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Undergraduates' Perception and Attitude Towards Traditional and Complementary Medicine: A University-Based Survey in Indonesia

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Abstract

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) have been broadly recognised in low to medium income countries and good proportion of population still rely on it. Yet, these practices vary greatly from country to country and from region to region, as they are influenced by wide range of factors such as culture, history, socioeconomic factors or personal attitudes and philosophy. However little is known about practice among students who do not have medical background. Such information from South-East Asia, where CAM is substantial part of health care tradition are missing. To be able to effectively integrate CAM into formal medical healthcare the actual patterns of CAM users need to be studied.

The research is based on combination of secondary sources study and primary data collection in form of self-administrated semi-structured 21-item questionnaire distributed in selected classes to students of Atma Jaya University of Yogyakarta (UAJY), Indonesia over a period of 4 months from December 2016 on. The questionnaire's structure followed previously published studies about attitude and perception towards CAM for better comparison and summarisation of selected topic.

Demographic information was analysed through descriptive analyses whilst Spearman's correlation test, t-Test were used to define association and relation between determinants. Significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Overall, 557 questionnaires were gathered with a response rate of 96%. Mean age of respondents is 20.1 (± 1.30) years old. The average number of known alternative medicine practices was 6.8 (± 3.5) for females and 6.9 (± 4.1) for males while the actual usage was only 2.6 (± 1.7) for females and 2.3 (± 1.9) for males. The more practices students use, the higher their willingness to recommend CAM to others (CI 0.137; $p \leq 0.01$). However, friends' advice presented less than 1% the reason to start using CAM. Furthermore, behavioural changes in CAM information retrieval have been found.

Use of CAM practice shows similar patterns as in other studies. As students tend to continue to practice CAM and the factors influencing the decision-making process are widening. It is desirable to validate the security of available sources and formulate effective guidelines that reflect current healthcare requirements.

Keywords: Alternative medicine, attitude, health, perception, university