

# Perspectives on Complementary and Alternative Medicine: The Role of Nurses and Health Care Providers: A Review

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## Abstract

In many developing countries, traditional medicine plays an important role in meeting the primary health care needs of the population. Nurses and other healthcare professionals have tried to incorporate some alternative medicine into clinical practice in order to treat and care for their patients. This article aims to review the existing literature to explore the effect, benefits and risks of complementary and alternative medicine, and the role of nurses and health care providers. Nurses generally have a good attitude regarding complementary and alternative medicine because they embrace a holistic approach to health, but they appear to lack a sufficient awareness about the risks and advantages of complementary and alternative medicine and are apprehensive to discuss it with their patients. The literature search was conducted using the leading health organizations like the CDC, WHO, Google Scholar, Up-To-Date, Medline, Pro-Quest–Medline Index, Clinical Key, EBSCO, and PubMed. This review emphasizes the importance and need for nurses and other health care providers to build their knowledge of complementary and alternative medicine through education and health research.

**Keywords:** Alternative Medicine, Complementary Therapy, Traditional medicine, Health Care Providers, Nurses, Nursing role.

## INTRODUCTION

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is a term that refers to a collection of medical and health-care systems, practices, and products that are not regarded to be part of mainstream medicine. Despite the ongoing dispute over the clinical effectiveness of complementary and alternative medicine interventions, surveys from throughout the world show that they are effective [1]. Complementary medicine (CM), often known as complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is fast growing in popularity. The majority of CM techniques are related to natural goods or mind-body practices [2]. Traditional medicine or alternative medicine has a long and illustrious past. It is the sum total of knowledge, skill, and practices based on theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous

to various cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health, as well as the prevention, diagnosis, improvement, or treatment of physical and mental illness, whether explicable or not [3]. In recent years, alternative medicine has grown in popularity. The rising use is based on various assumptions that may or may not be correct. Many herbal treatments have been known to have negative side effects, with some of them being carcinogenic [4].

In a 1998 survey conducted by the American Medical Association in the United States to determine the popularity and users of alternative treatments, it was discovered that alternative treatments are freely used by those who are not receiving conventional care. In fact, most, if not all, alternative treatments are available for chronic conditions such as pain

management, musculoskeletal limitations, psychosocial imbalances, and general health maintenance. Obviously, they all fall under the area of primary health care [5].

## COMPLEMENTARY HEALTH APPROACHES

The primary therapeutic input of complementary therapies can be classified to as shown in the diagram below:

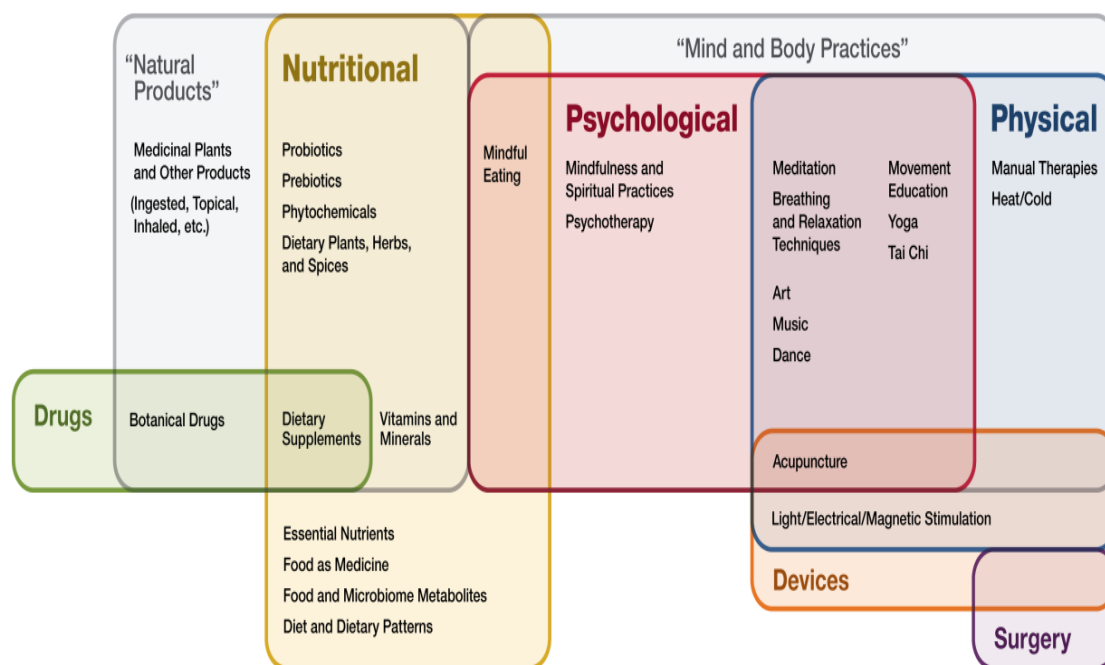


Figure-1: Examples of complementary health approaches that fall within the categories: Psychological, Physical, and Nutritional [6].

## USES OF COMPLEMENTARY/ALTERNATIVE (CAM) THERAPY

In many developing countries, traditional medicine plays an important role in meeting the primary health care needs of the population, and specific types of it have been used for a long time. Alternative medicine is utilized to treat a wide range of ailments, including diabetes, multiple sclerosis, dyslipidemia, and chronic pain [4]. The American Medical Association conducted a survey in the US in 1998 to reveal the popularity and users of alternative treatments, 15 items of traditional and alternative medicine were found, such as: traditional medicine, herbal medicine, acupuncture, massage, folk remedies, dietaries, spiritual healing, homeopathy, and the other modalities were found to be: relaxation, imagery, hypnosis, biofeedback, self-help groups, mega vitamins, and energy healing [5].

Complementary and alternative medicine is commonly used to treat pain, psychosocial problems, cardiovascular diseases, lung diseases as well as to provide symptomatic alleviation for cancer discomfort, among other things. This is a treatment approach that emphasizes on the individual's holistic care, with a special emphasis on client participation [2]. The use of CAM in clients with neurological illnesses such as dementia, multiple sclerosis, neuropathies, spinal cord injury, and epilepsy has been documented in the literature. Integrative medicine is a term that refers to the use of both traditional and alternative treatments. While CAM therapies aren't for everyone, treatments like acupuncture and healing touch therapies have been shown to aid with nausea, pain, and other cancer-related side effects [7].

## WHY PEOPLE USING COMPLEMENTARY/ALTERNATIVE THERAPY?

There are a variety of reasons why people use complementary and alternative medicine, including the belief that it is safer than traditional therapy, the perceived possible beneficial effects, having multiple medical conditions, and decreased functional activity [8]. Since so many older persons have several medical illnesses and reduced functional activity, CAM use is likely to be significant among this population. Many studies have documented patients using CAM for many conditions such as diabetes mellitus (DM), musculoskeletal, cardiac, neurological, urogenital, and mood disorders [9].

Older persons appear to be more likely to use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) than younger people for a variety of reasons. This proclivity has been studied in a number of studies around the world. CAM use appears to be more prevalent in older people due to a higher prevalence of numerous medical diseases, less functional activity, the assumption of CAM safety compared to conventional treatment, and perceived therapeutic results [10].

Individuals that use CAM services do so for a variety of reasons. One of the most compelling is the potential cost savings. A randomized controlled trial comparing the costs of physiotherapy, manual therapy, and general practitioner care for neck pain found that manual therapy improved faster than physiotherapy and general practitioner care and that the total costs of manual therapy were about one-third of the costs of physiotherapy and general practitioner care. This demonstrates that manual therapy is more effective and less expensive than physiotherapy or general practitioner care in the treatment of neck pain [11]. According to another recent study, patients who have a general practitioner with additional complementary and alternative medicine training have lower health-care costs and mortality rates than those who do not. Fewer hospital stays and prescription medicine usage resulted in lower expenditures [11].

## PRIMARY HEALTH CARE (PHC)

Traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) is a type of medicine with profound historical and cultural origins that is widely accepted and used around the world. T & C M encompasses a wide range of health practices that differ from country to country and area to region. Since the Declaration of Alma-Ata in 1978, T&CM has been acknowledged as a vital primary health care resource for many communities and as a component of achieving "health for all." [3].

Primary health care needs to be reorganized so that it is not isolated from hospital and specialist care. Ideally, primary health care should form the "interface" between family practice and specialist practice, which means taking part in the maintenance of the wellbeing of specialist patients to lessen the need for special hospital/specialist care. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been supporting and encouraging the full implementation of the primary health care concept as a realistic way to improve family practice and reduce the pressure on hospitals and specialists. For the same reason, the World Health Organization (WHO) has endorsed the use of traditional medicine in several parts of the world. Traditional medicine has been offering alternative means of health care for centuries, from the relief of ailments to preventive and rehabilitation activities. As a result, active traditional medicine practices would reduce hospital admissions and specialist care [5].

In the quest for healthier population. T & CM practitioner can play an important role in teaching individuals, families, and communities on health promotion, illness prevention, public health issues, and appropriate care-seeking[3]. T&CM's widespread use in primary care opens new avenues for dealing with serious emergencies. In 2002, traditional Chinese medicine treatments were used to treat 58.3% of all severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) patients, and kampo treatments were effective in treating both physical and mental distress. During the devastating earthquake that struck eastern Japan in 2011, many medical

facilities were lost. An exploratory study was performed to assess the practice of acupuncture on patients with pain and/or nausea in a Japanese emergency unit [3].

#### PRACTICES OF TRADITIONAL AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

Traditional and Complementary and alternative medicine treatments differ greatly from region to region, with specific techniques, commonly referred to as modalities, being seen in different ways based on the culture, understanding, and accessibility to conventional medicine. Acupuncture is one practice that has achieved tremendous improvement. Although acupuncture originated in traditional Chinese medicine, it is today utilized all around the world. According to statistics from 129 countries, acupuncture is presently recognized in 80 percent of them [11].

#### NURSING ROLE

Professional nurses are increasingly offering patients a variety of choices in therapies as part of a comprehensive care plan. Patients are asking for therapists that are prepared to work with them on a more comprehensive treatment plan that includes traditional, alternative, and complementary therapies [7]. Acupuncture, music therapy, hypnosis, massage therapy, aromatherapy, and other therapies have been used in clinical practice by nurses and other healthcare professionals to give a more holistic approach to treatment and care for their patients [2].

Nurses generally have a good attitude regarding CAM because they embrace a holistic approach to health, but they appear to lack a sufficient awareness about the risks and advantages of CAM and are apprehensive to discuss it with their patients. Nurses and other health-care workers should be involved in starting or participating in a variety of research projects in this field. As a result, patients can get evidence-based practice on a variety of topics [2].

According to a recent survey, patients frequently contact with nurses regarding complementary and alternative therapies. Only 5% of nurses, on the other hand, were able to

respond to their inquiries in this regard. Nonetheless, because nurses make up the majority of the health-care workforce, they have the most professional contact hours with patients, making it critical for them to have sufficient knowledge and information about the safe and effective use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in order to communicate. With patients, they aid them in making an informed decision about which types of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) are acceptable for particular diseases. Since 2004, the National Council Licensure Examination has required nurses to have a knowledge base in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies for entry-level registered nurses [12].

#### World Situation of Complementary and Alternative Therapy

Most countries in the world practice complementary and traditional medicine (C&TM). It is inherited from one generation to the next, and nearly three quarters of the world's population uses It is transmitted down through generations and is used to manage nearly three-quarters of the world's population. This approach to medicine is based on treatments and practices that those who believe in them feel are safe [13].

Almost half of the population in many industrialized countries currently utilizes some kind of T&CM on a regular basis (42 percent in the United States, 48 percent in Australia, 49 percent in France, and 70 percent in Canada), and many developing countries also use T&CM on a daily basis (Chile, 71 percent; Colombia, 40 percent; up to 80 percent in African countries).

Pertaining to the National Health Insurance Service of the Republic of Korea, musculoskeletal-related illnesses are the most common reason for visiting Korean health facilities, with 138 million visits in 2012 [3]. According to the WHO's traditional and complementary medicine strategy (2014–2023), the number of countries that acknowledge the use of traditional and complementary medicine risen to 103 in 2012,

Traditional and complementary medicine services are regulated by legislation in 29 countries. The number of nations with traditional and complementary medicine research institutes or centers has increased to 73[11].

#### SAUDI ARABIA FUTURE OF COMPLEMENTARY/ALTERNATIVE THERAPY

Complementary and traditional medicine are commonly utilized in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), as it is across the entire world. C&TM are extensively practiced throughout different groups of societies, according to a series of research conducted in Saudi Arabia, despite their limitations. Females and people with low educational levels are more likely to use C&TM. Consumers' religious beliefs are typically linked to CAM therapies. Accordingly, the common practices were usually Holy Quran therapy, using honey, black seed, and myrrh [14, 15], in addition to Alhijama (cupping), various herbal remedies, and cautery. As part of prophetic medicine [16, 17], Modern practices have also been introduced lately in the Saudi community through well-established clinics employing acupuncture, which is mostly practiced in the private sector [18].

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health (MOH) provides free health care to its residents, although this does not include complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). A ministerial directive (No. 236) dated 10/8/1429 H (12/8/2008 G) established a center for complementary and alternative medicine. The center's goals include serving as a resource for all things of CAM, regulating CAM practices within healthcare services, and using evidence-based CAM as a supplement to conventional medicine [19]. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) was created as a result of a policy that allows Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T & CM) to be integrated into the healthcare system. NCCAM is a reference for all aspects of T& CM in Saudi Arabia [20]. In addition to regulating and licensing T&CM practices, NCCAM is also involved in

promoting research, training, public awareness, and the authentication of Islamic medicine [21]. The NCCAM's regulatory mandate is carried out in collaboration with Saudi Arabia's other health regulatory bodies, including the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA), the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCHS), and the Ministry of Health's local and regional authorities. Acupuncture, osteopathy, chiropractic, naturopathy, and cupping are the five therapies now licensed in Saudi Arabia [21].

In a systematic review of 16 different studies, the usage of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) has increased in all nations in past few years. A study of 158 persons from various regions in Riyadh found that 85 percent of participants had used or known another who had used complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) at a certain point in their life. Furthermore, according to a study conducted in the Western area, 42 percent of 79 randomly selected mothers visiting the outpatient department of King Abdulaziz University Hospital have utilized complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) to treat chronic diseases in their children. In the previous 12 months, 1163 people had utilized CAM [22]. Study by (AlShehri et.,2020) found that primary healthcare patients utilized twenty-five different types of complementary medicine. Honey, herbal medication, Hijama (the Arabic term for cupping therapy), and Quran recitation are all examples of natural remedies. Ajwa al Madinah, Nigella sativa seeds (famous dates from Madinah, Saudi Arabia, used for therapeutic purposes), herbal medicine, Zamzam water (renowned water from the Zamzam spring near Makkah, Saudi Arabia, said to have healing properties), and dialysis were among them. Honey was the most popular, followed by the Quran, Zamzam water, and herbal medication [23].

#### CONCLUSION

Traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) is an important primary health care resource for many populations; it is a health

practice with strong historical and cultural roots that has global acceptability and applicability. The WHO has endorsed the use of traditional medicine in several parts of the world. Traditional medicine has been offering alternative means of health care for centuries, from the relief of ailments to preventive and rehabilitation activities. Some of conversation medicine has been considered to be integrated by nurses and other healthcare workers such acupuncture, music therapy, hypnosis, and massage therapy, into clinical practice to provide a more holistic approach to treatment and care for their patients. Nurses generally have a good attitude regarding CAM because they embrace a holistic approach to health, but have insufficient awareness about the risks and advantages of CAM and are apprehensive to discuss it with their patients. In Saudi Arabia, CAM is widely used, with prayer and reading of the Holy Quran being the most prevalent forms, followed by herbs and honey, food products, and cupping therapy. Lack of physician-patient contact regarding complementary and alternative medicine may reduce the chances of discussing the benefits and the differences between medications and complementary and alternative medicine treatments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for efforts to promote research in the field of CAM to address each practice individually, as well as a greater need for nurse researchers to collaborate with other members of the healthcare team to conduct quantitative and qualitative studies on various aspects of complementary and alternative therapies in order to build a body of evidence-based knowledge on the use of specific CAM therapies and their specific uses, effects, risks, and safety issues. Population surveys should be encouraged and supported by the mass media to raise knowledge and awareness about the practice of different complementary and alternative medicine modalities.

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