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A cross-sectional study on the use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) by cancer patients in a tertiary care hospital

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Background: Use of Complimentary & Alternative Medicine (CAM) by cancer patients has increased across the world. Not much about use of CAM in India is known. So this study was undertaken.

Objectives: To know the proportion of cancer patients using CAM attending a tertiary care centre, to know the patterns of usage of CAM amongst these patients and to know the reasons and perceptions which made them use CAM.

Materials & Methods: This is an interview based cross sectional study conducted among cancer patients being treated in tertiary care hospital. The patients were interviewed to know the usage patterns, reasons and perceptions behind the use of CAM. The interview schedules were analyzed using SPSS Version 10. Chi-square test was used to know the association between independent variables with CAM usage. $P < 0.05$ was considered significant.

Results: About 33.8% of the patients used one or more types of CAM. Ayurveda was the most common (50%) of the CAM tried by the patients. The predominant reason for use was as an adjuvant for allopathy (50%). Newly diagnosed cancer patients tend to try CAM more than those who are on treatment for more than a year ($p < 0.05$). Majority of them did not inform their doctors about CAM usage.

Conclusion: The usage of CAM could be higher than reported. If patients are satisfied with allopathy then CAM is used only as an adjuvant. Doctors should make an attempt to know as most of the patients would not disclose the usage of CAM.

Biography

Harsha Kumar H N is an Associate Professor in the Department of Community Medicine, KMC Mangalore. He teaches Community Medicine.

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