

Original article

The use of East-West Integrative Medicine in a national university hospital setting in Korea: A review of a new routine integrated hospital dataset

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Abstract

Aim: In Korea, where both conventional Western medicine (CWM) and traditional Korean medicine (TKM) coexist, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the pattern of patients' use of East-West Integrative Medicine (EWIM). This study analyses the patterns of EWIM use and measures patients satisfaction in a national Korean university hospital setting.

Methods: After obtaining the approval of an institutional review board, the medical records of patients attending integrated CWM and TKM hospitals between March 2010 and January 2011 were extracted and analysed using the clinical data warehouse of the hospitals' electronic medical record system. Patient satisfaction with EWIM use was assessed using a telephone survey after receiving consent from patients.

Results: Those using both medicines comprised 52.3% (1773/3393) of all TKM hospital care. Totally, 129 (35.4%) inpatients in the TKM hospital had used EWIM. Their primary reasons included radiologic or laboratory examinations (53.9%), CWM treatments (28.5%), and medical diagnosis (16.7%). In comparison, 21 (4.1%) outpatients of the TKM hospital had used EWIM, and 34 cases (1.1%) of outpatients had consulted with the CWM hospital. Their satisfaction with EWIM was generally high; however, some patients were dissatisfied with the complicated medical delivery system and the doctors' attitudes.

Conclusions: There was a high proportion of EWIM use in the TKM hospital based on the analysis of the hospital electronic record system. The medical delivery system needs to be modified for patients who used EWIM which could improve the Korean healthcare system and improve the experience of patients as consumers of medical service.

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Keywords: East-West Integrative Medicine; Conventional Western medicine; Traditional Korean medicine; Medical delivery system

Introduction

Integrative medicine is commonly defined as the combination of complementary practices and alternative medicine underpinned by evidence-based medicine [1]. It provides care that is centred on patients, is oriented towards healing, emphasises the therapeutic relationship, and uses treatments that originate from both conventional and alternative medicine [2,3]. Thus, it prioritises the human capacity for healing and increases quality of life.

In Korea, the healthcare delivery systems include conventional Western medicine (CWM) and traditional Korean medicine (TKM). Both medicines are included in the national

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healthcare system and developed in national policies based on historical and cultural backgrounds that differ from those of the complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) in Western society [4]. A total of 69% of the Korean population have received TKM [5], and those who have received both CWM and TKM are currently increasing in numbers [6].

East-West Integrative Medicine (EWIM) in Korea is an integration of CWM and TKM with regard to the diagnosis and treatment of patients with the need for both medicines. However, the research and policies with regard to EWIM vary depending on the country [3,7].

In Korea, EWIM research has tended to examine the conditions [8,9] and clinical treatments for specific disease groups [10,11] and no attempt has been made to study the pattern of EWIM use in a hospital population. CAM studies in other countries have carried out similar analysis [12,13]. Although there have been CAM surveys conducted with patients [14] and with experts [15], the entirety of the current patterns of integrative medicine has not been studied with regard to all patients in a hospital with an electronic medical record (EMR) system, even in the United States [16], England [17], or Israel [18]. Thus, we must determine the current patterns of EWIM use to improve the Korean medical system.

As there is great need to understand the consumption patterns of EWIM in Korea, this study analysed the patterns of EWIM use and surveyed patient satisfaction in a national university hospital.

Methods

Ethics

The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB approval # KCRC-IRB-2011001) at Pusan National University Korean Medicine Hospital in 2011.

Data collection from the EMR system

Pusan National University Yangsan Hospital (Yangsan, South Korea) was established in 2008 as a CWM hospital, and Pusan National University Korean Medicine Hospital (Yangsan, South Korea) opened in 2010 as a TKM medical complex and dental hospital in the same location. Both hospitals have a closely connected electronic medical record (EMR) system that facilitates collaborations between CWM and TKM, following national policy. A condition of opening this EWIM complex was that researchers would be allowed to observe the patients' pattern of use.

The study participants included in- and outpatients who visited the TKM hospital for treatment between March 2010 and January 2011. The medical records of patients from both the CWM and the TKM hospitals were extracted from the clinical data warehouse (CDW) of the EMR system following the predefined characteristics of the patterns of EWIM use in accordance with the study protocol.

Table 1

Use of traditional Korean medicine at Pusan National University Korean Medicine Hospital from March 2010 to January 2011.

Specialty	Outpatients	Inpatients	Total
Internal Medicine	739 (24.4)	117 (32.1)	856 (25.2)
Acupuncture & Moxibustion	789 (26.0)	74 (20.3)	863 (25.4)
Rehabilitation Medicine	602 (19.9)	118 (32.4)	720 (21.2)
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	181 (6.0)	10 (2.7)	191 (5.6)
Paediatric Medicine	300 (9.9)	7 (1.9)	307 (9.0)
Ear, Nose and Throat	141 (4.7)	1 (0.3)	142 (4.2)
Neuropsychology	68 (2.2)	11 (3.0)	79 (2.3)
Sasang Constitutional Medicine	209 (6.9)	26 (7.1)	235 (6.9)
Total	3029 (100.0)	364 (100.0)	3393 (100.0)

Data show *N* (%), *N*: number of patients.

The survey regarding EWIM use and satisfaction

For the period March 2010–January 2011 all patients who used EWIM in the TKM hospital and were recorded on the EMR system were identified as 3396. Contact was made to ask patients whether they were willing to participate in the satisfaction survey by telephone. For those who agreed to participate and provided verbal consent, telephone surveys were conducted by a clinical research coordinator. The survey consisted of six items that investigated patients' opinions of the use of EWIM and their satisfaction with this medicine (Table 5).

Data analysis

SPSS 18.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used for all statistical analyses. Categorical data were described as frequencies (percentages). The continuous data were summarised as the means \pm standard deviations. An independent t-test was used to detect between-group differences. A chi-square test was used to analyse between-group differences in categorical data. P-values <0.05 were considered significant.

Results

Between March 2010 and January 2011, 3393 patients, 3029 outpatients and 364 inpatients, received TKM care at the Korean Medicine Hospital, Pusan National University. Since the Ministry of Health and Welfare in Korea adopted the TKM specialist system in 1999 as a subspecialty of 8 departments, data is reported for these 8 departments [19] (see Table 1 for the list of departments). The proportions of departments using TKM were; acupuncture and moxibustion (26.0%), internal medicine (24.4%) and rehabilitation medicine (19.9%) which also had the largest proportion (70.4% total) of outpatients and rehabilitation medicine (32.4%), internal medicine (32.1%) and acupuncture and moxibustion (20.3%) with the latter having the largest proportions (84.4% total) of inpatients (Table 1).

EWIM pattern of use

A total of 50.1% (653/1303) of the patients who used TKM also received CWM in the first 6 months. Similarly, 52.3%

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