



# P-1198 THE IMPACT OF UN-PROVEN COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE PRACTICES IN DIABETES MANAGEMENT – AN INDIAN SCENARIO



Jothydev Kesavadev, Arun Shankar, Ashwin David Ashok, Lakshmy Ramachandran, Gopika Krishnan, Sunitha Jothydev

JOTHYDEV'S DIABETES RESEARCH CENTRE, Trivandrum, India

[www.jothydev.net](http://www.jothydev.net), [www.research.jothydev.com](http://www.research.jothydev.com), [jothydev@gmail.com](mailto:jothydev@gmail.com)

## BACKGROUND

India being a nation with rich traditional knowledge and cultural history, several Complementary and Alternative Medicinal (CAM) therapies have been deeply integrated into its healthcare system. Use of such scientifically unproven practices is highly prevalent even among patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer etc. In our own experience from 'Diabscreen Kerala' diabetes awareness camps conducted along the length and breadth of our state, almost 10-12% of all the diabetes affected individuals rely entirely on such traditional systems of medicine and another 10% either reduce or stop conventional medications (even insulin) for the purpose of adopting CAM practices. Patients often hold an inherent notion of CAM therapies being natural and safe, and hence even use it without discussing its pros and cons with their modern medicine doctors. The possibility of undesirable drug interactions with conventional medications, deteriorated quality of many of the CAM products, quackery among CAM practitioners etc. have all been identified as some of the reasons behind treatment failures and escalating costs of diabetes treatment.

## AIM

We made an attempt to explore the rate of CAM use among the diabetes patients who visited our clinic for routine diabetes management and evaluated any adverse events confronted by them.

## METHOD

An informal survey was conducted among our patients as well as practising clinicians to understand the prevalence of CAM use among diabetes patients. Any adverse events reported due to CAM use were documented and the possibilities for a prospective CAM use were explored.

## RESULTS

Overall, 68% of our patients followed some system of CAM of which Ayurveda was the most sought after stream.

<b>CAM popularity among our diabetes patients (% of patients following each system)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ayurveda (36%)</li> <li>▶ Acupuncture (6%)</li> <li>▶ None (32%)</li> <li>▶ Homoeopathy (10%)</li> <li>▶ Sweet therapy (4%)</li> <li>▶ Naturopathy (8%)</li> <li>▶ Other traditional practices (4%)</li> </ul>
<b>Reasons identified for CAM use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The notion among patients and/or their supporting members that CAMs are 'safe' and 'natural' with no side effects.</li> <li>▶ To avoid injections.</li> <li>▶ Very powerful and convincing advertisements by the manufacturers and even some of them given wide publicity with government support.</li> <li>▶ Fear of side effects of the modern conventional medicine.</li> </ul>
<b>Adverse effects reported from CAM use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Uncontrolled hyperglycemia either due to reduction or complete stoppage of conventional medications (especially insulin).</li> <li>▶ Serious hypoglycemic events due to drug interactions and resultant additive hypoglycemia.</li> <li>▶ Patients completely stopping insulin for undergoing acupuncture and ending up with requiring an amputation or even resulting in the death of the individual due to ketoacidosis.</li> <li>▶ Poorly controlled diabetes and associated complications due to decreased adherence to conventional medications as a result of adopting CAM practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Solutions identified towards a prospective CAM use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Widespread education on adopting only proven medicines and not to go behind advertisements in print and electronic media.</li> <li>▶ Implement stringent laws for promoting only genuine, safe and efficacious CAM practices and products.</li> <li>▶ Conduct well designed systematic clinical trials to identify those CAM therapies that could be integrated into conventional medicine.</li> </ul>

## DISCUSSION

It is unjustifiable to deny the public from adopting efficient therapies, which may ultimately result in developing costly disabling complications. Safer and effective options of CAM need to be identified through systematically conducted clinical trials. Quackery should be effectively managed with stringent regulations so as to enhance the quality and reliability of these systems of medicine and to effectively integrate them into the mainstream healthcare practices.

## REFERENCES

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