Complementary and Alternative Medicine
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*

Illnesses are treated with drugs, vaccine, or surgery

*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 for conventional medicine:
M.D. or D.O. (medical degrees)
Dentists, optometrists, podiatrists, nurses, physical therapists, dietitians, midwives and physician assistants
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

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
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
- Roling*
- 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

Copyright © McGraw-Hill Education. Permission required for reproduction or display.
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
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.
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
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
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.
Mind and Body Interventions

- Energy therapies
- Mind-body therapies
- Manipulative and body-based therapies
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
- Magnetic-field therapies: used to ease chronic pain
Mind-Body Therapies

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

- 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

- **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
- Yoga
- Qigong
- Progressive relaxation
- Good nutrition
- Adequate rest
- Acupuncture for pain following surgery

Conventional
- Surgery
- Penicillin
- Polio vaccine
- Chemotherapy

Alternative
- Homeopathic medicine
- Traditional Chinese Medicine
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
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*
Influences on Health Care Choices

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