



## Causes of Tendency for Complementary Medicine

Dariush Taherkhani<sup>1\*</sup>, Ali Davati<sup>2</sup>, Reza Majdzadeh<sup>3</sup> and Elham Emaratkar<sup>4</sup>

1. Shahed University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

2. Department of Social Medicine, School of Medicine, Shahed University, Tehran, Iran

3. Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

4. Department of Traditional Medicine, School of Medicine, Shahed University, Tehran, Iran

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is a vast area of medicine that includes both diagnosis and therapies using conventional medicine; and in this type of medicine, the principle is to maintain human health first, and then to cure diseases. Despite a huge range of advances in modern medicine, there has been surprisingly an increasing interest in CAM within recent years. Thus, it is somehow recognized as a serious, worldwide public health concern (1).

One in three people uses the CAM treatments in his/her lifetime, especially for the common ailments such as backache, headache, anxiety, and depression. Many medical schools in the world have included CAM in their curriculums. For example, at the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the United States (2), CAM covers for some educational materials in homeopathy and naturopathy courses. It is also significantly integrated in the alternative medicine systems in ancient countries such as Iran, India, and China. CAM is patient-centered and claims to facilitate patients' self-healing process. According to the theories of this medicine, human body has innate mechanisms for maintaining health and, of course, curing illnesses. The major goal of CAM is to activate such mechanisms and mobilize the emotional and spiritual forces of each individual to fight the diseases (3).

We know that CAM is basically based on empirical studies. Many researchers have reported that the social components of the tendency for complementary medicine fall into two main categories including repulsive and attractive factors. The repulsive factors are "iatrogenic effects of conventional medicine" and "superior position of the physician," and the attractive factors consist of "systemic approach," "socio-cultural attitude," and "economic advantage of CAM" (4). This letter attempts to show that the reasons can be more than those factors. We believe that the reasons for the growing public tendency for CAM also consist of "Holistic factor, which means CAM relies on the body's healing power instead of treating symptoms using medication. Thus, with this holistic belief that is spiritually, psychologically and socially

### \* Corresponding author

**Dariush Taherkhani, MD**

Shahed University of Medical Sciences,  
Tehran, Iran

**Tel:** +98 21 51210

**Email:** D.taherkhani@yahoo.com

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more attractive to the believers, therefore, accordingly this belief increases patients' satisfaction.

Another major component of CAM is based on lifestyle modification, therefore, most of CAM methods have five common principles for a better lifestyle including proper management of stresses; spiritual approaches; exercises; removing/reducing any type of addiction (especially smoking and alcohol); and dietary recommendations. Most people believe in spirituality, so as a consequence of lacking this factor in classical medicine, CAM looks more attractive to people. CAM claims that by strengthening the immune system *via* self-medication methods, patient's body is able to achieve a desirable result; thus, such an approach causes interest of patients. On the other hand, economic issues also play another major role in making CAM more interesting to the public, especially in lower socio-economic level. For example, a study indicated that about 80% of people

from the Southern Hemisphere were more interested in CAM than modern medicine due to the financial issues and the lower cost of CAM treatments. Dissatisfaction with current modern drugs and the bad attitude of health care providers play another important role in higher public interest in CAM. In developing countries, over a third of the population does not have access to the basic medical facilities, so better and easier accessibility to CAM makes it more feasible and attractive in such societies.

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