

Otolaryngologists’ Perspectives on Complementary and Alternative (CAM) Medicine

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Introduction

- Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) includes non-mainstream practices like acupuncture, ear candling, and herbal medicine, **and is not part of conventional medicine.**
- CAM often lacks robust scientific evidence; existing studies are frequently flawed due to poor methodology, bias, and small sample sizes. ¹
- CAM usage in the U.S. varies widely, with reported prevalence ranging from **24% to 72% of patients annually.**^{2,3}
- Question:** To what extent are otolaryngologists knowledgeable about CAM, perceive its utility in clinical practice, and engage in discussions about it with their patients?
 - Furthermore, how does practice setting (community health center, academic hospital, etc.) affect provider knowledge or approach to CAM?

Methods

- Validated IM-30 survey instrument adapted from Hsiao et al. 2005 focusing on 5 domains:
 - awareness and openness
 - readiness to refer
 - learning from alternate paradigms
 - patient-centered care
 - safety of integrative medicine
- Convenience sample of 6 Chicagoland academic medical centers and 9 private community practices
- Statistical analysis for survey responses included:
 - Chi-square testing of independence for multi-level or Fisher’s exact testing for single level variables
 - Monte Carlo simulation computational technique was utilized to approximate the p-value for low data counts

Discussion

- Community ENTs more frequently discuss CAM-related harms with patients and tend to be more cautious, possibly due to greater exposure within diverse populations.
- Conclusion:** Practice setting influences ENT attitudes and engagement with CAM, with community providers showing more interaction and concern, while academic providers may be more receptive due to scholarly exposure.

Results

	Characteristic	Total N=30	Academic (N=17)	Community (N=13)	P-Value
Gender	Male	19 (63)	12 (71)	7 (54)	0.575
	Female	11 (37)	5 (29)	6 (46)	
Practice Locality	Suburban	12 (40)	0 (0)	12 (92)	<0.001
	Urban	18 (60)	17 (100)	1 (8)	
Practice Setting	Academic Practice	17 (57)	-	-	-
	Community Practice	13 (43)	-	-	
Subspecialty	Neurotology	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.080
	Sleep	1 (3)	1 (6)	0 (0)	
	Thyroid and Parathyroid Surgery	1 (3)	0 (0)	1 (8)	
	General Otolaryngology	10 (33)	3 (18)	7 (54)	
	Facial Plastic Surgery	4 (13)	4 (24)	0 (0)	
	Rhinology	6 (20)	3 (18)	3 (23)	
	Pediatric Otolaryngology	4 (13)	4 (24)	0 (0)	
	Head and Neck Surgery	4 (13)	2 (12)	2 (15)	
Years in Practice	>10	16 (53)	9 (53)	5 (38)	0.676
	< 10	14 (47)	8 (47)	8 (62)	

Table 1: Surveyed sample demographic and practice characteristics.

	Survey Question	Total N=30	Academic(N=17)	Community (N=13)	P-Value
With approximately what percentage of your patients do you talk about possible benefits of using CAM therapies?	0-25%	25 (83)	16 (94)	9 (69)	0.105
	26-50%	3 (10)	0 (0)	3 (23)	
	51-75%	2 (7)	1 (6)	1 (8)	
	76-100%	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
With approximately what percentage of your patients do you talk about possible harms of using CAM therapies?	0-25%	24 (80)	16 (94)	8 (62)	0.016
	26-50%	5 (17)	0 (0)	5 (38)	
	51-75%	1 (3)	1 (6)	0 (0)	
	76-100%	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
What role does CAM play in your practice?	Complementary therapy	11 (33)	7 (41)	4 (31)	0.643
	Integrated medicine	3 (10)	1 (6)	2 (15)	
	No role	16 (57)	9 (53)	7 (54)	
Have you ever recommended CAM therapies to a patient?	No	13 (43)	6 (35)	7 (54)	0.519
	Yes	17 (57)	11 (65)	6 (46)	

Table 2: CAM's role in surveyed Otolaryngologists' patient encounters and daily practice.

	Survey Question	Total N=30	Academic (N=17)	Community (N=13)	P-Value
Specialists in my field should have knowledge about the most common CAM therapies	Strongly agree	3 (10)	0 (0)	3 (23)	0.043
	Agree	22 (73.33)	13 (76)	9 (69)	
	Neither	5 (16.67)	4 (24)	1 (8)	
	Disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
Some CAM therapies hold promise for treatment of symptoms, conditions and/or diseases	Strongly agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.423
	Agree	18 (60)	11 (65)	7 (54)	
	Neither	6 (20)	4 (24)	2 (15)	
	Disagree	6 (20)	2 (12)	4 (31)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	

Table 3: Surveyed Otolaryngologists’ positive attitudinal perception of CAM in their field.

	Survey Question	Total N=30	Academic (N=17)	Community (N=13)	P-Value
CAM therapy usage decreases patient adherence to guideline directed therapy	Strongly agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.755
	Agree	8 (26.67)	4 (24)	4 (31)	
	Neither	13 (43.33)	7 (41)	6 (46)	
	Disagree	9 (30)	6 (35)	3 (23)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
CAM therapies are not reliably tested and require more study prior to my recommendations	Strongly agree	3 (10)	0 (0)	3 (23)	0.002
	Agree	11 (36.67)	0 (0)	1 (8)	
	Neither	14 (46.67)	12 (71)	7 (54)	
	Disagree	0 (0)	5 (29)	0 (0)	
	Strongly Disagree	2 (6.67)	0 (0)	2 (15)	
CAM therapies are risky and may negatively impact my patients or practice	Strongly agree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.019
	Agree	3 (10)	0 (0)	3 (23)	
	Neither	16 (53.33)	12 (71)	4 (31)	
	Disagree	11 (36.67)	5 (29)	6 (46)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	

Table 4: Surveyed Otolaryngologists’ negative attitudinal perception of CAM in their field.

References

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