



Purpose and effectiveness of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

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DESCRIPTION

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered part of conventional medicine. CAM may also be referred to as traditional medicine (also known as indigenous or folk medicine) which comprises unscientific knowledge systems that developed over generations within various societies before the era of modern medicine. Practices known as traditional medicines include herbal, Ayurveda, Siddha medicine, Unani, ancient Iranian medicine, Islamic medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, traditional Korean medicine, acupuncture, traditional African medicine, and other pseudo medical knowledge and practices all over the globe. Indian traditional medicine mainly depends on the herbal medicine which refers to using a plant's seeds, berries, roots, leaves, bark, or flowers for medicinal purposes. The use of herbal supplements has increased dramatically over the past 30 years. Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 80% of people worldwide rely on herbal medicines for some part of their primary health care. Herbal medicine is used to treat many conditions, such as asthma, eczema, premenstrual syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, jaundice, iron overload linked diseases, migraine, menopausal symptoms, chronic fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome, and cancer. Evidence is accumulating that most of the diseases that afflict humanity have their origin in deleterious free radical reactions. Ayurvedic form of medicine is believed to be existent in India for thousands of years. It employs various techniques and things to provide healing or relief to the ailing patients. One of the things that ayurveda uses, is medications of plant origin.

People often use the terms complementary therapy and alternative therapy as if they mean the same thing. And they are often joined into one phrase-Complementary and Alternative therapy. A complementary therapy means you can use it alongside your conventional medical treatment.

It may help you to feel better and cope better with your cancer and treatment. An alternative therapy is generally used instead of medical treatment.

All cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy, have to go through rigorous testing by law. This is to prove that they work. Most alternative therapies have not been through such testing. And there is no scientific evidence that they work. Some types of alternative therapy may not be completely safe and could cause harmful side effects. Some treatments may interact with each other.

Challenges in Defining Alternative Medicine

Prominent members of the science and biomedical science community say that it is not meaningful to define an alternative medicine that is separate from a conventional medicine because the expressions "conventional medicine", "alternative medicine", "complementary medicine", "integrative medicine", and "holistic medicine" do not refer to any medicine at all. Others say that alternative medicine cannot be precisely defined because of the diversity of theories and practices it includes, and because the boundaries between alternative and conventional medicine overlap, are porous, and change. Healthcare practices categorized as alternative may differ in their historical origin, theoretical basis, diagnostic technique, therapeutic practice and in their relationship to the medical mainstream. Under a definition of alternative medicine as "non-mainstream", treatments considered alternative in one location may be considered conventional in another.

Critics say the expression is deceptive because it implies there is an effective alternative to science-based medicine, and that complementary is deceptive because it implies that the treatment increases the effectiveness of (complements) science-based medicine, while alternative medicines that have been tested nearly always have no measurable positive effect compared to a placebo.