Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) - Can it assist in the holistic management of ADHD?

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Introduction
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), affects 3-7% of children.
- Conventional treatment is a multimodal approach of behavioural therapy and stimulant medication.
- Parents find it difficult to use medication because of social stigmatisation, adverse side effects and unknown long term risks.
- One in five South Australian children uses CAM.
- Families seek CAM, as it is considered natural and safe.
- Research demonstrates parents often use CAM without knowledge of risks and benefits, or in discussion with clinicians, possibly resulting in adversities or inappropriate care.
- These issues necessitate a need to review the evidence on CAM as a holistic management strategy for ADHD.

Objective
The primary objective is to establish if CAM can assist in the holistic management of ADHD.

Method
Seventeen primary articles were chosen for critical analysis from online health research databases. These contain selected CAM therapies with a focus on ADHD in children/adolescents. Themes for the review derived from the National Centre Complementary and Alternative Medicine. CAM domains:
- Alternative Medical System - Homeopathic
- Biological Based Therapies - Essential Fatty Acid Supplementation (Fish Oil) and Aromatherapy
- Manipulative and Body-Based Methods - Massage
- Mind-Body Interventions - Meditation, Yoga, and Tai Chi.

Findings
- This critique established that select CAM reviewed is considered safe and beneficial for improving core ADHD symptoms.
- The body of evidence does not support the use of CAM as a sole treatment for ADHD.
- CAM as an integrative, holistic management strategy is viable for families on an individual basis, using a trial and error approach.
- A clear gap in the literature is the comparison of CAM to conventional treatment.
- Future research requires a methodological design that suits the various elements of CAM and the multidimensional aspects of ADHD.

Conclusion
- Holistic care moves beyond traditional medical models to consider the patient’s mind-body-spirit connection in relation to their family values, culture and beliefs.
- Paediatric use of CAM is increasing and the nursing profession must develop an evidence-based knowledge of CAM therapies.
- It is vital that nurses advocate for parents and offer all beneficial therapies that can assist in the management of their family’s health.
- Offering this information to families clinically will demystify CAM and create a strong therapeutic relationship, thereby optimising management of ADHD and enhancing overall family wellbeing.

References