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What do nursing students know and practice about complementary and alternative therapies?

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Introduction: Today, many healthy individuals and patients use complementary therapies to improve health, to prevent diseases or to support medical care and treatment in the presence of medical conditions. As a result of the increased interest of the people in complementary therapies, nurses, as healthcare professionals and members of healthcare teams who are to meet healthcare demands of the society, are now inevitably required be involved in provision of complementary therapies. Complementary therapies, therefore, may be regarded as one of the roles of professional nurses with academic background and scientific problem-solving skills, within the context of independent nursing concept.

Aim: This study was conducted to determine knowledge levels and practice situations about CAT of nursing students.

Methods: The study was conducted in a Health School of state university in Turkey. The sample of the study was 303 nursing students. The data collected by using questionnaire that was developed by researchers. Descriptive statistics and chi-square test were used in the study.

Results: The mean age of the students were 20.59 ± 2.33 . 63.8% of the students were female, 91.2% were not trained for CAT, and 33.6% were not interested in CAT. The students that used one of the CAT methods were 31.4%. 66.9% of the students stated that they wanted the education program for CAT to be added to the nursing curriculum. 53.5% of the students stated that CAT was as effective as medical treatment, and 65.7% stated that they should not be used without consulting the doctor. The students had no knowledge about CAT methods: 81.2% of ayurveda, 81.1% acupresure, 78.4% reiki, 72.6% reflexology, 71.5% taichi, 66.4% aromatherapy, 64.3% homeopathy, 63.3% fengshui, 59.5% osteopathy, 57.2% ozone therapy, 54.6% therapeutic touch, 44.0% color therapy. 39.8% of male students and 27.6% of girls thought that CAT methods should be used as a last choice and the difference between the two rates was significant ($p < 0.05$). 38.7% of the female students and 25.2% of the male students thought that CAT methods should be used in consultation with the doctor and the difference between the two ratios was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: According to this study, information on complementary therapies and their areas of use should be included in nursing curriculums and nurses should be updated on these therapies through in-service trainings. In line with the results of this study, it is recommended that nurses carry out scientific studies on complementary therapies, investigate the benefits and possible side effects of these methods, and inform the healthy/sick person and/or his/her family and the society.

Biography

Yasemin Altınbas has completed her PhD from Ege University Institute of Health Science. She had worked in Ege University Faculty of Nursing, as a Research Assistant between 2011-2016. She is working as an Assistant Professor at Surgical Nursing Department in Adiyaman University School of Health-Turkey.

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