

NON-CONVENTIONAL THERAPIES AND HERBAL MEDICINES IN CANCER: WHAT DO COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS THINK?

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ABSTRACT

Background: The use of non-conventional and herbal therapies for curing cancer is becoming popular due to varied reasons. Opinions of non-conventional therapists / CAM practitioners are mostly unexplored by researchers. **Objectives:** To explore opinions of complementary and alternative medicine practitioners regarding role of non-conventional therapies and herbal medicine in cure of cancer meeting expectations of their patients. **Methodology:** Cross-sectional survey was conducted among selected practitioners of complementary and alternative medicine from different states of the country. Their opinions regarding role of non-conventional therapies and herbal medicine in cure of cancer were explored by conducting personal interviews using semi-structured interview schedules. **Results:** There were 61(25.0%) respondents had faith in Ayurvedic treatment and only 28(11.5%) in Naturopathy/ herbal medicine. Only 69(28.3%) respondents were of the opinion that cancer can be cured completely while 66(27.0%) agreed with this opinion provided patient approaches at an early stage. High mortality due to cancer was attributed to delay in diagnosis and treatment by 38.1% respondents reporting a broad spectrum of perceived reasons of high cancer mortality. Among all CAM practitioners, about 70% were also aware of Chemotherapy as well as stem cell therapy. Majority of respondents were in favor of vegetarian diet reporting its important role in curing Cancer. Vitamins and minerals were reportedly having role in boosting immunity of patients as reported by 36.9% respondents. Holistic approach for cancer cure combining physical, mental, environmental, spiritual factors, social factors along with social system was suggested by 26.2% respondents. Majority of respondents were of the opinion that there was an urgent need of discovering newer, more potent and specific drugs for Cancer. **Conclusions and Suggestions:** Faith in individual therapies by practitioners of complementary and alternative medicine was very low. Delay in diagnosis and treatment came out to be the most common reported reason of mortality due to cancer. The study suggests the need of early diagnosis and treatment of cancer patients with holistic approach combining together all therapies with no full reliance laid on use of a single therapy. There seems to be an urgent need of discovering newer, more potent and specific drugs for Cancer with proven efficacy on scientific basis.

KEYWORDS: Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Therapists; Herbal Medicine; Holistic Approach; Non-conventional therapies.

INTRODUCTION

The use of non-conventional therapies for curing cancer is becoming popular due to varied reasons. Conventional medicine, also called "allopathic medicine" is based on scientific knowledge of the body and uses treatments that have been proven effective through scientific research. The term 'Complementary Medicine' is primarily used to describe practices used in conjunction with or to complement conventional medical treatments. Complementary therapy is nonstandard cancer treatment

that is used alongside traditional treatment, while alternative therapy is nonstandard treatment used in place of traditional methods/ standard medical treatments. Complementary Medicine refers to non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical techniques used with a historical or cultural, rather than a scientific, basis as a complement to "conventional" medical treatments. Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is defined as "diagnosis, treatment and/or prevention which complements main stream medicine by contributing to a common whole, by

satisfying a demand not met by orthodoxy or by diversifying the conceptual frame works of medicine".^[1,2] The therapies that are used together with conventional treatment and those that are used in place of conventional treatment are known as Complementary and Alternative therapies, respectively. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) defines CAM as a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered part of conventional medicine.^[3] Such techniques include non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical techniques such as Naturopathy, Herbalism, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Other Traditional Medicines, Ayurveda, Meditation, Yoga, biofeedback, Hypnosis, Homeopathy, Acupuncture, and Nutritional-based Therapies, Touch Therapies, Siddha, Colour Therapy, Aroma Therapy, Chiropractic Therapy, Reiki, Acupuncture, Unani, Yoga, Massage in addition to a range of other practices. CAM practices are not part of conventional medicine because there is insufficient proof that they are safe and effective.^[4] Increased side effects of drugs, lack of curative treatment for several chronic diseases, high cost of new drugs, microbial resistance and emerging diseases are some reasons for renewed public interest in complementary and alternative medicines.^[5]

Charak Samhita and Sushruta provide evidence of a rich tradition of herbal medicine in India. According to the World Health Organization, the use of herbal remedies throughout the world exceeds that of conventional drugs by two- to three-fold.^[6] Studies have reported high prevalence of herbal medicine use across globe mainly in developing countries for primary health care.^[7,8] Natural medicines are considered to be in great demand because of their efficacy, safety and lesser side effects. Patients are usually unaware of potential side-effects, and how and when herbal medicines could be taken safely. According to CAM practitioners patients' expectations change over time and that they need to continually manage these expectations to enhance patient engagement and satisfaction with treatment. They reported that they attempt to ensure that their patients' expectations are realistic in roles and responsibilities of practitioners and patients, treatment outcomes, timeframe for improvement, and treatment experience.^[9] Non – conventional therapies have been a relatively neglected area and opinions of non –conventional therapists/CAM practitioners are mostly unexplored by researchers. Present study attempts to explore opinions of complementary and alternative medicine practitioners regarding role of non -conventional therapies and herbal medicine in cure of cancer meeting expectations of their patients.

METHODS

Present study is a part of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), India sponsored project "Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Use among Cancer Patients". Results are based on a cross-

sectional survey conducted among selected 244 practitioners of complementary and alternative medicine from different states of the country. They were practicing in different fields like Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Alternative and Integrative Medicine (Prayer and Faith Healing, Spiritual Healing, Yoga, Traditional Chinese Medicine), Mind-Body Medicines, Manipulative And Body-Based Practices and Tibetan System Medicine (TSM) etc. Their opinions regarding role of non -conventional therapies and herbal medicine in cure of cancer were explored by conducting personal interviews using semi-structured interview schedules. They were interviewed for collecting information regarding their background and their opinions, perceptions and beliefs regarding cancer, its causes and cure misconceptions regarding CAM and herbal therapies. Several focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted among CAM practitioners to explore their opinions regarding role of CAM in curing cancer. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were organized to collect opinions of CAM therapists participating in FGD. There were sessions on objectives of FGD/Need of Holistic Approach and role of CAM in Cancer Management and Holistic Approach to Cancer Treatment (Ayurvedic, Unani, Homeopathic, Indo Tibetan System of Medicine, Naturopathy/ Herbal Treatment, Yoga/Meditation, Acupuncture/ Acupressure, Spiritual Therapy/Prayer and Faith Healing, Any Other Therapies. Data analysis was done by describing qualitative information with the help of content analysis using absolute numbers and percentages.

RESULTS

Out of 244 CAM practitioners, there were 112(45.9%) private practitioners and remaining were attached with some Government institutions. Overall mean age of respondents was found to be 39.8 ±11.6 years. The group consisted of total 244 CAM practitioners including 209 (85.7%) practitioners having some professional degrees whereas remaining 35(14.3%) were not having any professional degree. Out of them 121(49.6%) were experts from Ayurvedic and 54(22.1%) were Homeopathic Practitioners and 42(17.2%) Experts from Tibetan System of Medicine also represented the group. Varied opinions of participants regarding usefulness of different non-conventional/alternative therapies like Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Alternative and Integrative Medicine (Prayer and Faith Healing, Spiritual Healing, Yoga, Traditional Chinese Medicine), Mind-Body Medicines, Manipulative And Body-Based Practices were observed (Table -1). There were 61(25.0%) respondents had faith in Ayurvedic treatment, 54(22.1%) in homeopathic treatment, 34 (14.0%) in Acupuncture/ acupressure and 28(11.5%) in Naturopathy/ herbal medicine.

Table- 2 presents opinions of respondents regarding cure of cancer. There were 113 (46.3%) respondents who were of the opinion that single cure for cancer was seldom possible while 36(14.8%) were silent on this issue. When asked whether there was possibility to cure

cancer completely or not, 69(28.3%) were of the opinion that it can be cured completely while 66(27.0%) agreed with this opinion provided patient approaches at an early stage. There were 41 (16.8%) respondents who were of the opinion that it cannot be cured completely as it multiplies. A number of other varied opinions also emerged as listed in the table. Majority (92.2%) respondents were of the opinion that there was an urgent need of discovering newer, more potent and specific drugs for Cancer. When asked about reasons of high mortality due to cancer, 93(38.1%) attributed it to delay in diagnosis and treatment. Among all respondents 41(16.8%) were of the opinion that it was due to stress, depression, under nutrition, unhealthy life style, industrialization, environmental exploitation. Negative thoughts, emotions and attitude were also attributed to high mortality as reported by 13(5.3%) CAM practitioners. Expensive treatment and lack of collaboration between conventional and alternative therapies were also reported by 12(4.9%) and 5(2.0%) respondents respectively.

Respondents were also explored for their comments regarding the issue "Cancer over the world is being treated without understanding". Ignorance of doctors regarding the root cause of cancer and unpredictable nature of the disease were equally reported (14.8%) by the respondents. There were 48(19.8%) respondents who were silent on this issue. Limitations, inadequacies and deficiencies in the present science existed for cancer management as agreed by 166(68.0%) respondents.

Lack of early detection was the most common reported current challenge in cancer management as reported by 221(90.6%) respondents followed by complexity in origin of the disease as reported by 98(40.2%) respondents. Maintenance of cancer therapy was the third most common reported challenge according to 79(32.4%) respondents. Out of conventional therapies, Chemo therapy was the most commonly known therapy as 170(69.7%) CAM practitioners were aware of this therapy followed by Radiation as reported by 147(60.2%) and Surgery reported by 120(49.2%). Among CAM therapies Ayurvedic treatment (59.0%) followed by Homeopathy 44.7% and Yoga Meditation

33.6% were the most commonly therapies respondents were aware of. Respondents were also aware of some other therapies listed in this Table. Among all CAM practitioners, 171 (70.1%) were also aware of stem cell treatment. Among all those who were aware of stem cell treatment, 38(24.7%) nearly knew it without having further knowledge of its detail. Stem cell treatment was reportedly was very good, complete cure and much effective for healing cancer cell as told by 42(27.3%) respondents.

Various other views advocating as well as discouraging this treatment were also expressed as presented in this Table. Majority of respondents (81.6%) were in favor of Vegetarian diet having reported important role in curing Cancer. Respondents who were in favor of vegetarian diet were also asked about its role in cancer cure. There were 23 (11.6%) of those respondents who were of the opinion that vitamins and minerals are present in vegetarian diet (11.6%) whereas 115(57.8%) respondents were not aware of any specific role of Vegetarian diet in Cancer. Vitamins and minerals were reportedly having role in boosting immunity of patients as reported by 90(36.9%) respondents.

Respondents were specifically asked about the role of herbal medicine in cancer therapy. The most common argument in favor of herbal medicine came out to be enhancement of immunity and improving quality of life (23.4%) followed by treating cancer from roots (19.7%) as shown in Table- 3. There were 176(72.1%) respondents who strongly agreed that Herbalism was playing an important role in curing cancer. In spite of involvement in CAM practice, 221(90.6%) respondents were of the opinion that allopathic medical care should not be stopped by the patients while using CAM therapies. Opinions of CAM practitioners also provided varied pieces of advice for patients while using CAM. About 79% were of the opinion that there was no risk or side effects for patients using CAM. Even 100% of CAM practitioners who agree with side effects were of the opinion that Unani system of medicine was not free from side effects. Only a few respondents came forward suggesting measures to cope with side effects of CAM.

Table 1: Opinions of CAM Practitioners Regarding Usefulness of Different Non-conventional Therapies in Cancer Cure.

Have Faith in the therapy (N=244)	No.	%
Ayurvedic	61	25.0
Unani	16	6.5
Siddha	18	7.4
Homeopathic	54	22.1
Naturopathy/ herbal medicine	28	11.5
Acupuncture/ acupressure	34	14.0
Psychological therapy/ counseling	34	14.0
Spiritual therapy/ prayer/ faith healing/pranic healing/Rikki	58	23.8
Laughter therapy	12	5.0
Physiotherapy	41	16.8
Yoga/meditation	50	20.5

Tibetan System Medicine (TSM)	15	6.1
Any other		
Shiatsu	31	12.7
Nutrition (vitamins& minerals)	34	14.0
Diet	29	11.9
Body work	30	12.3
Hypnotherapy	30	12.3
Reflexology	29	11.9
Visualization	29	11.9
Panchkarma	29	11.9
Relaxation	36	14.8
Music therapy	10	4.1
Aromatherapy	29	11.9
Immunotherapy	35	14.3
Hormone Therapy	29	11.9
Cow urinepathy	06	2.4

Table 2: Opinions of CAM Practitioners regarding Cancer and its Management.

Believe in 'single cure is seldom possible'	No.	%
Yes	95	38.9
No	113	46.3
No response	36	14.8
Possibility to cure cancer completely		
Yes, it is treatable & cured completely	69	28.3
If the person approaches at early stage	66	27.0
No, it is not possible because it multiplies	41	16.8
Depends upon site and stage of cancer/ Depends on case to case	25	10.2
When the healing is done wholistically at all levels/Holistic approach including physical, emotional, psychological & Spiritual	09	3.7
It is curable with the patient's belief and family cooperation	04	1.6
No, it only reliefs/lesser the pain	01	0.4
No, we can't. We can only prevent the further growth.	05	2.0
It is possible with combined therapy of conventional treatment & CAM treatment	10	4.1
Yes with lifestyle modification	04	1.6
Yes, but it takes long time period	03	1.2
To some extent it is possible/doubtful	09	3.7
Depends on patients immunity	02	0.8
Yes, but before chemotherapy & radiation	01	0.4
Yes, but allopathy has its side effect	02	0.8
Yes, if patient take proper and complete treatment	01	0.4
We are able to dispose all KARMAS of the patients (as per Bhagwat Geeta)	01	0.4
Need to discovering newer, more potent and specific drugs for cancer	(N=244)	
Yes it is seldom required	225	92.2
No	06	2.5
Not sure	01	0.4
No, there are many drugs available in homeopathy which can cure cancer.	01	0.4
Yes, Holistic approach is also very effective for treating cancer	05	2.0
Cancer is a due to psycho somatic disorders in body which needs to be more explored with counseling	01	0.4
More research should be done in which normal cell won't get disturbed and only diseased part can be treated.	03	1.2
No need to discovering newer drugs, need to give proper treatment and save from side effect to patients	05	2.0
Reasons of high mortality due to cancer (N=244)		
Delay in diagnosis and treatment	93	38.1
Stress, Depression, Under nutrition, Unhealthy life style, Industrialization, Environmental exploitation	41	16.8
Improper research in this field	09	3.7

Improper treatment/lack of treatment	13	5.3
Over dose of drugs/side effects	07	2.9
Psycho-somatic disorders	06	2.5
Due to negative thoughts, emotions, attitude	13	5.3
Carelessness of patients and sometimes doctors	07	2.9
Because of expensive treatment	12	4.9
Lack of collaborative research between conventional medicine & CAM	05	2.0
Due to lack of importance given to CAM	11	4.5
Don't agree with this statement, survival changes are now days	03	1.2
Giving more importance to materialistic world than inner self	04	1.6
Lack of awareness/Ignorance/fear of cancer	51	20.9
Lack of potent medicine/effective medicine	04	1.6
Cancer is a non-curable disease	05	2.0
No response	17	7.0
Lack of faith on one doctor and therapy	01	0.4
Complexity of the disease	02	0.8
Karmic actions	01	0.4
Lack of patience about treatment and cure	02	0.8
Shyness of people in rural areas and patient don't want tell/share anything about disease	01	0.4
Need of proper planning by health care system	01	0.4
Cancer comes again and again	01	0.4
Because symptoms are detected later	10	4.1
Treatment is not available at district level	01	0.4
Govt. is not supporting alternative medicine in this field and other field also	02	0.8
Cancer over the world is being treated without understanding comments		
Because it is unpredictable.	36	14.8
Doctors need to do more research to know the root cause of cancer.	36	14.8
Because of ignorance and lack of proper treatment	35	14.3
Because without knowing the etiology we adopt treatment	23	9.4
Awareness regarding early symptoms is neglected	05	2.0
Tibetan Medicine have revealed different causes of cancer which are not mentioned in allopathy	09	3.7
Prescribed pattern of medicine (Homeopathy) in hospitals can make the cause of cancer understood to some extent.	03	1.2
It depends upon the type of Cancer	06	2.5
Psycho somatic causes are totally being ignored.	05	2.0
Not agreed with the statement. Doctor must know the causes.	10	4.1
Due to multiple factors/reasons/causes	06	2.5
Due to substance abuse and unhealthy food	02	0.8
Environment, way of living, stress and strain on brain	06	2.5
Allopath in govt. institution have proper knowledge but they don't have enthusiasm or proper infrastructure to treat it	01	0.4
Many time we cannot find reason every disease	02	0.8
People afraid of cancer	03	1.2
Yes, no oncologist cares for the cause; they just prescribed medicine to kill cancer cells. It produce side effects on healthy cell	09	3.7
Doctors are not believe the principles of other therapies	02	0.8
Because herbal medicines are more complex	01	0.4
No response	48	19.7
Reason behind inadequacies and deficiencies of the present science		
Yes	166	68.0
No	48	19.7
No response	09	3.7
Current challenges faced in cancer management		
Lack of early detection	221	90.6
Complexity in origin	98	40.2
Maintenance of cancer therapy	79	32.4

Non Specific systematic distribution resulting in adverse effects	74	30.3
Inadequate drug concentrate at the tumor site	71	29.1
Inability to monitor therapeutic responses	55	22.5
Any other	10	4.1
Any other (N=10)		
Lack of awareness regarding prevention of cancer	02	20.0
Lack of holistic approach & understanding	01	10.0
Lack of understanding of cancer	02	20.0
Treatment is expensive/patient want free treatment	02	20.0
Social fear of cancer	01	10.0
Patient want to be keep secret about the disease	01	10.0
Therapies available to cure cancer		
Conventional Therapies		
Chemotherapy	170	69.7
Radiation	147	60.2
Surgery	120	49.2
Any other	44	18.0
Complementary and Alternative Therapies		
Ayurvedic treatment	144	59.0
Homeopathy	109	44.7
Yoga/ meditation	82	33.6
Naturopathy / herbal	63	25.8
Spiritual therapy/ prayer& faith healing	44	18.0
Tibetan medicine treatment	37	15.2
Acupuncture	20	8.2
Unani	16	6.6
Psychological therapy/ counseling	15	6.1
Physiotherapy	6	2.5
Siddha	5	2.0
Any other	56	23.0
Awareness about Stem Cell Treatment		
Yes	171	70.1
No	73	29.9
Effectiveness of Stem Cell Treatment for treating cancer? (N=171)		
It is very good, complete cure and much effective for healing cancer cell	42	27.3
Only heard about it, no working experience/Don't know	38	24.7
It is expensive and not available in every where	13	8.4
The body heals itself which is the understanding principle behind healing	09	5.8
Stem cell are potent and healthy cells which helps in relieving the old cell from there tonic content and its gives vitalizing to the body. But body needs to accept it	07	4.5
Its works or not its depend on type of cancer	06	3.9
It is controversial	02	1.3
It is good for other disease like Malaria, Leukemia	02	1.3
Stem cell treatment is still evolving and there are more research going on	02	1.3
There is many side effects of stem cell treatment	01	0.6
Its result are also in pipe line	01	0.6
Improve quality of life and increase immunity	01	0.6
No response/Blank	54	35.1
Do you think vegetarian diet plays an important role in curing cancer		
Yes	199	81.6
No	39	16.0
No response	6	2.5
Role of vegetarian diet in curing cancer (N=199)		
Unspecified	115	57.8
Yes, vitamins and minerals are present in vegetarian food	23	11.6
Best nutritious diet	15	6.1
It improves immunity of the patient	15	6.1
It is easily digestible	14	7.0

No, wholesome diet is the best	10	5.0
It depends upon patients body	07	3.5
Nature cures naturally	04	2.0
Dietary and life style knowledge is prescribed	06	3.0
No, meat should be included in the diet	02	1.0
Patient keep healthy and be safe to negative thought and activity by vegetarian diet	02	1.0
Depends on type of cancer that is important or not-veg diet	02	1.0
Yes, it helps in detoxification	01	0.5
Vegetarian diet is a better option because animal might be infected	01	0.5
Vegetarian diet are at lease modesty Cancer protective 10-12% reduction in overall cancer risk	01	0.5
Having no side effect	01	0.5
Yes, it is related to Karmas	02	1.0
No response	25	12.6
Role of vitamins and minerals supplement in treating cancer(N=244)		
Vitamins and minerals provides immunity/boosts immunity	90	36.9
These supplements provide healthy and balanced nutritious diet	27	11.1
Very light diet/easy to digest	11	4.5
For speedy recovery, vegetarian diet plays a vital role	10	4.1
It improves the quality of life of the patient	07	2.9
Protects the patient from negative and harmful effects	06	2.5
It contains lots of Iron and Vitamin C	04	2.5
It is organic and pure	02	0.8
It detoxify the body	05	2.0
Mineral and Vitamins are given on the basis of individual cases	05	2.0
It helps in recovery and reducing side effects	03	1.2
Vitamin D might provide some protection against colon cancer	02	0.8
Increase the resistance power	03	1.2
No role in treating cancer	01	0.4
No response	50	22.4

Table 3: Opinions of CAM Practitioners Regarding Herbal Medicines and CAM in Cancer.

Herbal medicines are more expensive as compared to allopathic treatment	No.	%
Yes	28	11.5
No	214	87.7
No response	2	0.8
Have you heard about the Quinones and Polyphenols plant metabolites		
Yes	109	44.7
No	126	51.6
No response	09	3.7
If Yes, have you ever used these for treating your patients (N=223)		
Yes	48	19.7
No	175	71.7
No response	21	8.6
Role of herbal medicine in cancer therapy(N=244)		
Enhance the immunity and quality of life	57	23.4
It treats the cancer from roots	48	19.7
It has no side effects	40	16.4
Herbal medicines are extracted from natural products	28	11.5
Re strengthening of the body	23	9.5
Relief in pain & mentally strong	11	4.5
It create toxic environment for cancer and not harm normal healthy cells	05	0.9
Its move toxic	06	2.4
Same as ayurveda	05	2.0
It cures patient physically	05	2.0
Proper Diet	05	2.0
Slow treatment but supportive	03	1.2
Moxa therapy can play role in curing cancer	02	0.9

Its works at DNA level	02	0.9
Can't explain in this limited space	01	0.4
Along with Ayurveda minerals like diamonds	01	0.4
Do you agree that herbalism is playing an important role in curing cancer		
Strongly agree	176	72.1
Less agree	49	20.1
Strongly disagree	02	0.8
Less disagree	05	2.0
Don't know	01	0.4
No response	11	4.5
CAM treatment requires patients to stop traditional allopathic medical care.		
Yes	20	8.2
No	221	90.6
Don't Know	01	0.4
No response	02	0.8
If yes, reasons (N=20)		
CAM detoxify body, for this allopathy has to be stopped	02	10.0
Allopath leads the complications/contradictions	03	15.0
Allopath drugs are highly toxic and harmful	04	20.0
CAM is sufficient to cure cancer	02	10.0
No need to discontinue allopathic treatment	01	5.0
Yes, only in emergency case	01	5.0
To take full benefit of treatment, one must stop	01	5.0
Research about it	02	10.0
Because both have different approach totally	01	5.0
Patient should do before starting CAM therapy (N=244)		
Evaluate the problems or disease and routine check up	24	9.8
Believe in its practitioner to cure / Blind faith	20	8.2
All methods of treatment should collectively play huge roll in CAM	15	6.1
First consult the doctor	15	6.1
Diagnosis the like of treatment	11	4.5
Research all option available and make an intelligent choice	09	3.7
Nothing, they can start CAM anytime	09	3.7
Strictly avoid the food which causes the cancer/take proper diet	08	3.3
Have knowledge and understand about CAM	06	2.5
Give all history to detail doctor	06	2.5
Start medicine as possible as earlier	03	1.2
Assessment by CAM practitioners	02	0.8
Try to TSM	02	0.8
Patient should be placed on vegetarian diet	02	0.8
Take information to other chronic patients	01	0.4
Consult their physician	01	0.4
Should stop the other treatment	01	0.4
Consult expert for evidence based medicine	01	0.4
Is there any risk or side effects using CAM		
Yes	17	7.0
No	192	78.7
No response	35	14.3
If Yes, In which therapy (N=17)		
Ayurvedic treatment	07	41.1
Unani	17	100.0
Naturopathy/Herbal Treatment	02	11.8
Nutrition	02	11.8
Side effects of CAM (N=17)		
It add on to another problem in body	05	29.4
Excess use of any therapy is harmful	02	11.8
There is harmful in specific therapies when use wrongly or use in excess like ayurveda, unani, herbal, nutrition	03	17.7

Sometime patients is not able to digest	02	11.8
Disease will progress	01	5.9
Overdose taken with a aim to recover faster results in side effects	02	11.8
Measures to cope with side effects of CAM (N=244)		
Consult to his treating doctor	27	11.1
Consult experts	12	4.9
Change the doctor and medicine (Treatment)	06	2.5
Discontinue the process	06	2.5
Whatever doctor advice for side effects	06	2.5
Noting	02	0.8
Don't know	06	2.5
Yoga/Meditation	03	1.2
Be positive and take prevent as a treatment	02	0.8
They should care about their diet	02	0.8
Should follow the remedy for side effect	01	0.4
Take homeopathy medicine	01	0.4
Boost immune system	01	0.4
They should know how to get their medicine on right time	01	0.4
Patient should drink half liter palm oil and later bath with fresh water	01	0.4

DISCUSSION

Opinions of Health Care practicing different CAM therapies for treating cancer regarding CAM and herbal medicines in cancer were explored in this study. When asked about reasons of high mortality due to cancer, 93(38.1%) attributed it to delay in diagnosis and treatment. A broad spectrum of perceived reasons of high cancer mortality was observed in the present study. Out of conventional therapies, Chemotherapy was the most commonly known therapy and about 70% CAM practitioners were aware of this therapy. Among all CAM practitioners, 70.1% were also aware of stem cell treatment. Majority of respondents were in favor of Vegetarian diet having reported its important role in curing Cancer. Vitamins and minerals were reportedly having role in boosting immunity of patients as reported by 90(36.9%) respondents. holistic approach for cancer cure combining physical, mental, environmental, spiritual factors, social factors along with social system was suggested by 26.2% respondents. Lack of early detection was the most common reported current challenge in cancer management as reported by 221(90.6%) respondents followed by complexity in origin of the disease as reported by 98(40.2%) respondents. Majority of respondents were of the opinion that there was an urgent need of discovering newer, more potent and specific drugs for Cancer.

Some of experts/CAM practitioners were reluctant of using the term CAM for their respective therapies. Lot of controversies was prevalent as experts from some specific fields claimed that their therapy was the main line of treatment and can do wonders in cancer cure. Their claims are yet to be proved scientifically. Lack of scientific evidences in available literature was discussed in FGD's which may be the barrier in support of their claim. Holistic medicine, a system of health care may lead to optimal attainment of the physical, mental emotional, social and spiritual aspects of health. In this

system emphasis is laid upon all components including physical, nutritional, environmental, emotional, social, spiritual, and lifestyle values.^[1]

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Faith in individual therapies by practitioners of complementary and alternative medicine was very low. Delay in diagnosis and treatment came out to be the most common reported reason of mortality due to cancer. The study suggests the need of early diagnosis and treatment of cancer patients with holistic approach combining together all therapies with no full reliance laid on use of a single therapy. There seems to be an urgent need of discovering newer, more potent and specific drugs for Cancer with proven efficacy on scientific basis.

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