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Knowledge, attitude and practice toward complementary and traditional medicine among Kashan health care staff, 2012



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Attitude;
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Summary

Objectives: Studies show that medical staff in different countries have different attitudes toward traditional and complementary medicine. Therefore, the current study aimed to evaluate the knowledge, attitude and practice of complementary and traditional medicine by medical staff of Kashan, Iran.

Design: A cross-sectional study was performed.

Setting: A total of 378 questionnaires were distributed among health care team members in Kashan University of Medical Sciences in 2012. The questionnaire was consisted of 5 questions regarding demographic characteristics and 12 questions on knowledge, attitude and practice of traditional and complementary medicine. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results: In total, 309 questionnaires were returned and 302 questionnaires were analyzed. Among the participants, 60.9% were female. The mean age of subjects was 29.70 ± 9.28 years. Totally, 88.4% of the participants had no previous education on complementary and traditional medicine, and 77.8% showed interest to learn in this area. Also, 57.6% of participants had the experience of personal use of complementary and traditional therapies. The commonly used methods were: herbal therapy, cupping and traditional bathing. Participants used traditional medicine mostly for digestive diseases, colds, migraine and headaches, skin disorders, losing weight, and diabetes. Moreover, 56% of participants had recommended complementary and traditional therapies to the others.

Conclusions: Most of the participants had low level knowledge on complementary and traditional medicine, but expressed their interest to learn in this field. Therefore, training health care team members and especially nurses and doctors on the applications, benefits and side effects of complementary and traditional medicine is recommended.

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Introduction

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) or traditional and complementary medicine (TCM) refer to a wide

range of medical opinions and therapeutic actions not clearly defined in the modern medical society, and it is not taught in medical universities or also applied in hospitals.¹ Studies indicated that, despite the grate developments in classic medicine, everyday more people turn to the complementary medicine^{2,3} both in developed and developing countries.⁴ Although studies on the prevalence of CAM use, and the provision of CAM, are not directly comparable across countries and surveys because of differences in research methods and in local definitions and categories of CAM.⁵ It is estimated that one out of three people are using some types of complementary therapies for common problems such as back pain, anxiety and depression.⁴ Because of people's respecting for these methods; knowledge and attitude of health care workers, especially doctors and nurses, about this kind of medicine is highly important.⁶ Therefore, it is recommended that physicians and nurses should have a comprehensive information on CAM to be able to remind their clients the probable risks and side effects and also answer their relevant questions.^{1,7} Hence, some of developed countries have decided to include courses on CAM in the medical group curriculum, so, therapists and clients can benefit from the best therapeutic methods with the lowest costs and highest quality.¹

CAM or TCM has various branches such as herbal therapy, massage therapy, acupuncture, yoga, Chinese traditional medicine and many other methods which most of them have been derived from historic and ethnic culture of nations and their effectiveness and methods are different from conventional medicine. In CAM, therapist treats client as a whole entity, not just focusing on some special illness or disorder.^{1,4} In the past decades, attention and interest toward the use of CAM has been increased globally, despite the diversity seen in the type and methods of CAM in different countries. For instance, in the United States, approximately 38% of adults and 12% of children were using some forms of CAM in the year 2007.⁸ Accordingly, a study of American navy and Marine Corps personnel reported that more than 37% of them have used at least one CAM therapy during the past year.⁹ Also, 74% of Canadians,¹⁰ two third of Australian general population and 24% of adults with a chronic condition,¹¹ 31% of Finnish adults,¹² 60% of Chinese,¹³ 84% of Nigerians¹⁴ and 62.5% of Iranian people have had the experience of using complementary medicine methods.¹⁵ European information centre for CAM has also reported that 20% of Europeans have a clear preference for CAM healthcare, another 20% are regular users and another 20% are occasional users of CAM.¹⁶ A study has indicated the effect of factors such as gender, graduation and social level on the tendency to the complementary medicine.¹⁷

Studies on the attitude of medical staff of different countries toward complementary medicine have had different results. In Hong Kong, more than 90% of nurses participated in a study showed their interests to learn about CAM.⁷ A study in America has reported that 76% of the United States medical staff have had the experience of using CAM.¹⁸ Another study in Australia has reported that more than 59% of nurses had positive attitudes toward CAM, while in contrast, about 33% and 7.2% of them have had neutral and negative attitudes, respectively.¹⁹

Iran has a very rich traditional medicine especially in the use of medical plants for the treatment of various ailments.

It dates back to more than 3000 years ago and has its roots in pre-Islamic Iranian medicine and Greek, Indian and Egyptian medicine.²⁰ Iran's traditional medicine looks at clients and diseases through an angle different from that of modern medicine. It views man as a whole entity.²⁰

During the time, Iran's traditional medicine has gradually affected by modern medicine and started to fade out with the beginning of eighteenth century by the establishment of Western style medical and pharmacy schools.^{20,21} Although traditional medicine in Iran was faced with the problem of legality, it was never completely faded out from the life of the folks, but continued to be an integral part of people's culture, despite great pressure from modern medicine. The government has also gradually showed some interest to traditional medicine. Then, the National Academy of Traditional Medicine in Iran and Islam was established in 1991. The mission of this academy is to support the research on herbal medicine; to study the history of Iranian traditional medicine; to preserve Iranian traditional medicine; to investigate education in traditional medicine and incorporating of traditional medicine training and research into the allopathic medical programs. As a result of public enthusiasm, over the last two decades, noticeable progress has been visible in this area, so that new herbal medicines enter the Iranian drug market every year. The majority of these medications are sold without prescription and only a few of them are needed to be prescribed. However, we do not have a clear estimation of traditional and CAM usage, in Iran, but it seems to be increased like other countries.^{18-19,21}

Despite the trend mentioned above, presently this type of medical or health care practice has not a formal place in the medical and nursing practice. In recent years several physicians started to use and prescribe some types of TCM in their private offices. For example the garlic tablets are now prescribed by most of physicians for its lipid decreasing and anti hypertensive effects and Psyllium is used for its laxative effects. Also some non-governmental and private centers have been established for doing some types of complementary therapies such as massage therapy and acupuncture. In recent years, an increasing number of studies are investigating different types of traditional and complementary therapies; and many research papers have been published and are being published in this field by the medical and nurse researchers. However, the results of such studies have not yet been influenced on the medical and nursing practice within hospital settings.

Although some of the studies have reported that the interest of Iranian people to use TCM has grown,^{1,22} still little studies have considered the attitudes or use of TCM by medical staff. One of such studies implemented in Kerman city has reported that nurses have had positive attitude toward complementary medicine.²³ However, Naghibi-Harat et al., have reported that students and medical assistants of Tehran University have had little knowledge about complementary medicine.²² Lack of study on the attitude and performance of health care workers regarding the TCM together with growing attitude of people toward this kind of medicine indicates a necessity to pay attention to the attitude and performance of health care workers toward the TCM. Therefore, the current study aimed to evaluate the knowledge, attitude and use of complementary and traditional medicine by medical staff of Kashan, Iran.

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