Complementary and Alternative Medicine

CHAPTER 17
Approaches to Health Care

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not considered to be conventional.

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)
- Support scientific investigation of complementary and alternative healing practices
- Trains those researching CAM practices
- Disseminates authoritative information
Conventional Medicine

Refers to the dominant health care system in the U.S., Canada, much of Europe

*Western medicine, biomedicine, allopathic medicine*

Health is restored when the medical practitioner treats the illness with drugs, vaccine, or surgery
Conventional Medicine

Other ideas underlying conventional medicine

- The body is like a machine; illness is a sign that a part needs to be fixed
- Illness is defined by a set of symptoms that are similar in everyone who has the illness
- Investigations into causes of disease and treatments for them are done using the scientific method

Practitioners:

- M.D. or D.O. (medical degrees)
- Dentists, optometrists, podiatrists, nurses, physical therapists, dietitians, midwives, medical assistants, etc.
Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Complementary medicine (CAM): group of practices used together with conventional medicine

Alternative medicine: group of practices used as an alternative to conventional medicine

Integrative medicine: use of conventional medicine in combination with CAM practices that have been proven safe and effective
Characteristics of CAM

The body is believed to have an inherent balance or ability to heal itself

The whole person is treated (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual)

Each person is unique, so treatment is individualized

Many practices use a complex combination of interventions, often involving many medications at the same time along with recommended behaviors
CAM Practices and Providers

Two main types of complementary health approaches

- Natural products (i.e., echinacea)
- Mind and body interventions (i.e., t’ai chi or chiropractic medicine)

People use CAM for a variety of reasons

- Improve health and well-being
- Relieve symptoms of a chronic disease or illness
- A more holistic approach to health
- Most often used in the treatment of back pain

Training, licensing, and credentialing of CAM providers varies by state
Types of CAM Approaches

Mind-Body Therapies
- Biofeedback*
- Imagery, visualization
- Hypnotherapy*
- Meditation
- Prayer and spirituality
- Relaxation techniques
- Yoga

Manipulative and Body-Based Therapies
- Alexander technique*
- Chiropractic *
- Feldenkrais*
- Massage*
- Osteopathy*
- Pilates
- Rolfing*
- Trager approach*

Energy Therapies
- Acupuncture*
- Light therapy
- Magnetic-field therapies
- Qigong
- Reiki*
- T'ai chi
- Therapeutic touch*

Natural Products
- Dietary supplements
- Herbal or botanical products
- Traditional/folk medicines
- Probiotics
- Aromatherapy

Alternative Medical Systems
- Traditional Chinese medicine
- Ayurvedic medicine
- Native American medicine
- Homeopathy
- Naturopathy

* indicates often used in a CAM context.
CAM Therapies
Diseases/Conditions

- Back pain: 17.1%
- Neck pain: 5.9%
- Joint pain: 5.2%
- Arthritis: 3.5%
- Anxiety: 2.8%
- Cholesterol: 2.1%
- Head or chest cold: 2.0%
- Other musculoskeletal: 1.8%
- Severe headache or migraine: 1.6%
- Insomnia: 1.4%
Natural Products

Natural products, or biologically-based practices, include the use of the following:

- Dietary supplements, megavitamins, minerals, herbal medicines, probiotics, functional foods, and dietary regimens

Therapeutic diets involve reduction or removal of certain types of foods for a set time period

Dietary alterations are usually used as an adjunct or complement to other forms of therapy
Dietary Supplements

CAM practitioners occasionally recommend dietary supplements

- High-dose vitamin supplementation; megavitamins

Supplementation of minerals and trace elements

Probiotics to restore balance of bacteria and yeast
Herbal Medicines

Vast array of products derived from plants and other natural substances

Herbal remedies rooted in history

Currently being investigated by researchers in controlled clinical studies

Safety is major concern

- Contamination
- Lack of standardization
- Drug interactions
Traditional Chinese Medicine

A well-developed medical system that has been in existence for nearly 3,000 years

Focuses on maintaining or restoring the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the individual

Illness occurs when your qi (chi) or energy force is disturbed or imbalanced (yin-yang principle)

Diagnosis involves evaluating an individual for signs of imbalance

Methods include herbal medicine, acupuncture, acupressure, and dietary modification
Yin-Yang
Ayurveda

Has been practiced in India for 5,000 years

Emphasizes balance among the body, mind, and spirit and sets a goal of restoring harmony to the individual

When your three doshas are in balance, you are considered in good health

- **Vatta**: energy of movement; consists of space and air
- **Pitta**: energy of metabolism and digestion; consists of fire and water
- **Kapha**: energy that forms body structure and holds cells together; consists of earth and water
Homeopathy

Developed by German chemist and physician Samuel Hahnemann

Three principles:

• Law of similars: substance that causes disease in a healthy person can cure the same symptoms in a sick person
• Principle of minimal dose: remedies intended to encourage the body to heal itself; smallest possible dose will have greatest effect
• Every patient is unique

Controversial, but appears to be no significant associated risk associated except possible delay of diagnosis, other treatments
Naturopathy

Main principle is that the body has the ability to heal itself, especially through nutrition.

Focus is on cleansing and strengthening the body rather than on treating the symptoms of a specific illness.

Dietary modification, nutritional supplementation, herbal remedies, hydrotherapy, massage, homeopathy, acupuncture, biofeedback, stress reduction techniques, and lifestyle counseling.

Research on evaluating naturopathy as a complete system of medicine in early stage.
Native American Medicine

Healing and spirituality merge

Physical well-being associated with spiritual balance; illness associated with imbalance

Healers have spiritual powers or ties to the supernatural: shamans, medicine men/women

Ability to heal is seen as a gift and often passed down through several generations of a family

Healers learn the medicinal uses of roots, herbs, and other plants

Remedies may include prayer, healing touch, herbal teas, tinctures, charms, and healing rituals
Mind and Body Interventions

Three types of mind and body interventions:

- Energy therapies, intended to balance the flow of vital energy through the body
- Mind-body therapies, based on the premise that our state of mind affects the health of our body
- Manipulative and body-based therapies, require the hands of trained practitioners to help our body heal itself
Energy Therapies

Based on the idea that a disruption or imbalance of energy is at the root of illness and that restoration restores health

- Acupuncture: insertion of needles at certain points in the skin to stimulate the flow of qi
- Acupressure: use of Japanese Shiatsu massage at acupuncture points to improve flow of qi
- T’ai chi: moving meditation
- Qigong: physical movement, breathing, and focused attention to enhance flow of qi and boost immune functioning
- Magnetic-field therapies: used to ease chronic pain
- Therapeutic touch and reiki: use of practitioner's hands to channel and direct energy
Mind-Body Therapies

Medical practices based on the premise that the mind influences the body in ways that promote or detract from well-being

Examples:
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Deep breathing
- Prayer
- Progressive relaxation
- Visualization
- Biofeedback
- Hypnotherapy
Manipulative and Body-Based Practices

Focus on the body’s structures and systems, such as bones, joints, muscles, soft tissues, and circulatory system

Include the following:

- **Osteopathic medicine**: considered a form of conventional medicine; healing through manipulation and focus on the whole person
- **Chiropractic medicine**: belief that illnesses are the result of subluxation of the spine
- **Massage therapy and bodywork**: pressure aimed at increasing blood flow and inducing relaxation
Making Informed Health Care Choices

Conventional medicine, CAM, and self-care are three intersecting areas of healthcare

Consumers need to do the following:

 ◦ Consult with their conventional care physician
 ◦ Research the therapy and provider
 ◦ Be wary of commercial websites that are selling a product
Sectors of Health Care

- **Self-Care**
  - Ice pack for muscle strain
  - Extra fluids and rest when sick

- **Integrative**
  - Good nutrition
  - Adequate rest
  - Acupuncture for pain following surgery

- **Conventional**
  - Surgery
  - Penicillin
  - Polio vaccine
  - Chemotherapy

- **Alternative**
  - Homeopathic medicine
  - Traditional Chinese Medicine

Yoga
Qigong
Progressive relaxation

Massage
Chiropractic
Choosing Self-Care

Actions taken on behalf of your own health

- Eating healthy foods, exercising, sleeping well
- Observing your own symptoms
- Evaluating your external environment
- Gathering information and advice
- Making informed decisions
- Treating yourself or seeking professional care

*Medical self-care:* treating a physical problem

*Health promotion self-care:* taking action to maintain and improve health
Influences on Health Care Choices

Insurance status is a major deciding factor
- Without insurance, chronic health conditions are less well controlled, due to the prohibitive costs
- Determines when problems are diagnosed, and what/when preventive actions are taken
- Affordable Care Act of 2010: young adults can stay on parents’ health insurance up to age 26

The media are an important influence
- Disseminate health information
- Popularize diets, products, treatments, attitudes
- Direct-to-consumer advertising: marketing of products directly to consumers instead of to health care providers
Supporting Integrative Medicine

Proponents suggest a convergence of conventional medicine and CAM practices might provide more effective and comprehensive medical treatment

May also help reduce health care spending

- Despite spending more on health care than any other country, the U.S. ranks last out of 17 peer countries in life expectancy