

The Role of Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Emerging Health Issues

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Short Communication

Complementary Medicine refers to medical practices that are used alongside conventional treatments but are not considered part of mainstream medicine, such as herbal remedies, acupuncture, and chiropractic care. Over the recent years, infertility has ascended to the ranks of the third most prevalent public health concern, trailing only cardio-cerebrovascular ailments and tumors. A recent study by Feng et al [1] discusses the phenomenon of female infertility, characterized as a fertility disorder arising from multiple causative or etiological factors. The increasing prevalence of female infertility is attributed to diverse factors that include societal pressures, delayed marriage, resulting in adverse consequences encompassing economic strain, psychological distress, and potential marital discord. Conventional treatments, such as hormone therapy, in vitro fertilization, and embryo transfer, are noted for their suboptimal obstetric outcomes and potential complications and adverse effects. The study emphasizes that complementary and alternative medicine has emerged as a novel approach for infertility treatment, challenging traditional therapies. These medicines provide a holistic approach to restore and harmonize the female physiological equilibrium, thus asserting improved therapeutic outcomes. The adoption of CAM by infertile women has been rising lately; however, there are certain reservations and controversies. Randomized controlled trials have produced contradictory evidence regarding the efficacy of CAM in treating infertility, and a consensus on its mechanism of action remains elusive. In this regard Feng et al [1]. conducted a comprehensive systematic review of the literature on CAM's treatment of female infertility, based on the published literature. The review primarily delves into acupuncture, moxibustion, and oral Chinese herbal medicine, while also briefly exploring psychological interventions, bio similar electrical stimulation, homeopathy and hyperbaric oxygen therapy. The review study also mentions ancillary methodologies like enema therapy and psychological intervention. Yet, limitations persist within the CAM domain for infertility, encompassing scanty sample sizes, suboptimal quality, and a dearth of standardized protocols. These factors collectively impede the substantiation of

CAM's effectiveness. Consequently, the anticipation hinges on the emergence of meticulously conducted high-calibre studies in the domain of CAM's role in infertility treatment.

A review by Alsharif [2]. addresses the utilization of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) among cancer patients in Saudi Arabia, while highlighting the demographic distribution, prevalence rates, and motives for CAM adoption. The scarcity of studies in Arab countries investigating CAM use and motivations among cancer patients was observed by the study. The authors conducted an extensive literature search across five scientific databases spanning across a decade and noted that the collective prevalence of CAM use among cancer patients ranged from 25 to 80% for cancer treatment. Among CAM modalities, natural products such as vitamins, minerals, herbs, and relaxation techniques were most frequently employed. Patients cited the beneficial effects on recovery, healing, and health enhancement as reasons for CAM adoption. The utilization of CAM was interpreted as an exploratory endeavor, a coping mechanism, or an expression of unmet needs within the cancer care continuum. Effective healthcare provider-patient communication is highlighted as essential to foster a trustworthy relationship. In clinical practice, healthcare providers are urged to discuss CAM use with cancer patients and inform them about evidence-based therapeutic possibilities.

A study by Jia et al [3] highlights the pervasive impact of polycystic ovary syndrome on a substantial portion of women within childbearing age globally. Due to its intricate origin and uncertain pathogenesis, the absence of a definitive curative approach persists. Established clinical interventions, such as hormone therapy and surgical procedures, are associated

with adverse effects. Consequently, the pursuit of alternative therapies becomes imperative. Complementary and alternative medicine, particularly traditional Chinese medicine, immunotherapy, medicinal foods, vitamin therapy, dietary interventions, psychotherapy, and oxygen therapy, has garnered increasing attention from the medical community due to its promising outcomes in PCOS management. The review identifies and assesses the limitations inherent in the existing literature pertaining to the application of CAM in PCOS management.

A review study by Mbizo et al [4] addresses the underexplored area of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) utilization in the context of chronic disease combinations. The research assesses CAM use prevalence and odds among individuals with hypercholesterolemia, hypertension, diabetes, and obesity. It further examines the impact of specific disease dyads and triads on CAM modalities encompassing biological treatments, mind-body interventions, energy therapies, and alternative medical systems. The study identified that CAM utilization percentages varied across chronic conditions, with mind-body interventions consistently employed across all combinations of dyads and triads. Specific combinations showed significant associations with manipulative methods and energy therapies. Single dyads were significant for biological treatments and alternative systems, and one triad exhibited significance for manipulative methods. These findings have implications for clinical practice and future research in the domain of multimorbidity and CAM usage.

The study presents the evolving landscape of integrative medicine and the central role of family practitioners in educating patients about the advantages and risks associated with complementary and alternative medicine products. This importance is emphasized as more patients are on maintenance medications, which could lead to interactions with CAM products or counteract the specific effects of pharmaceutical treatments. The study presented valuable data on the prevalence of CAM use in individuals with different combinations of chronic conditions, a topic that has been insufficiently studied in terms of specific CAM practices. Patients with multiple health issues often explore non-conventional approaches, underscoring the need for healthcare providers to actively inquire about CAM usage and provide personalized information about its potential benefits, risks, and implications. The study focused on four common chronic conditions due to their prevalence, aiming to pave the way for future research that includes CAM in clinical guidelines for managing complex health scenarios, thereby enhancing healthcare utilization and patient outcomes. Notably, research suggests that patients often do not spontaneously disclose their CAM usage to healthcare providers.

A recent study by Wang et al [5] described the increasing concern over mental health issues in children within the U.S., highlighting the potential benefits of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) for remediating these concerns. The study sheds light on the prevalence, motives, and associated factors of CAM use in children with mental health issues. CAM use was found to be more common in children with mental health issues compared to those without. Herbal remedies, mind-body therapies, and chiropractic care were the most frequently employed modalities. The primary reasons for CAM use were

their perceived helpfulness, naturalness, and holistic approach. A significant number of CAM users found these therapies beneficial. Predictors of CAM use included female gender, higher parental education and socioeconomic status, and the presence of co-existing medical conditions. Only a small portion of CAM usage was doctor-recommended. Around 10 million parents of children with mental health issues reported CAM use, driven by a preference for natural and holistic healthcare. The positive perceptions of CAM's efficacy suggest potential for its integration into pediatric psychiatric care. Considering the low doctor-recommended CAM usage, enhancing medical professionals' CAM knowledge is crucial for effective patient-physician communication. Additionally, strategies are needed to address disparities in accessing CAM therapies based on parental education and family income.

Gray et al [6] discussed the state of Complementary Medicine and its education in various countries. The study highlights the popularity of Complementary Medicine. Complementary Medicine (CM) is still widely practiced and accepted in many countries. It continues to be popular among the general public. This popularity of CM has led to a higher number of students enrolling in educational institutions that offer CM programs. These programs can be found in both public and private sectors of higher education. Despite the growing popularity of CM and the increase in CM education providers, there has been a lack of critical evaluation of research related to CM education. The study describes the first critical review of contemporary literature on CM education. The authors conducted a review of empirical research papers that discuss CM education and its various aspects. Several studies emphasized on the development of educational competencies to teach clinical skills and standards including application of new educational theories, methods, and technology in CM. The review identifies significant gaps in the research on CM education. There is a lack of comprehensive research related to educational technology and e-learning within the field of CM education, which contrasts with the more established research in medical and allied health education. The authors emphasize the need to establish a strategic research agenda for CM education. The ultimate goal is to ensure that healthcare practitioners educated in CM are well-prepared and effective.

Conclusion

Complementary and traditional medicine is popular all across the world. It is practiced widely in rural areas lacking accessibility to medical logistics and infrastructure. CAM have become subject of great interest due to their natural properties that often don't have adverse side effects and can be prescribed over longer durations providing holistic cure. In recent times CAM have found significant applications in treatment of female infertility, polycystic ovarian syndromes, cancer treatment, in management of chronic disease and syndromes and addressing child mental health issues. CAM has the potential to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of synthetic pharmaceuticals while maintaining the physiological and psychological balance. However CAM needs more scientific studies in order to be integrated into the regular evidence based clinical practice.

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