



Methadone Maintenance Therapy and Complementary Medicine: A New Frontier in Holistic Addiction Treatment?

Nader Aghakhani¹ and Roya Naderi^{2,3*}

1. Food and Beverages Safety Research Center, Urmia University of Medical Sciences, Urmia, Iran

2. Nephrology and Kidney Transplant Research Center, Clinical Research Institute, Urmia University of Medical Sciences, Urmia, Iran

3. Department of Physiology, School of Medicine, Urmia University of Medical Sciences, Urmia, Iran

To the Editor

Methadone Maintenance Therapy (MMT) is a recognized technique used to treat opioid addiction by utilizing methadone, a long-acting opioid agonist that alleviates withdrawal symptoms. This therapy has been proven to reduce drug use, lower the risk of overdose and blood-borne infections, and enhance both physical and mental health. Additionally, it can help curb illicit drug use, decrease overdose fatalities, reduce criminal behaviors, and improve social functioning in patients undergoing treatment (1).

This approach is administered as part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes counseling, support groups, and additional services. Its prolonged duration of action means that it only needs to be taken once per day. The treatment works by binding to the same brain receptors as heroin or fentanyl opioids, but does not produce intense feelings of euphoria and relapsing. Instead, it alleviates symptoms of withdrawal and cravings, enabling individuals to function normally. Although it is a useful option, some individuals may experience side effects from the medication or have difficulty discontinuing it. In such cases, complementary medicine methods may be used to enhance overall health and well-being during the treatment (2).

For this purpose, a popular complementary therapy is acupuncture with the potential to improve pain symptoms and reduce the need for opioid medications. Acupuncture involves inserting thin needles into specific points on the body that correspond to channels or meridians to balance energy flow and promote healing. Additionally, it includes counseling and other supportive services to help patients address the root causes of their addiction and establish a strong foundation for long-term recovery (3).

As a complementary medicine approach to treating depression symptoms in individuals receiving (MMT), herbal supplements may also be used. Some of them have the potential to enhance or hinder the efficacy of methadone or produce undesirable side effects. Therefore, consulting with a healthcare provider before using any supplements

* Corresponding author

Roya Naderi, PhD

Department of Physiology, School of Medicine, Nephrology and Kidney Transplant Research Center, Clinical Research Institute, Urmia University of Medical Sciences, Urmia, Iran

Tel: +98 44 3278 0801

Fax: +98 44 3278 0801

Email: naderi.r@umsu.ac.ir

Received: 15 Dec 2024

Accepted: 5 Mar 2025

Citation to this article

Aghakhani N, Naderi R. Methadone Maintenance Therapy and Complementary Medicine: A New Frontier in Holistic Addiction Treatment? *J Iran Med Counc*. 2026;9(1):273-274.

may be necessary (4).

Additionally, complementary treatments, such as yoga and meditation have been shown to enhance mental health, alleviate stress, and promote overall well-being for individuals with substance use disorders. These practices can help individuals in addiction recovery manage stress and anxiety, which are common triggers for relapse. Also, massage therapy can be helpful in reducing muscle pain, tension, and anxiety (5).

In conclusion, Methadone Maintenance Therapy is an effective approach to treating opioid addiction. While complementary medicine strategies such as acupuncture, herbal supplements, mind-body practices, and massage therapy can contribute to overall health and well-being during treatment, they should not be used as a replacement for medical

treatments. These complementary therapies can assist in the recovery process. Before trying any new therapies or treatments, it is recommended to consult with a healthcare professional to ensure the safety and effectiveness of this approach.

Keywords: Complementary medicine, Health, Well-being, Methadone maintenance therapy.

Ethical approval

Not applicable.

Funding

None.

Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest in this manuscript.

References

1. Aghakhani N, Lopez V, Cleary M. Experiences and perceived social support among iranian men on methadone maintenance therapy: a qualitative study. *Issues Ment Health Nurs* 2017;38(9):692-7.
2. Tinkler E, Vallejos Bartlett C, Brooks M, Gilbert JM, Henderson R, Shuman D. Medication-assisted treatment for opioid addiction in opioid treatment programs. *Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 43. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration* 2005. 358 p.
3. Mills EJ, Wu P, Gagnier J, Ebbert JO. Efficacy of acupuncture for cocaine dependence: a systematic review & meta-analysis. *Harm Reduct J* 2005;2:1-6.
4. Li L, Nguyen TA, Liang LJ, Lin C, Pham TH, Nguyen HTT, et al. Strengthening addiction care continuum through community consortium in vietnam: protocol for a cluster-randomized controlled trial. *JMIR Res Protoc* 2023;12:e44219.
5. Verma S. Substance Use disorders and role of complementary and integrative medicine/functional medicine. *Child Adolesc Psychiatr Clin N Am* 2023;32(2):217-41.