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Recent Advances in the Complementary and Alternative Medication: How Far Will It Go In Future

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ABSTRACT

The complementary and alternative medication has taken up a great market in medicine and healthcare, worldwide. The patients as well as the doctors believe in treating a disease not only with conventional drugs but also with holistic approaches like the will power of the patient being cured and other herbal and alternative methods. Yoga, meditation, Ayurveda and acupuncture techniques are playing their roles since a very long time. A study shows that about 80% of the total population relies on alternative techniques to relieve themselves from pain and other health related issues. The safe and appropriate use of this kind of medication is also very important if we need positive results as conventional drugs are also playing their parts along with the CAM. We can also fight with various adverse drug reactions by using different complementary and alternative medications. It not only cures a disease but also brings changes in the lifestyle of the patients towards safe and healthy life ahead. The studies conducted on the needs and demands of this type of medication have proven that the future of complementary and alternative medication has a long way ahead. Although, the regular drug therapy shall never be avoided.

Keywords: *Complementary and Alternative Medication (CAM); Acupuncture; Yoga; Meditation; Chiropractic; Naturopathy.*

1.0 Introduction

Alternative medication is a very different approach of curing patients with various diseases. It differs from the conventional medication in many aspects. It is a whole new idea of using the natural resources around, in curing acute or chronic conditions between mankind. It includes different types of preventive and health care practices for example homeopathy, chiropractic, naturopathy and herbal treatments which do not have any proven fact of their therapeutic actions and are very different from generally accepted medical methods [1]. Allopathic Medication is also a broad category of medical practice which is also referred as biomedicine, modern medicine, scientific medicine and western medicine [2]. It basically describes a different set of medication in the field of CAM and does not denote a particular method of treatment. It is one of the most running method at present for treatment. At times, CAM is also referred to as the supplementary of allopathic medication. Allopathic method describes the conventional method of treatment in a way; hence, CAM is always a

supplement and not the first option of treatment over allopathic medication. Another very different medication that has come up as a whole-person centered medication system is the Korean system of medication including “four constitutions” and acupuncture as the actual Korean methodologies of treatment and prevention [3]. Koreans have proven their method of treatment by actively validating and developing their complementary and alternative methods.

When CAM comes to mind, Ayurveda can never be neglected as it is one of the most ancient methods of treatment of life threatening diseases available worldwide. It includes the science of prevention, life and longevity on earth which was written almost 5000 years ago in India and is still in records of the practitioners [1]. Apart from this, yoga, meditation etc. has also been practiced in India in order to cure the body and provide us a healthy way of living life.

Traditional medicines play a key role in treatment of disorders by using various health practices, different approaches, broad knowledge of the method and true beliefs, not only including plant,

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animal and mineral resources of medication but also the spiritual, holistic and manual techniques like exercises for maintaining human health by treating, diagnosing and preventing illness [2].

An estimation shows that about two third of the world population opt for CAM other than allopathic medicine since these have no side effects, are more personal and less expensive [4]. The patients using CAM are majorly those suffering from chronic diseases like HIV, asthma, breast cancer, diabetes, arthritis, epilepsy, migraine, etc. The safety and efficacy of CAM also comes in mind when these are used worldwide with different conventional medications for the treatment of chronic and incurable diseases. The appropriate use of such methods is very important to obtain positive results and to avoid unexpected situations.

Fig 1: Depicting Advantages and Disadvantages of CAM

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1. Safer than conventional medication	1. Not fit for severe cases and emergencies
2. Effective	2. Conventional medication can not be avoided
3. Cheap	3. Slower healing results
4. Provides a life long healthy environment	4. Needs safety considerations
5. No side effects	5. Requires strong believe and will power
6. Personal	

2.0 Literature Review

Due to huge transition in the people’s mind towards complementary and alternative medication various studies had been done. According to the study, Aesculapius is considered as the originator of Unani system of medicine in Greece and his descendent. Also, Hippocrates (460-377 BC) designed the frame work of this system; hence, called as “father of unani system” [1]. Ministry of Health and Welfare, Govt. of India, in their Annual report (1998-1999) quoted that the shaping up of Ayurveda took place between 5th century BC and 5th century AD, while, it was originated in 10th century BC [2]. So it is very much clear that from many years this CAM is serving the patients and giving the best medication for their health.

Further, it was estimated that about 400 million US dollars were invested by Korean

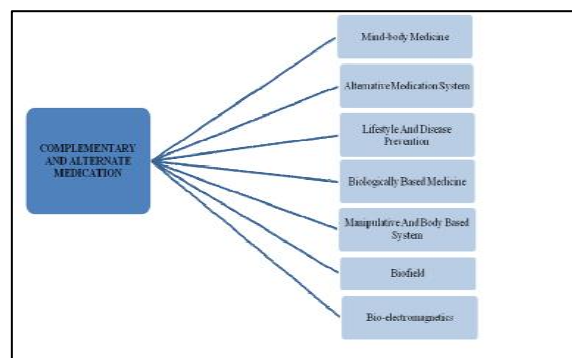
government to develop Korean system of medication in 2006-2010 and 1 billion US dollars for the year 2011-2015 [5]. This huge amount of expenditure induces the further use of such type medication and hence the chance of future aspects increases parallelwise. A study was conducted to estimate the percentage of physicians who know about their patients using the CAM therapies in four chronic diseases that are Rheumatoid Arthritis, HIV, epilepsy and diabetes mellitus and the results were 100% in case of Rheumatoid patients, 95% in case of HIV patients, 74% in case of epilepsy patients and 29% in case of diabetes mellitus patients [4]. It was quoted that about 40% of Americans use CAM with the regular medications for better treatment of their illness and several other multidimensional approaches other than pharmacological therapies [6].

The use of CAM in India is also booming as the time passes. As it was found out the percentage of people covering over 33,000 households in 19 states of India, referring to the traditional system of medication was one third i.e. 32% of the whole, as concluded in the survey conducted by the ICMR in New Delhi [7]. It has been reviewed that the ever increasing rate of CAM users worldwide is due to arise from cultural norms and dissatisfaction of the patients with biomedical system of treatment, cure and prevention [8]. In this way, we can say that CAM has totally changed the views of individuals by increasing their engagement for using such type of medication. The individuals now rely on these medications because of its least side-effects and other factors. This shows a bright future and a long going pathway of CAM in the coming times, worldwide.

3.0 Types of Cam

The studies has shown that the complementary and alternative medication has been divided into seven broad categories which are further sub-divided into their respective classes depending on the methods of treatment. The categories are as follows:-

Fig 2: Types of CAM



Source- General Information Package, NIH Office of Alternative Medicine Clearing House, Silver Spring. The above categories are further sub divided into various parts as given below:-

1. Mind-body medicine

- a Mind-body system
- b Mind-body methods (e.g. yoga, hypnosis, meditation)
- c Religion and spirituality (e.g. confession, spiritual healing, prayer)
- d. Social and contextual areas (e.g. holistic nursing, intuitive diagnosis, community-based approaches)

2. Alternative medication system

- a Acupuncture and Oriental medicine
- b Traditional indigenous systems (e.g. Ayurvedic medicine, Siddha, Unani-tibbi, native American medicine)
- c Unconventional Western systems (e.g. Homeopathy, psionic medicine, orthomolecular medicine, functional medicine, environmental medicine)
- d Naturopathy

3. Lifestyle and disease prevention

- a Clinical prevention practices (e.g. electrodermal diagnosis, intuition, panchakarma, chirography) medical
- b Lifestyle therapies
- c Health promotion

4. Biologically based medicine

- a Phytotherapy or herbalism (plant-derived preparations that are used for therapeutic and prevention purpose, e.g. Ginkgo biloba, garlic, ginseng, turmeric, aloe vera, saw palmetto, capsicum)
- b Special diet therapies (e.g. vegetarian, high fibre, Mediterranean, natural hygiene)
- c Orthomolecular medicine
- d Pharmacological, biological and instrumental interventions

5. Manipulative and body based system

- a Chiropractic medicine
- b Massage and body work (e.g. osteopathic manipulative therapy, kinesiology, reflexology, acupressure etc.)
- c Unconventional physical therapies (e.g. hydrotherapy, colonics, diathermy, light and colour therapy, heat and electrotherapy).

- d Biofield medicine system basically consist of the methods using the subtle energy resources which covers the human body in and around for medical purposes.
- e Bioelectromagnetics use the electromagnetic fields around the body, very unconventionally, for medical purposes.

4.0 Recent Trends in Cam

There is a clear opportunity for CAM with the high rate and it is increasing day by day. This has totally changed the advancement and trends in individual's mind. In 2010, a great achievement for naturopathy and herbal medication was the detection of therapeutic usage of the onion bulbs and other parts of the plant against diabetes, cataract, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, helminthiasis, cancer, gastrointestinal disorders, and respiratory tract disorders [9]. Hypnosis, massage therapy etc. has come up as a new trend of treating people with different mental disorders and pain sensations.

Many naturopathy methods like mud bath and oil bath has taken the shape of trendy spa treatments which are very famous among the generation. Similarly, People prefer CAM system for the treatment of diabetes and hypertension by tackling with these using herbal and medicinal plants. Also, they bring a great change in their lifestyles by following yoga, meditation and naturopathy systems to treat themselves in a better way.

5.0 Future Prospectives: How Far Will It Go

From the above discussions it is very much clear that how CAM has affected the lives of individuals from last many years and also will be helpful in future for treating chronic and acute diseases. It can be explained by the following example- NASH (nonalcoholic steatohepatitis) is a silent liver disease which cannot be easily diagnosed but the herbal treatment for this disease has proved its beneficial effect to treat deadly disease in a safer manner [10]. The emergence of various chronic disorders in humans has led to the vast increase in morbidity and mortality rate at present [11]. The reason behind this is a mixture of both physical as well as mental disturbance caused due to various reasons in life. This widens the future prospective of CAM therapy as the conventional medication alone cannot treat such disorders completely [12].

Studies has shown that the man of the century deals with anxiety issues with respect to money, health, family issues and different other disease causing environmental factors which are very difficult to treat if CAM is not used.

The future trends open up here.

6.0 Conclusion

The complementary and alternative system of medication has always proved to be as useful in the healthcare industries as the conventional system of medication. In old times, the system was homely, spiritual and personal in approach. As of now, the characterization has not changed but broadened up including holistic approach and modernity of the system. The present trends include various highly effective methods like yoga, exercises, acupuncture, herbal treatments, naturopathy, meditation, hypnosis, Ayurveda, Chinese system of medication, Korean methods etc. The techniques are all ancient based, just the facilities have increased. The studies prove the fact of ever increasing demand of CAM among the people worldwide for diagnosis, prevention and cure. For the betterment of health and longer life span CAM is needed the most and this gives it a wide future prospective.

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