

Definition

Complementary /Alternative Medicine: A broad domain of healing resources that encompasses all health systems, modalities, and practices and their accompanied theories and beliefs, other than those intrinsic to the politically dominant health systems.

Integrative Health Medicine: traditional plus evidence based complementary /alternative health system. It is set up to reaffirm physician patient relationship; informed by evidence and makes use of all therapies and health care professionals.

How did CAM come about?

Too many reasons to list. (Patients wanting to do more for themselves, patient wanting more autonomy in their own care, personal belief systems, cultural beliefs etc.)

Possibly from traditional medicines over-emphasis on physiology and outcomes that could reinforce the patient's perception that physicians undervalue patient relationships.

What are some categories of CAM?

- Whole Medical Systems (incorporates many systems and often holistic) (i.e. Chinese, Ayurveda and other culturally based systems; homeopathy)
- Biologically Based: i.e. Herbs, botanicals, dietary supplements, caffeine, energy supplements
- Manipulative: i.e. Therapeutic Massage
- Biomechanical: surgeries as well as Chiropractic and Osteopathic manipulation/massage
- Mind- Body Therapy: Biofeedback, guided imagery, hypnosis, yoga
- Biofields/ Bioenergetics: acupuncture, therapeutic touch, prayer.
- Homeopathy: a specific branch of whole medicine systems that uses dilute preparations in natural amounts to compliment the inner healing
- Lifestyles therapy: exercise, rest, light therapy, heat or cold therapy

Many CAM's are becoming more disease specific and may even include an alternative medicine clinics run by a physician to serve that population. Most CAM's are self use therapies that do not involve an outside health provider or therapists.

Is CAM good, bad or indifferent?

We cannot say in many cases because critical scientific literature is not available. (No control studies that involve placebo)

Why should my Doctors care?

- Its on the rise (up to 50% of pediatrics and 75% of adolescent) and likely here to stay
- It is important (and a good social skill) not to alienate a patient's belief
- It is better understand the patients beliefs
- It could work (i.e. chamomile tea for colic, acupuncture for addiction treatment, massage therapy in premature neonates)
- It could be harmful in some cases

When could CAM be problematic?

- Drug interaction with prescribed therapies (decreasing medicines efficacy, increasing side effects etc.)
- Some have side effects just like traditional medicines
- Delay in seeking medical care for a severe illness resulting in poor outcome.
- The therapy itself in some cases may be potential harmful (Chelation when not indicated; poorly regulated products particularly from other countries that may contain lead, mercury etc)
- Nutritional deficiencies resulting from an elimination diets
- It can be expensive especially when you have to pay out of pocket
- Overly aggressive manipulation therapy for young children who naturally have very pliable necks and spines.

- Some CAM can be just as difficult and time consuming or invasive as traditional therapies
- When the salesperson wants money up front (a potential scam)

It is important to understand that many of the over the counter products are unregulated or regulated as food products, so we do not know all the medicinal issues with the products.

We have no way of knowing no way of knowing:

- If it contains what it is advertised to contain
- The amount a certain content
- If it contains additional material including known toxins

Why would people choose a CAM?

- The perception that "It's natural so it can not hurt the child"
- The need for a complete treatment not just treating the illness but the patient as a whole.
- Personal belief (that may be the best medicine option)
- The Internet with sophisticated marketing and testimonials and unproven claims
- Fear of traditional medicine side effects
- It is not always due to dissatisfaction with present medical care (as Medical people believe), however there are cases where parents are frustrated with complex therapies, discomfort, bewildering technologies or uncertainty of a cure.
- Parents also may feel frustrated that they were not included in the development of medical care plans may turn to CAM's.
- There may not be a complete traditional medicine solution to all medical issues. (Particularly for patient with chronic medical problems)

Why should Doctors talk about CAM's

- To value the parents and their beliefs/ to better understand their patients
- To increase compliance with office care by making them feel valued
- To become more aware of potential risks to the patient
- To prevent a potential adverse outcome
- To educate the parents of common misperceptions
- To educate patients about how medicine and science works
- Over time scientific evidence may prove a CAM efficacious. At that time it would no longer be consider "alternative"

Will CAM's take over traditional medicine?

- Probably not because society still primarily sees it as an adjunct to traditional therapies.
- There is little incentive from manufacturers to make them traditional therapies since government regulations would drive up their costs

Is it really cheaper than traditional medicine?

Difficult to say since most of it is out of pocket expenses which are difficult to access.

What do we (the practice) need to know?

- What specific Alternative medicine are you taking?
- What other medicines is the patient taking? (traditional and alternative medicines)
- What are you beliefs about the specific alternative medicines (how do you want it to help you or your child?)
- Does it work?
- Where do you purchase it from (especially if it a product from outside the U.S.) Bring by the office
- Is it costing you too much?
- Is it as equally or more painful or intensive as a traditional medicine therapy?

There are more CAM's than any one physicians can track, so please be patience with us if we need to do homework regarding your the alternative therapy.

If I have left any important detail you think should be included in this handout, please let me know.

Resources for Complementary and Alternative Health Products

- Natural Medicine Comprehensive Data Base (a good book and web site)
- Natural Standard (a good web site)
- Consumer Lab (a good web site containing specific manufacturing reliability and safety)

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) A general overview

352 383-0624

Though the practice does not consider itself an Alternative Medicine provider, we are interested and care

