

2 *Complementary Therapies— Useful Tools or Dangerous Liaisons*

V Parameshvara

Abstract: Economics, social and cultural factors have accounted for the upsurge of interest in health by people all over the world. Hence each system of medicine arose in societies where the level of cultural, social and economic development was ancient or feudal.¹ Numerous such systems have gradually advanced haphazardly but continue to co-exist with modern (western) system of medicine.

Complementary/Integrated medicine stems from a broader concept of health beyond biological markings. Much of these constitute psychoneuroimmunology.

Complementary medicine has existed all along and will continue to serve the masses indefinitely. Masses have accepted complementary medicine. To ask whether you are for or against complementary medicine is like asking whether you are for health or disease. It is up to all of us to make use of these remedies wisely, prudently and rationally and make it more popular, thus making complementary medicine acceptable even by modern system of medicine.

In fact, complementary medicine simply needs to be evaluated and explained in understandable terms. In the meantime, it would be disastrous to throw the baby out with the bath water because it is unproven or difficult to explain.

INTRODUCTION

Complementary medicine refers to treatments that may be used as adjuncts to conventional treatment and are not usually taught in medical schools. Integrated medicine has a larger meaning and mission, its focus being on health and healing rather than disease and treatment. It views patients as whole, people with mind and spirit as well as bodies and includes these dimensions into diagnosis and treatment. It also involves patients and doctors working to maintain health by paying attention to lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise, quality of rest, sleep and the nature of relationship.²

PERCEPTION

Every country has its own traditional medical system. It is acupuncture for the Chinese, magnetic healing for the French, herbal remedies for the Indians, with bone setting common to vast number of countries, etc. Granny's cures for cold and flu abound; and each nation and even region within a nation develops its own remedies for common ailments. Ancient world - wide system of home medicine is using plants to prevent and cure disease. There are hundred and thousands of valuable medicinal plants which are used in home medicine and about which we simply know nothing.

Interestingly, the term alternative/complementary has come to embarrass any form of medicine that is outside the main stream of western medicine, as practised by the majority of the doctors today. It is also known as "Fringe medicine" or more insultingly as "Quack medicine", because it is often practised by people with no formal medical training.

Modern doctors would do well to remember that a very large number of people would have been tolerably well-treated by home/complementary medicine even before the arrival of modern medicine. Modern medicine, therefore, is relatively new, much of it frankly untried for long enough and a lot of its efforts wasted unlike home medicine. It is not right for modern scientific medicine to be considered superior to the millions in the developing and developed countries, who would get timely relief by home/complementary medicine.

In reality, western medicine as we know it today, is alternative medicine in historic terms because the disciplines of home medicine were going strong, centuries or even thousands of years before modern medicine which is only about three hundred years old. Until as recently as one hundred and fifty years ago, home medicines consisting of plant extracts and simple inorganic compounds were the most useful treatments available.

THE CONCEPT

The problem with modern medicine is the emphasis from patient to laboratory and the concept of the patient as a whole person in breach than in observation. Healing process brings with the assumption that the individual to be treated is ill or damaged in some way or other and the body is the obvious target in modern medicine. But many a time the beliefs of the patient are more decisive than physiological responses and on occasions can critically control the body's powers of rejuvenation. A great deal of research is now underway on the biology of the mind. Given the complexities of human biology and social life various alternative/complementary systems of medicine have a decisive and useful role to play in the art of healing and relief of pain. There is a wide range of intervention proposed by advocates of various alternative systems of medicine.

SCOPE

Most patients turn to complementary medicine out of frustration. Research shows that the consultation process and holistic approach adopted by practitioners of complementary medicine make patient feel more in control of their illness. Unfortunately, this opinion is not often available because physicians with the desired attitudes, knowledge, and training are few and far between.²

Conventional (modern) medicine can no longer ignore complementary medicine. In USA expenditure on complementary medicine rose in 1990-1997 from \$13bn to \$38bn a year and twice as many consultations were with practitioners of complementary medicine as with mainstream family doctors. This trend is also apparent in Australia. In the UK, a survey in Southampton (population 200,000) showed that around 4 million pounds a year was spent on complementary medicine outside the NHS.²

In short, two-thirds of the world's population, mainly in developing countries, relies on traditional complementary medicine. Hence even *the World Health Organisation has declared its intention to actively encourage traditional medicine worldwide, realising that despite western medical care being available, a majority of the people of the third world choose to be loyal to complementary medicines. WHO has pledged itself to 'foster a realistic approach to traditional medicine to explore the merits of traditional medicine in the light of modern science in order to encourage useful ones; and to promote the integration of proven valuable knowledge and skills in traditional and western medicine.*

In Britain, awareness is growing and some medical schools already have some teaching. The Consortium of Academic Health Centres for Integrative Medicine in United Kingdom aims to have programmes of Integrated Medicine in a fifth of the country's 125 medical schools within the next few years.² In USA, many practitioners are being trained with a distance learning, internet based module, and medical education is also being restructured.

MEDICINE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Medicine of the new millennium is the upcoming integrated complementary medicine in order to restore 'care' by values eroded by social and economic factors and paying attention to lifestyle

factors—power of self-care and healing by environmental influences. Complementary medicine and alternative medicine are no longer an obscure issue in medicine. Teaching complementary medicine is increasingly viewed as a way of making teaching more holistic.

SOME FORMS OF THE COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

Home Medicine

Home remedies are an important and integral part of treatment which has existed from time immemorial. In fact, it is estimated that since millions of years before the advent of civilisation, people were known to practice home remedies to obtain relief from sickness and suffering. This was not just for human being alone; even animals like horses and dogs tend to change their dietetic habits and eat certain vegetables leaves, when they feel out of sorts physically.

Home medicine involves use of common substances and materials available in and around the house. They are easily prepared, readily available, non-time consuming, in-expensive, invariably effective for common disorders and offer physical and mental relief, and emotional reassurance with few or no side effects and require no investigations. Home medicine has stood the test of time. Used wisely and prudently by the experienced practitioners, home medicine is a boon to society. Every person knows some type of home remedy or other. There is no man or woman who has not taken a home medicine at some time or other. Though the list of home remedies is endless but its scope unlimited.

For home medicine to play its logical part in total health care, a lot needs to happen; doctors must be better trained to analyse and understand these therapies for what they are worth. Very few medical colleges ever mention, for example an ancient and valuable therapy such as herbal medicine.

Homeopathy

A brain child of Samuel Hahnemann, a German Physician—(1755-1843). Hahnemann's theory is based on that if a substance can produce illness in a healthy person, a tiny quantity of it can cure the same illness in the sick person.

Homeopaths claim that this type of treatment can do no harm. A meta-analysis, published in the Journal Lancet, examined over 200 randomised, placebo-controlled trials and found an odds ratio of 2.45 (95% confidence interval 2.05 to 2.93) in favour of homeopathy. The authors concluded: "The results of our meta-analysis are not compatible in the hypothesis that the clinical effects of homeopathy are completely due to placebo effect."³

Hypnosis and Relaxation Therapies

Hypnosis is the induction of a deeply relaxed state with increased suggestibility and suspension of critical faculties—Hypnotic trance. Once in this state patients are given therapeutic suggestions to encourage changes in behavior or relief of symptoms. Sequential muscle relaxation (SMR), progressive relaxation and Jacobson relaxation, movement, stretches and breathing exercises are found useful in stress management.⁴

Meditation and Yoga

The practice focuses on stilling or emptying the mind. Meditators concentrate on their breath or a sound ("mantra") which they repeat to themselves—a state of detached observation. Yoga practice involves postures-muscle stretching and mental relaxation and can also play a social function.⁴

Ayurveda and Siddha System

Implies in improving the quality and longevity of life by promoting healthy lifestyles and also encompasses preventive and curative measures.

Unani System

A widely practiced independent system of medicine.

Taichi

A series of slow and graceful movements – a set pattern.

Acupuncture

It has a wide therapeutic application for both body and mind. Its strength lies in the area of functional disorders although it can be used to treat both acute and chronic disease.

Chiropractic

This therapy is both a science and an art. Chiropractors specialise in treating muscle and joint disorders by manipulation or adjustment of spine and joints.

Osteopathy

Means 'bone disease' and is based on a detailed and dedicated study of human anatomy, physiology; and believes that the coordinator of all body activity is neuroendocrine system.

Holistic Concept

Health implies a sound mind, in a sound body, in a sound family, in sound environment. Holistic healing means treating the whole person; helping the person to bring the mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual dimension into greater harmony by fostering the self-regeneration and self-reparative process of natural healing.

Naturopathy and Natural Therapy

Natural therapy encourages the use of normal flora of bacteria to protect the hosts against many diseases – probiotic therapy, e.g. Lactobacilli in intestinal flora, urinary and genital tract of women. Introduce the right kind of bacteria and several pathogens lose their niche in the human host - that is the rationale behind. Magnetic therapy, pranic healing, aroma therapy, crystal-gazing, dowsing, accupressure, faith cures, prayer, rituals, religious support, psychospiritual therapies (imaginary and visualisation), etc. are some of the other forms of complementary medicine.

APPLICATION OF COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE FOR INCURABLE DISEASE

HIV Infection

The popularity and use of complementary therapies among patients with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection has grown enormously. In a prospective, longitudinal cohort study of 56 patients aged 23 to 69 years with HIV infection, Nina Singh, et al,⁵ observed that thirty percent of patients reported using nontraditional therapy. This therapy users reported greater community based acquired immunodeficiency syndrome group support (P = 06), greater perceived social support (P = 08) and significantly higher recreational of 'street drugs' use (P = 02). Nontraditional therapy users were significantly more assertive (P=0.04) compared to conventional therapy users. Patients choose therapy because they seek greater control of the outcome of their disease. However, no beneficial effect on disease progression, CD4 cells count,

or mortality was observed in these patients. Homosexuals, affluent and educated patients are more likely to seek alternative therapies.⁵

Metastatic (Breast) Cancer and Alternative Therapy

Metastatic breast cancer is incurable, but effective treatment is possible for most patients. Alternative therapy could be complementary to the input of the oncologist. Interventions such as massage, relaxation, aroma therapy, hypnotherapy, acupuncture and homeopathy have gained widespread acceptance. The use of alternative therapies such as naturopathy, nutritional, immunological or physical treatment are also common. The focus must be on the person rather than the disease. There is more to the management of incurable disease than tumor regression alone. Therapeutic interventions need to be critically assessed on the basis of their impact on palliative end points, quality of life and psychological well-being.⁶

Modern Medicine: 'An Industry'

Modern medicine is an enormous business and because big business is so well represented in high places, any change that is suggested is ridiculed as unworkable or useless. Home medicine is no exception.

A powerful lobby against the growth of home/complementary medicine would probably be the pharmaceutical industry. A handful of drug innovations like the antibiotics has made a difference to life expectancy. But certainly they are not responsible for saving as many millions of lives as we would think.

Majority of killer infection diseases were fast disappearing years before drugs were available to cure them. Over exposure of drugs of modern medicine has produced whole new kinds of illnesses, actually brought about by doctors. Hence there must be an alternative to this. People are paying a heavy price for modern medicine and going to the doctor has become synonymous with drug taking. *The price we, in a society, pay for modern medicine is not only measured in unwanted drugs side effects, unnecessary investments, but also expense.*

Most doctors become angry when they hear that alternative therapies and home remedies could, many a time, be effective but their anger is mostly protective because they simply have not been taught to think on a plane other than mechanical or biochemical.

Polypill vs Polymeal

Although the concept of a Polypill (Thiazide, ACE inhibitor, β -blocker, Statin Aspirin, and Folic acid) is exciting in terms of reducing risk of cardiovascular disease, the potential costs and adverse effects are its main pitfalls. The concept of tastier and safer alternative, 'Polymeal' – chocolate, wine, fish, nuts, garlic, fruits and vegetables – all have positive effect on cardiovascular disease and have been enjoyed by mankind for centuries – the researchers found that a combined meal of these components may reduce cardiovascular disease by more than 75 percent.⁷

DRUG MARKETING AND DRUG LIAISONS

Power of Color⁸/Power of Placebo⁹

Colors affect the perceived action of a drug. Red, yellow and orange are associated with a stimulant effect, while blue and green are related to a tranquilising effect. Hypnotic, sedative and anxiolytic drugs are more likely to be green, blue or purple.

Power of Product Names and Proper Claims¹⁰

Explicit or implicit claims are embodied in the proprietary names of pharmaceutical products. A number of drugs have names that allude their indications or actions. Such names may be problematic, because they affect promise more than the drug can deliver. The claim has (tacit) meaning for either the patient, or the doctor, or both, the result of marketing techniques.

Names of Drugs Referring to Indications or Action

The possibility of misrepresentation is much more apparent as names refer to the drug's indication or actions, but some names are innocuous, e.g. Sotalol for the blocking agent.

Dangerous Liaisons

In some specific groups, the dangerous liaisons between names and implied effects are more widespread, e.g. Anorectic drug (mirapront 'miraculous and prompt'); hypnotics and anxiolytics drugs (librium 'promising freedom'); Serenace ('peace and serenity').

Creative efforts of marketing departments concentrate on relative sophistication of the allusion—suggesting and aiming at a more or less sophisticated target audience—specific illness groups and specific social groups.

From moral and regulatory points of view that there are drugs on the market whose names imply indications, actions or effects that are different from the drugs real effects: drugs are remembered more by proprietary names than by their generic equivalents. Good ethical reasons exist to question names that imply actions far beyond the known pharmaceutical actions of a given product.¹⁰

MURDER BY FAKE DRUGS: TIME FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION¹¹

Much of the counterfeit drug trade is probably linked to organised crime, corruption, the narcotics trade, unregulated pharmaceutical companies and the business interests of unscrupulous politicians. Much greater international political will to eliminate the problem is required.¹¹

LIES, WHITE LIES AND TOTAL LIES

There are nearly 4000 manufacturers of traditional remedies in India with annual domestic sales worth nearly 300 million US dollars. A herbal company advertises pills that it claimed would 'change fetal sex.' Advertisements also offer curative and preventive traditional remedies for illness ranging from AIDS, Cancer to hair loss and premature aging etc., in spite of the fact that drug act bans the advertising of products for at least 20 new diseases including AIDS, Genetic disorders, Liver disease and Parkinson's disease.¹²

Public Notice: News Items

"Prohibition of advertisement of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homeopathy or any other drug treatment of disease mentioned in Schedule of Drugs and Magic Remedies (objectionable advertisements) Act 1854....Some of the diseases for which advertisement of treatment banned... Asthma... Cancer... Cataract... Venereal diseases and HIV AIDS, etc."

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India davp7540(10)2006, The Times of India, Saturday 7th Oct 2006.

Advertisements in Television: (? NDTV)

- "Contact 'Pharma'... for complete cure of HBS" at 9.00 PM; 7th October 2006
- "Visit for Hepatitis C cure www..." at 9.00 A.M; 10th October 2006.

News Item

"The high court of Karnataka ordered four doctors who have been alleged to be putting up misleading advertisements claiming a cure for AIDS to file counter affidavits within a month"

Times News Network, 12th Oct 2006.

Advertisements in Medical Journal

1. "Nature's Mood Booster-Emotional playing field – for quality of life, gently, surely."
2. "Optimum use of herbal medicines which have shown positive benefits in clinical studies, may reduce the risk of coronary artery disease in individuals with risk factors – Gugul."

Publication in Medical Journals

"TF" The drug economical and can be recommended for individuals and couples suffering from erectile dysfunction. "Trial 50 men aged 19 to 59 years – 50% married, 32% single, 16% divorced, 2% widowers. Outcome : 32(74%) at the end of 2nd and 42(84%) reported they were satisfied.¹³"

The value of a drug should be expressed in terms of safety, tolerability, efficacy and price and their efficacy and should ideally be measured in terms of clinical end points that are relevant to patients, if surrogate end points are used they should be valid. Promotional literature of low scientific validity should not be allowed to influence practice.¹⁴ Time seems ripe for a licencing policy that promotes the safety and quality of herbal medicine.¹⁵

Why Herbal Wave and Complementary Medicine are Sweeping over Society?

1. Cultural perception: Inherent bias for traditional medicine and prejudice against western (modern) medicine.
2. It is also possible that when someone seeks medical help, he or she is usually suffering from the condition which may be self limiting or it may be chronic or partial recoveries and relapses or may be of psychological origin, or might actually be an acute medical condition. All of these people are really ill and will benefit from some sort of treatment. The last group makes up less than 20 percent and gets most help from modern system of medicine. The other 80 percent fall into the groups that would fare just as well, with better family ties and simple home remedies.
3. The bulk of ailments is probably the result of all kinds of disruptions, be it environmental, dietary, psychological or other worldly situations. This is where alternative medical therapies could play an important and popular role in health care.

REFERENCES

1. V Parameshvara. Alternative Medicine – Implications for Clinical Practice. Medicine Update APICON 1997;7:27.
2. Lesley Rees. Integrated Medicine. BMJ 2001;322: 119.
3. Andrew Vickers Catherine Zollman. Homeopathy. BMJ 1999;319:115-8.
4. Andrew Vickers Catherine Zollman. Hypnosis and Relaxation Therapies. BMJ 1999;319:1346-9.
5. Singh N, et al. Determinants of nontraditional therapy use in patients with HIV infection – A prospective study. Arch Int Med 1996;156(21): 197-201.
6. Ashby, et al. Psychological support, treatment of metastatic disease and palliative care. Med J Augt 1996;164(11):43-9.
7. Student BMJ. Ultimate polymeal. BMJ 2005;13: 272.
8. Anton JM, de Crain, et al. Effect of colour of drugs. BMJ 1996;313:1624-6.
9. Herxheimer. Power of Placebo. BMJ 1996;313:1569-70.
10. Soren Holm, Martyn Evans. Product names, proper claims. BMJ 1996;313:1627-9.
11. Paul Newton, et al. Murder by fake drugs. BMJ 2002;324:800-801.
12. Ganapathi Mudur. India cracks down on traditional drugs advertisement. BMJ 1996;12:509.
13. Roumen Bostandjiev, Mitra SK. Clinical evaluation of Tentex Forte and Himcolin in the treatment of Functional Erectile Dysfunction. Medicine Update 2004;11:947-51.
14. Trisha Grunhalgh. Papers that report drug trades. BMJ 1997;315:483.
15. Peter AGM Dc Smet. Should herbal medicine-like products be licensed as medicines. BMJ 1995;310: 1023-4.

