June 30, 2022

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) on Physical and Mental Well-being: The Doctors' Perspective

It encompasses a broad array of restorative therapies from various modalities, techniques, and health systems. These can be offered as self-care or delivered by a skilled practitioner. Yoga, meditation, Ayurveda, traditional Chinese medicine, homoeopathy, naturopathy and a variety of other practises are all meant to facilitate in the healing of the body and mind.

CAM and its efficacy are still not part of the medical curriculum in India, despite the fact that it has been certified by the Indian government and is commonly accessible. As a result, the medical graduate may be oblivious of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). Health professionals may encounter patients who use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and their related side effects in their work. As a result, the study was needed to assess doctors' perspectives of CAM and Integrative medicine, as well as their need for CAM to be included in education and training.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A meta-analysis of the literature, as well as specific national surveys, show that doctors of various subspecialties are interested in complementary and alternative medicine. (Polley et al, 2007).

In an exploratory qualitative study on academic doctors' attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and its role in the NHS, Maha and Shaw (2007) found that professional experience shaped doctors' perspectives. Those who were enthusiastic about complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) were generally triggered by positive experiences with patients who had benefitted from it. As a result, they decided to pursue CAM education. Doctors who practised CAM praised the approach, which contrasted with the limits of normal consultations, when it came to the impact of CAM on their own practise.

A total of 233 physicians from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, responded to a Web-based survey by Wahner-Roedler DL et al. (2006). The survey focussed on their attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicine in general. It also highlighted their awareness of specific CAM therapies. 76% of doctors did not recommend their patients to any alternative medical clinician. Nevertheless, 44% expressed that they would recommend their patients if such a clinician were to be available in their medical centre. 57% of physicians felt that incorporating CAM therapies would improve the contentment of their cases. Around 48% of the physicians felt that their practice would be more successful with greater patient inflow if they were to offer alternative medicine. Most physicians believed that a few forms of CAM were useful to treat illnesses, however, they were hesitant to recommend them to their patients. The study emphasised the necessity of providing clinicians with easy access to evidence-based information about complementary and alternative medicine.

According to Roy et al. (2015), medical practitioners who had used complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) themselves were more likely to recommend it to their patients (52%) and inquire about it from patients (37%) than those who had not. Sixty percent of patients used complementary and alternative medicine in addition to allopathic medicine. Only 7% of patients were asked about CAM use by their doctors, and only 19% of patients proactively disclosed to their doctors about the CAM they were using.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) on Physical and Mental Well-being: The Doctors' Perspective

Sirois et al. (2016) discovered that both psychological and behavioural markers of CAM use are associated to confidence in the efficacy of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). They perceived a fit between one's health-care ideals and CAM. The results offered early evidence for an updated paradigm in which CAM use is viewed as a multi-dimensional health condition with behavioural manifestations.

Telles et al (2011) conducted a cross-sectional study with 295 physicians aged 20-60 years who were trained in Ayurveda, homoeopathy, conventional medicine and naturopathy. Besides, these physicians attended a 4-day residential programme on Indian culture. Both conventionally trained and CAM clinicians were evenly likely to prescribe complementary and alternative medicine to their patients. The strong motives in recommending CAM were (1) the belief that it tackles the main ground of the problem (2) their conviction of the medication. The survey's limitation was that it failed to explain the strong grounds for this belief.

In 2012, Awad and colleagues conducted a descriptive and cross-sectional study on a randomly selected sample of 250 students in Kuwait University's Faculties of Medicine and Pharmacy. A pre-tested questionnaire was administered to determine the awareness, effectiveness and hazards of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) practice. The other variables of study included general attitude towards CAM and the requirement for education on the same. The data was analyzed using descriptive and logistic regression approaches. 88.4% was the completion rate for the survey. 55.2% students used CAM and female students used it the most. Herbal products were by far the most popular (83, 37.6%). Even among those who claimed to know the most about 11 CAM modalities, knowledge was frequently lacking. 58 pharmacy students (49.2%) had much more knowledge of herbal goods than 32 medical students (31.4%). Positive attitudes about complementary and alternative medicine were prevalent, with 176 (79.7%) stating that it has ideas and practises that mainstream treatment may learn from. Herbal items (37.6%), massage (24.4%), nutritional supplements or prayer/Qur'an recitation (23.1%) were the most regularly used CAM modalities among students, aromatherapy and music with 10.9% and 7.7% respectively were not regularly used.

Acupuncture, cauterization and hypnosis were least used modalities. Lack of competent individuals and a lack of scientific proof were the two most common perceived hurdles to CAM deployment. Knowing about complementary and alternative medicine was vital for future healthcare providers, according to 198 respondents (89.6%).

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised of eleven willing medical practitioners – seven males and four females with experience ranging 12-30 years.

Procedure

A qualitative approach was adopted to assess the perception of Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and Integrative medicine among doctors and their desire for the integration of CAM in education and training. Focus group Discussion (FGD) through a Google Meet was done on the sample of eleven willing medical. Narrative interviews and a few multiple choice questions were used to acquire qualitative data.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) on Physical and Mental Well-being: The Doctors' Perspective

The moderator and assistant moderator introduced themselves and offered a brief summary of the focus group's principal purpose during the introductory round. Each one presented themselves, their work speciality, and years of experience in the field of medicine after getting their consent. The entire debate was videotaped and transcribed, and six questions were raised.

RESULTS

Results are analyzed using narratives.

The Results are structured according to the preliminary details of the participants and to each of the questions posed.

Table 1 showing the profile of the participants.

SN	Age in years	Gender	Religion	Specialization	Years of experience
1	36	Male	Hindu	Community medicine	12
2	54	Male	Atheist	Psychiatry	30
3	42	Female	Hindu	Anaesthesia	13
4	48	Male	Hindu	Pharmacology	21
5	46	Male	Sanathana dharma	Clinical Microbiology	22
6	41	Female	Hindu	Oral medicine	13
7	41	Female	Muslim	Prosthodontics	18
8	48	Male	Hindu	Public Health	20
9	49	Female	Hindu	Maxillofacial Surgery	25
10	48	Male	Indian	Surgery	15
11	54	Male	Muslim	Pediatrics	30

What is your perspective of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in relation to Allopathic medicine?

There were varying responses given by the participants with 36% of the respondents who had a positive approach towards CAM.

"It's balanced. CAM could help for chronic disease states". (Participant 3, F).

"For acute conditions: my answer would be negative. For chronic conditions: positive. It's not true that they are free of adverse effects." (Participant 4, M).

"Undecided. There is hardly anyone who practices pure alternative medicine. Many uses modern medicines in disguise of alternative medicine" (Participant 5, M)

Highlight your perspectives of evidence base for complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)?

"Useful for diabetic foot treatment, for Rheumatic disease, chronic skin lesions" (Participant 3, F)

"Yet to be built up. As of now evidence is not much. Government is providing lot of funding hence evidence synthesis is not difficult. Difficult to accept without well designed scientific studies" (Participant 4, M).

"More research has to be carried out to prove the effectiveness of CAM" (Participant 7, F)

"Alternative medicine (Ayurveda/ Homeopathy) may be effective in treating a number of mild health problems and preventing diseases. Complementary medicine may improve the

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) on Physical and Mental Well-being: The Doctors' Perspective

health and wellness of the person when used along with traditional medicine. However, there is enough research/ clinical trials to support their safety". (Participant 9, F)

There are no scientific articles on the efficacy of CAM in pharmacopoeia, according to 54% of doctors. This is in agreement with Barnes (2003), who stated that supplementary medications are not ineffective, but that more rigorous clinical research and comprehensive surveillance of their use are needed. Complementary medicine pharmacovigilance is still in its infancy.

Is there a need for education and training in CAM? Provide reasons.

The participants had varied responses. A large majority of the participants (63.6%) felt a strong need for education and training in CAM. 9% felt no such need for education and training in CAM.

"Community should be made aware of risk and benefits" (Participant 1, M)

"Only scientifically accepted facts should be taught. Not pseudoscience and findings from research with poor methodology" (Participant 2, M)

"Without a proper basis, it's unwise to practice CAM" (Participant 4, M).

"Formal training on CAM is lacking and is not at par with modern medicine" (Participant 5, M).

"We must not promote unscientific things" (Participant 6, F)

"There is lack of awareness among the public about non-surgical methods of treatment" (Participant 7, F)

"It is always better to know more about CAM if it is going to benefit our patients" (Participant 9, F)

According to Roy et al. (2015), a modification in medical curriculum is urgently needed to include sensitization of medical graduates toward complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) so as to better grasp the ramifications of its use among patients. CAM and biological perspectives are frequently misaligned. In 2018, Agarwal's research advised that CAM content be incorporated into allopathic medical education and clinical practice.

Have you encountered patients with temporary worsening of symptoms following concurrent use of CAM? Elaborate.

A large majority of the respondents responded in the affirmative.

"Lots. Patients end up with liver and renal failure after long term CAM" (Participant 1, M)

"No" (Participant 3, F)

"Not Applicable" (Participant 4, M)

"Yes. Gall bladder stones, lead poisoning, steroid dependence" (Participant 5, M)

"Yes. Few cases in my practice due to poor application of CAM" (Participant 8, M)

"Yes, we face this problem routinely in our practice, especially cancer patients come for treatment after trying all the alternative medicines" (Participant 9, F)

"Yes, Cancer and fracture cases" (Participant 10, M)

Have you ever discussed CAM during consultation with your patients? Provide reasons.

The answers by the participants varied. 36% of the respondents discussed CAM with their patients, another 36% of the respondents discussed the same only sometimes with their patients.

"I keep telling them about hazards of CAM" (Participant 1, M)

"Drugs in CAM could interfere with Anesthesia" (Participant 3, F)

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) on Physical and Mental Well-being: The Doctors' Perspective

"Not applicable" (Participant 4, M).

"When they present themselves with unusual symptoms" (Participant 5, M).

"When reinforced patients agree" (Participant 6, F)

"My specialization cannot be treated with CAM" (Participant 7, F)

"Depending on the disease" (Participant 8, M)

"I do recommend CAM along with traditional medicine" (Participant 9, F)

"It does not help" (Participant 10, M)

"Some patients don't want medications" (Participant 11, M)

The above replies are consistent with Maha and Shaw (2007) findings, which categorize doctors' attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicine into three groups: 'enthusiasts', 'skeptics', and 'undecided.' The drugs in CAM interfere with the usage of anesthesia during surgery (Prosthodontics) and medical treatment of ailments. Their attitudes on CAM were based on a range of rationales, one of which being the lack of scientific proof. The respondents even stated that their patients utilize complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) to supplement rather than replace conventional health care (Astin, 1998).

What is your take on Integrative medicine?

"Good for patients and society provided there is good scientific data for the same"

(Participant 1, M)

"Modern medicine is integrated; it accepts scientifically proven treatments from all modalities"

(Participant 2, M)

"There needs to be an awareness campaign for the public. Both forms of medicine should come

together" (Participant 3, F)

"Should be the next step" (Participant 4, M).

"I have a very positive approach towards integrative medicine. There are many health problems which can be treated without surgery and minimal approach with integrated medicine" (Participant 7, F)

"It should be integrated" (Participant 8, M)

"May benefit the patient" (Participant 9, F)

"Not practical" (Participant 11, M)

The vast majority of respondents stated that CAM and allopathic medicine should be integrated. Medical practitioners felt that medical students needed to be exposed to various systems of medicine in order to improve India's overall healthcare.

DISCUSSION

The study's participants, aged 36 to 54, showed scepticism toward CAM in their daily practise. Offering complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) to patients may improve patients' treatment options and perhaps raise doctors' satisfaction with their work. The Medical Council of India's adoption of the updated undergraduate medical education curriculum will enable every Indian medical graduate to understand "health for all" as a national aim and appreciate the reason for multiple treatment modalities as an institutional goal. However, given the doctors' frequent concerns about a lack of scientific proof in this study, opinions about the evidence base may continue to be a significant barrier to further

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) on Physical and Mental Well-being: The Doctors' Perspective

CAM incorporation. More study on the usefulness of integrative medicine is needed, as is the integration of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in education and training.

REFERENCES

- Agarwal, V. (2018). Complementary and alternative medicine provider knowledge discourse on holistic health. *Frontiers in Communication*, 3, 15.
- Astin, J. A. (1998). Why patients use alternative medicine: results of a national study. *Jama*, 279(19), 1548–1553.
- Awad A. I, Al-Ajmi. S, Waheedi, M. A. (2012). Knowledge, Perceptions and Attitudes toward Complementary and Alternative Therapies among Kuwaiti Medical and Pharmacy Students. *Medical Principles & Practice*. 21(4), 350–354.
- Barnes, J. (2003). Quality, efficacy and safety of complementary medicines: fashions, facts and the future. Part I. Regulation and quality. *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, 55(3), 226–233.
- Barrett, S. (2005). Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the United States. *Medscape General Medicine*, 7(4), 17.
- Fountain-Polley, S., Kawai, G., Goldstein, A., & Ninan, T. (2007). Knowledge and exposure to complementary and alternative medicine in paediatric doctors: a questionnaire survey. *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 7(1), 1–5.
- Maha, N., & Shaw, A. (2007). Academic doctors' views of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and its role within the NHS: an exploratory qualitative study. *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 7(1), 1–11.
- Mishra, S. K., Trikamji, B., & Togneri, E. (2015). Complementary and alternative medicine in chronic neurological pain. *Indian Journal of Pain*, 29(2), 73–81.
- Roy, V., Gupta, M., & Ghosh, R. K. (2015). Perception, attitude and usage of complementary and alternative medicine among doctors and patients in a tertiary care hospital in India. *Indian Journal of Pharmacology*, 47(2), 137–142.
- Sirois, F. M., Salamonsen, A., & Kristoffersen, A. E. (2016). Reasons for continuing use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) in students: a consumer commitment model. *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 16(1), 1–9.
- Telles, S., Gaur, V., Sharma, S., & Balkrishna, A. (2011). Attitude of conventional and CAM physicians toward CAM in India. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 17(11), 1069–1073.
- Wahner-Roedler DL, Vincent A, Elkin PL, Loehrer LL, Cha SS, Bauer BA. (2006). Physicians' attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicine and their knowledge of specific therapies: a survey at an academic medical center. *Evidence Based Complementary Alternative Medicine*, 3(4):495–501.
- World Health Organization. (2019). *WHO Global Report on Traditional and Complementary Medicine 2019*. World Health Organization.

Acknowledgement

The authors appreciate all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Fathima H., Mathias T.& Lobo S. S. (2022). Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) on Physical and Mental Well-being: The Doctors' Perspective. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(2), 634-640. DIP:18.01.064.20221002, DOI:10.25215/1002.064