

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**THE USAGE OF COMPLEMENTARY  
AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE  
(CAM): PREVALENCE, HEALTH  
LITERACY, BELIEFS AND SELF-  
MANAGEMENT AMONG PEOPLE  
WITH HYPERTENSION IN A RURAL  
AREAS, PAHANG, MALAYSIA**

**AZIZUL FARID BIN ZAKARIA**

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## ABSTRACT

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is believed to have had health benefits in treating hypertension in past decades, especially in rural areas. However, CAM is often not supported by scientific evidence. Thus, awareness of the possible toxicity of CAM in the self-management of health is crucial. This study aims to identify CAM users' prevalence, beliefs, health literacy, and examine the associated factors for the self-management of hypertension. This cross-sectional study used a set of questionnaires consisting of demographic data, health-related characteristics, the Montana State University CAM Health Literacy Scale, the Hypertension Self-Care Activity Level Effect (H-SCALE), and the Beliefs About Medicine Questionnaire (BMQ). The study employed simple random sampling, and it was conducted in four clinics located in Jerantut, Pahang, from January 2021 to May 2021. The analysis involved a total of 233 hypertensive patients. The study found that 60.9% (n=233) of the participants used CAM within the last 12 months to treat hypertension, with herbs (n= 142, 50%) being the most preferred alternative medication. Most of the respondents had adequate health literacy regarding CAM usage (mean  $44.50 \pm 5.67$ ) and held a positive perception toward CAM with Specific-Necessity (mean  $17.61 \pm 2.91$ ) higher than Specific-Concern (mean  $15.20 \pm 3.39$ ). The results showed that 96.1% (n=233) reported adherence to alcohol cessation, 65.7% (n=233) reported adherence to taking medication, 62.7% (n=233) reported adherence to quitting smoking, 39.9% (n=233) reported adherence to good weight management, 25.3% (n=233) reported adherence to active physical activity. Only 3.9% (n=233) reported adherence to dietary approach to stop hypertension (DASH). The results of multiple logistic regression analysis showed that the female gender was linked to non-adherence with taking medication ( $p < 0.05$ ) while having higher health literacy was related to greater adherence to medication ( $p < 0.05$ ). The study also found that the female gender was associated with non-adherence to quitting smoking, accompanied by a higher belief about medication specific-necessity ( $p < 0.05$ ). In contrast, older age was related to better adherence to quitting smoking ( $p < 0.05$ ). Factors such as being female, having longer disease duration, and higher health literacy were associated with non-adherence to weight management ( $p < 0.05$ ), while having formal education and a stronger belief in the importance of specific medication was linked to greater adherence to weight management ( $p < 0.05$ ). The study found that a firmer belief in the importance of specific medication was related to non-adherence with quitting alcohol use ( $p < 0.05$ ). This study may provide a better understanding of CAM usage among people with hypertension with significant concerns over safety and interaction with the standards prescribed treatment. Further intervention is needed to decrease the possibility of complications and optimize self-management of hypertension with the use of CAM.

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