

Informed Consent Regarding Alternative Therapies

Complementary and Alternative Medicine

There are many terms used to describe approaches to health care that are outside the realm of conventional medicine- medicine as practiced by holders of M.D. (medical doctor) or D.O. (doctor of osteopathy) degrees and by their allied health professionals such as physical therapists, psychologists, and registered nurses. as practiced in the United States. This fact sheet explains how the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), a component of the National Institutes of Health, defines some of the key terms used in the field of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine. Complementary medicine is used together with conventional medicine, and alternative medicine is used in place of conventional medicine.

What is CAM?

CAM is a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine. Conventional medicine is medicine as practiced by holders of M.D. (medical doctor) or D.O. (doctor of osteopathy) degrees and by their allied health professionals, such as physical therapists, psychologists, and registered nurses. Some health care providers practice both CAM and conventional medicine. While some scientific evidence exists regarding some CAM therapies, for most there are key questions that are yet to be answered through well-designed scientific studies--questions such as whether these therapies are safe and whether they work for the diseases or medical conditions for which they are used. This is true, as well, for conventional medicine in many instances. When there are reasonable studies proving the efficacy of a modality we call it evidence based medicine. There was little evidence for hormone replacement therapy in women (HRT) and poor evidence for the use of Vioxx, yet we used these therapies on the assumption that what evidence we did have suggested human benefit. As we all know this did not prove to be so for many who later suffered from cancer, heart disease and even death. Likewise, we use natural remedies (alternative therapies) making our best assumptions based on existing data which is growing rapidly. Still, as HRT was, many CAM modalities are yet unproven. I chose treatments with great care as a result.

The list of what is considered to be CAM changes continually, as those therapies that are proven to be safe and effective become adopted into conventional health care and as new approaches to health care emerge.

Are complementary medicine and alternative medicine different from each other?

Yes, they are different.

* Complementary medicine is used together with conventional medicine. An example of a complementary therapy is using aromatherapyA therapy in which the scent of essential oils

from flowers, herbs, and trees is inhaled to promote health and well-being. to help lessen a patient's discomfort following surgery.

* Alternative medicine is used in place of conventional medicine. An example of an alternative therapy is using a special diet to treat cancer instead of undergoing surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy that has been recommended by a conventional doctor.

What is integrative medicine?

Integrative medicine combines treatments from conventional medicine and CAM for which there is some high-quality evidence of safety and effectiveness. It is also called integrated medicine. An approach to medicine that combines treatments from conventional medicine and CAM for which there is some high-quality scientific evidence of safety and effectiveness..

What are the major types of complementary and alternative medicine?

NCCAM groups CAM practices into four domains, recognizing there can be some overlap. In addition, NCCAM studies CAM whole medical systems, which cut across all domains.

Whole Medical Systems

Whole medical systems are built upon complete systems of theory and practice. Often, these systems have evolved apart from and earlier than the conventional medical approach used in the United States. Examples of whole medical systems that have developed in Western cultures include homeopathic medicine. A whole medical system that originated in Europe. Homeopathy seeks to stimulate the body's ability to heal itself by giving very small doses of highly diluted substances that in larger doses would produce illness or symptoms (an approach called "like cures like") and naturopathic medicine. A whole medical system that originated in Europe. Naturopathy aims to support the body's ability to heal itself through the use of dietary and lifestyle changes together with CAM therapies such as herbs, massage, and joint manipulation. Examples of systems that have developed in non-Western cultures include traditional Chinese medicine. A whole medical system that originated in China. It is based on the concept that disease results from disruption in the flow of qi and imbalance in the forces of yin and yang. Practices such as herbs, meditation, massage, and acupuncture seek to aid healing by restoring the yin-yang balance and the flow of qi. and Ayurveda. A whole medical system that originated in India. It aims to integrate the body, mind, and spirit to prevent and treat disease. Therapies used include herbs, massage, and yoga..

Mind-Body Medicine

Mind-body medicine uses a variety of techniques designed to enhance the mind's capacity to affect bodily function and symptoms. Some techniques that were considered CAM in the past have become mainstream (for example, patient support groups and cognitive-behavioral therapy). Other mind-body techniques are still considered CAM, including meditation-a conscious mental process using certain techniques -- such as focusing attention or maintaining

a specific posture -- to suspend the stream of thoughts and relax the body and mind., prayer, mental healing, and therapies that use creative outlets such as art, music, or dance.

Biologically Based Practices

Biologically based practices in CAM use substances found in nature, such as herbs, foods, and vitamins. Some examples include dietary supplements, herbal products, and the use of other so-called natural but as yet scientifically unproven therapies (for example, using shark cartilage to treat cancer).

Manipulative and Body-Based Practices

Manipulative and body-based practices in CAM are based on manipulation-the application of controlled force to a joint, moving it beyond the normal range of motion in an effort to aid in restoring health. Manipulation may be performed as a part of other therapies or whole medical systems, including chiropractic medicine, massage, and naturopathy. and/or movement of one or more parts of the body. Some examples include chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation- a type of manipulation practiced by osteopathic physicians. It is combined with physical therapy and instruction in proper posture., and massage- pressing, rubbing, and moving muscles and other soft tissues of the body, primarily by using the hands and fingers. The aim is to increase the flow of blood and oxygen to the massaged area.

Energy Medicine

Energy therapies involve the use of energy fields. They are of two types:

* Biofield therapies are intended to affect energy fields that purportedly surround and penetrate the human body. The existence of such fields has not yet been scientifically proven. Some forms of energy therapy manipulate biofields by applying pressure and/or manipulating the body by placing the hands in, or through, these fields. Examples include qi gong- a component of traditional Chinese medicine that combines movement, meditation, and controlled breathing. The intent is to improve blood flow and the flow of qi., Reiki-a therapy in which practitioners seek to transmit a universal energy to a person, either from a distance or by placing their hands on or near that person. The intent is to heal the spirit and thus the body., and Therapeutic Touch- a therapy in which practitioners pass their hands over another person's body with the intent to use their own perceived healing energy to identify energy imbalances and promote health..

* Bioelectromagnetic-based therapies involve the unconventional use of electromagnetic fields, such as pulsed fields, magnetic fields, or alternating-current or direct-current fields.

NCCAM is the Federal Government's lead agency for scientific research on CAM. . NCCAM's mission is to explore complementary and alternative healing practices in the context of rigorous science, train CAM researchers, and disseminate authoritative information to the public and professionals.

For More Information

Sources of NCCAM Information

NCCAM Clearinghouse

The NCCAM Clearinghouse provides information on CAM and NCCAM, including publications and searches of Federal databases of scientific and medical literature. Examples of publications include "Selecting a CAM Practitioner" and "Are You Considering Using CAM?" The Clearinghouse does not provide medical advice, treatment recommendations, or referrals to practitioners.

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226

TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615

Web site: nccam.nih.gov

E-mail: info@nccam.nih.gov

Sources of Information on Dietary Supplements

Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), NIH

ODS seeks to strengthen knowledge and understanding of dietary supplements by evaluating scientific information, supporting research, sharing research results, and educating the public. Its resources include publications and the International Bibliographic Information on Dietary Supplements database.

Web site: ods.od.nih.gov

E-mail: ods@nih.gov

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition

Web site: cfsan.fda.gov

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-723-3366

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THE OPTION OF NO TREATMENT- RISKS/ BENEFITS

RISKS OF EARLY TERMINATION OF TREATMENT

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DO YOU HAVE ANY LIMITATIONS ON MY TREATMENT PLAN?