

**USE OF COMPLEMENTARY & ALTERNATIVE MEDICINES (CAM) AMONG
CANCER PATIENTS EVALUATING HEALTH BELIEF OF CANCER PATIENTS IN
THE CONTEXT OF CAM**



**RESEARCH MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE (RMI)
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
40450 SHAH ALAM, SELANGOR
MALAYSIA**

BY :

**MARYAM FAROOQUI
PROF DR AISHAH ADAM
DR HUMERA NAZ**

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1. Letter of Report Submission

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Penolong Naib Canselor (Penyelidikan)
Institut Pengurusan Penyelidikan (RMI)
UiTM, Shah Alam

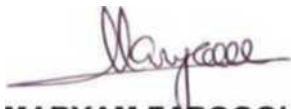
Tuan,

LAPORAN AKHIR PENYELIDIKAN “USE OF COMPLEMENTARY & ALTERNATIVE MEDICINES (CAM) AMONG CANCER PATIENTS: EVALUATING HEALTH BELIEF OF CANCER PATIENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF CAM”

Merujuk kepada perkara di atas, bersama-sama ini diserahkan 4 (empat) naskah Laporan Akhir Penyelidikan bertajuk ***“Use of Complementary & Alternative Medicines (CAM) among cancer patients: Evaluating health belief of cancer patients in the context of CAM”*** oleh kumpulan penyelidik dari Fakulti Farmasi untuk makluman pihak tuan.

Sekian, terima kasih.

Yang benar,



MARYAM FAROOQUI
Ketua
Projek Penyelidikan

5. Report

5.1 Proposed Executive Summary

In the last decade, there has been a global upsurge in the use of traditional medicines (TM)/Complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) in both developed and developing countries. Today therefore utilization of CAM as an alternative or to complement the conventional therapy is common among patients with chronic diseases including cancer. The use of CAM ranges from as low 14% to as high as 87.5% (1). There common basis is a holistic approach of feeling of well being and reducing the side effects due to conventional therapies (2, 3). However studies also shows that use of CAM is a reason behind non-compliance or refusal to the conventional cancer treatment (4) and more or less same situation has been noticed among Malaysian population. The situation has given rise to concerns among health practitioners and consumers on the issue of safety, efficacy and regulation of these modalities in the country. At this particular stage consumer knowledge is the best way to cater the needs of ensuring safety when receiving T&CM therapies. The current study is expected to evaluate cancer patients belief towards CAM use and to develop a CAMHBM (Complementary and alternative medicines health belief model) which would help in designing public health interventions. Qualitative methodology which is known to help researchers to understand people's perceptions and belief towards specific issues like utilization of health care facilities or belief towards specific practice is planned to adopt for this study. The study will benefit the patients in addressing the issues like barriers to the conventional therapies and communication with the physicians regarding CAM use. It will also help public health care workers in designing effective interventional programs to educate patients about rational use of CAM in line with patients' health belief. The study will also benefit the health care providers in providing ground information about patients' belief to bring into discussion during cancer treatment decision making process. Last but not least it will benefit the policy makers in providing a potential platform for designing efficacious public health interventions.

5.2 Enhanced Executive Summary

Cancer patients' knowledge about cancer and experiences with the therapies including CAM plays an important role in long term adherence in their disease management. This study aimed to explore cancer patients' knowledge about cancer and perceptions towards conventional therapies and to understand the contributing factors to their medication adherence in Malaysian population. At the same time the study also aimed to determine Malaysian cancer patients' decision making about the use of Complementary and Alternative Medicines (CAM) in cancer management.

A qualitative research approach was adopted to gain a better understanding of the current perceptions and knowledge held by cancer patients. Twenty patients were interviewed using a semi structured interview guide. Saturation point was reached after the 18th interview and no new information was emerged after the subsequent 2 interviews. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by means of a standard content analysis framework.

For the first objective a total of three themes were identified from the interview analysis Knowledge about the causes of cancer, self beliefs towards the effectiveness of conventional therapies to treat cancer, and personal self belief and experiences towards adverse effects due to conventional therapies. Most of the patients related their cancer cause as God's will. Participants perceived conventional therapies as effective due to its scientific methods of preparations. Fear of side effects were among the reasons in delay seeking treatments, however perceptions were reported to change after getting treatments with effective management to reduce the risks of side effects. The analysis of second objective revealed four themes: conceptualizing CAM, discovery and decision making process, reasons for using or not using CAM and barriers to CAM use. Generally, the participants were most comfortable with the term traditional medicines or in local language '*ubat kampung*', i.e. medicines comes from '*local traditions*'. Mixed perceptions were shown towards the use of CAM to cure cancer, however, slow onset of action and cost was cited as a major barrier in CAM use. Concerns towards the safety and efficacy of CAM for cancer as well as their potential interactions with the conventional therapies highlights the importance of patients' knowledge towards cancer and its treatment.

The study finding provides ground information about cancer patients' perceptions towards cancer and its treatment including conventional and CAM therapies. Priorities for future research should be focus among patients who defaulted the conventional therapies at any stage. The study findings would also help in designing educational programs to enhance awareness towards cancer and its treatment among healthy individuals.

Key Words: Complementary and Alternative Medicines, Cancer, decision-making, Information seeking, barriers, qualitative