

# The Exploration of Nurses' and Surgical Patients' Knowledge, Perspectives, Understanding, and Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

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## A history of medicine:

- 2000 B.C. — “Here, eat this root.”
- 1000 A.D. — “That root is heathen. Say this prayer.”
- 1850 A.D. — “That prayer is superstitious. Drink this potion.”
- 1940 A.D. — “That potion is snake oil. Swallow this pill.”
- 1985 A.D. — “That pill is ineffective. Take this antibiotic.”
- 2000 A.D. — “That antibiotic doesn’t work anymore.”
- Here, “eat this root.”

# Research Question

- What are nurses' and surgical patients' knowledge, perspectives, understanding, and use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)?

# Method/Methodology

## **Two Phases - mixed methods/mixed methodologies**

- To offer complementary perspectives and increase rigour, one approach is enhanced or compensated by the strength of using other approaches.
- By addressing different views of reality the researcher is well placed to more thoroughly investigate and understand the complexity of human experiences.

## Method/Methodology

- *Phase one*: a descriptive study
- *Phase two*: a Heideggerian phenomenological study

# Method/Methodology

## *Phase One*

- Five metropolitan hospitals in Adelaide, Australia
- Questionnaire-based study
  - Pilot tested
- Convenience sampling
- 675 participants (353 patients & 322 nurses)

# Method/Methodology

## *Phase One*

- Inclusion criteria – *patients*
  - 18 years of age or older
  - Being able to write and read in English
  - Being mentally and physically able to answer the questionnaire
  - Being hospitalised in surgical wards

# Method/Methodology

## *Phase One*

- Inclusion criteria – *nurses*
  - Holding a qualification in nursing
  - Working in surgical wards



# Method/Methodology

## *Phase One*

- Statistical analysis
  - Descriptive and inferential statistics

# Method/Methodology

## *Phase Two*

- Semi-structured interviews (9 nurses & 7 patients)
  - Richness of data was achieved.

# Method/Methodology

## *Phase Two*

- Inclusion criteria – *patients*
  - Being hospitalised in surgical wards

# Method/Methodology

## *Phase Two*

- Inclusion criteria – *nurses*
  - Holding a qualification in nursing
  - Working in surgical wards

# Method/Methodology

## *Phase Two*

- Van Manen's hermeneutic approach was used to understand the experience.
  - Van Manen's hermeneutic approach not only investigates what the study has targeted but also reflects Heideggerian philosophical assumptions, assisting to a process in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants.

## Method/Methodology

- Ethical approvals were obtained from the Ethics Committees of the relevant medical centres.

## Findings: Phase 1 - Nurses



### *Personal use of CAM:*

95.7% of nurses acknowledged personal use of CAM.

## Findings: Phase 1 - Nurses



### *Most frequently personally used CAM:*

Massage (72%)

Non-herbal supplements (70.2%)

Meditation/relaxation techniques/imagery techniques (57.5%)



## Findings: Phase 1 - Nurses



### *Personal use of CAM domains:*

Mind-body interventions (80.7%)

Manipulative and body-based practices (78.6%)

Biologically-based practices (78.3%)

Alternative medical systems (60.2%)

Energy therapies (17.7%)

## Findings: Phase 1 - Nurses



### *Most common reasons for personal use of CAM:*

CAM fits into my way of life/philosophy (37.7%)

Potential improvement in my condition (37%)

Proven benefit I my condition (29.9%)

## Findings: Phase 1 - Nurses



### *Professional use of CAM:*

49.7% of nurses acknowledged professional use of CAM.

## Findings: Phase - Nurses



### *Most commonly professionally used CAM:*

Massage therapy (23%)

Music therapy (19.6%)

Non-herbal supplements (17.4%)

## Findings: Phase 1 - Nurses



### *CAM therapists commonly recommended to patients:*

Massage therapist (48.4%)

Herbalist/naturopath (25.8%)

Chiropractor (25.8%)

## Findings: Phase 1 - Nurses



### *Communication about CAM with patients:*

15.8% of nurses *always* ask surgical patients about the use of herbal medicine.

5.3% of nurses always ask surgical patients about the use of CAM therapies (except herbal medicine).

## Findings: Phase 1 - Nurses



### *CAM knowledge:*

7.8% of nurses rated themselves as having no knowledge and 52.5% as having very little knowledge of CAM.

3.4% of nurses perceived themselves as knowing a lot about CAM and 34.8% rated their knowledge of CAM as some.

## Findings: Phase 1 - Nurses



### *Attitude toward CAM:*

22.4% of nurses rated their attitudes towards CAM as very positive and 36.6% as slightly positive.

32.6% of nurses were neutral, and 4.7% had a slightly negative with 2.5% having a very negative attitude towards CAM.



## Findings: Phase 1 - Patients



### *Personal use of CAM:*

90.4% of patients acknowledged personal use of CAM.

# Findings: Phase 1 - Patients



## *Most frequently used CAM:*

Non-herbal supplements (60.3%)

Massage therapy (45%)

Chiropractic (39.7%)

# Findings: Phase 1 - Patients



## *Personal use of CAM domains:*

Biologically based therapies (68.8%)

Mind-body interventions (65.4%)

Manipulative and body-based methods (63.2%)

Alternative medical systems (44.5%)

Energy therapies (16.7%)

## Findings: Phase 1 - Patients



### *Most common reasons for personal use of CAM:*

CAM fits into my way of life/philosophy (26%)

Recommended by family/friends (24.1%)

Potential improvement in my condition (23.8%)

# Findings: Phase 1 - Patients



*Most commonly preferred CAM for use in hospital:*

Massage therapy (53.5%)

Non-herbal supplements (43.1%)

Music therapy (34.8%)

## Findings: Phase 1 - Patients



### *Disclosure of CAM use:*

48.4% of patients had informed doctors and/or nurses about their use of herbal medicine.

## Phase 1: Findings - Patients



*Disclosure of CAM use (except herbal medicine):*  
38.4% of patients had informed doctors and/or nurses about their use of CAM.

# Findings: Phase 1 - Patients



## *CAM knowledge:*

24.4% of patients rated themselves as not having any knowledge about CAM, and 42.5% rated themselves as having “very little” knowledge of CAM.

28.9% of patients rated themselves as having “some” knowledge of CAM, while 3.1% rated themselves as having “a lot” of knowledge of CAM.



# Findings: Phase 1 - Patients



## *Attitude toward CAM:*

46.4% of patients had either a “very positive” (16.7%) or a “slightly positive” attitude (29.7%) towards CAM.

6.5% of patients had a “slightly negative” attitude and 3.4% had a “very negative” attitude towards CAM.

# Findings: Phase 1 - Comparing Nurses' and Patients' Data



## *Significant differences:*

- CAM domains used personally
- CAM provided by nurses and CAM preferred by patients
- Attitudes toward CAM

# Findings: Phase 1 - Comparing Nurses' and Patients' Data



*No significant difference:*

- CAM knowledge

## Phase Two

- Thematic findings:
  - Being frustrated
  - Being willing
  - Self-appraisal
  - Taking control
  - Being satisfied



My body hates my mind,  
and my mind hates my  
body! ... I've found it's  
probably one of the only  
ways to go.

**We are frustrated:**  
*Sense of helplessness*  
*Being confined*



I do like the idea of it. ... I  
personally would like to see  
more complementary  
medicine ... [but] nurses,  
like us, are imprisoned and  
can't do it.



We have to take responsibility  
for some of our treatment ourselves ...

**We are willing:**  
*Wanting to know*  
*Being committed*  
*Accepting holistic care*  
*disliking*

... I'm planning to  
go and learn more  
about these therapies  
... I like to do it.





I'm very sceptical of  
alternative medicines.

**We are self-appraising:**

*Admitting*  
*Being at risk*  
*Certainty*  
*Liking familiarity*

... I think we don't have perhaps  
enough knowledge behind the  
alternative therapies ...





It [bees' pollen] can't kill me. If it doesn't give me hives or anything, I'll keep taking it, so – we'll see how we go.

**We are taking control of our treatment:**  
*Getting through*  
*Being independent*

I said, I'll give it a go.  
I'll give it a shot, I've got nothing to lose.







I feel happy, I feel calm,  
I feel relaxed [laugh]. ...  
I feel like a marshmallow ...  
Just soft and squidgy ...

**We are satisfied:**  
*Sense of well-being*  
*Being gratified*

[It] makes you feel good  
that you are doing that  
for a patient, you know.



# Conclusion

- Openness toward CAM
- CAM keeps hopes alive
- Not willing to leave allopathic medicine wholly
- A doorway to be more holistic
- Fulfilled to be practising CAM

# Conclusion

- Nurses' awareness of their limitations
- Nurses' and patients' reliance on personal experience
- Dissatisfaction with care or treatment as a pushing factor
- Not used as a “cure” by clients satisfied with allopathic medicine
- Used mainly as a “complementary” rather than an “alternative”

# Conclusion

- Existence of difficulties to practising CAM
- Treatment of both mind & body
- CAM therapies as effective as medications
- Conventional health care services perceived somewhat impersonal
- Putting trust in health professionals rather than CAM therapists

# Implications

- Nursing education
- Nursing practice
- Nursing research

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