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Contents

Introduction	2
Background	2
Methods	4
Results	6
Discussion	6
Conclusion	8
References	9

Introduction

This study examines the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the public in the United Kingdom about complementary and alternative therapies. This is due to the unprecedented adoption of complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) by the British public in recent years. Despite widespread scepticism regarding the efficacy and usefulness of complementary and alternative therapies, they are shockingly acquiring widespread acceptance among the British public. They are also widely used in modern healthcare systems around the world, including publicly funded institutions such as the National Health Service of the United Kingdom. Many CAM therapies, such as massage, osteopathy, and chiropractic therapy, have also been rigorously scrutinised utilising the rigorous protocols of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and proven to be safe and effective (Stoneman et al, (2013). The research will go further in trying to achieve a balance between the use of complementary and alternative medicine and conventional treatment. Complementary and alternative medicines are two terms mostly used correspondingly (Cancer Research UK, 2021).

Complementary therapies are distinct from conventional medicine in terms of their approach and treatment methods. Yoga, meditation, acupuncture, massage, aromatherapy, herbal medicine, visualisation, and homoeopathy are just a few of the therapies that are frequently combined with or in addition to mainstream treatments. (Bupa UK, 2021).

Any sort of medicine or therapy that does not fall within the scope of conventional medicine is referred to as alternative medicine. For hundreds of years, alternative medicine has been practised. Others are more recent additions to the collection. Something that started out as an "alternative" treatment may eventually become a part of traditional medicine if there is enough evidence that it works and has no hazards (Huizen, 2021).

Aim: The goal of this study is to look at how the UK population's beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes have led to their growing acceptance of the use of complementary and alternative medicines.

Objectives: The main objectives of this study are to explore and scrutinise articles and publications that have previously looked at this problem, as well as to make recommendations.

Background

Though there has been a surge in public interest in complementary and alternative medicine in recent years, and the public's response to these therapies has been overwhelmingly favourable, a thorny issue that keeps rearing its ugly head among physicians is the debate over their clinical usefulness (Frass et al., 2012). This study will be reviewing four different studies that looked at similar areas of research. The first is, Alison Chisholm's study (2012), Exploring UK attitudes regarding unlicensed medicines use: a questionnaire-based study of members of the public and clinicians. The study's goal is to use questionnaires to measure patients' and doctors' opinions towards complementary medicines. The total sample size is 749 patients and doctors, all of whom are adults. Despite their misgivings about being offered cheaper medicines made up of complementary medicines, 81 per cent of the participants said they would prefer the licenced and more expensive drugs on the approved

list. Only 14 per cent of prescribing clinicians were aware of the UK General Medical Council's advice on the use of complementary medicines. Even when orthodox treatments were available, 17% of doctors were prepared to give complementary drugs. The clear lack of proof of safety was a key issue for 76 per cent of clinicians providing complementary therapies, while 71 per cent were concerned about legal consequences and roughly 71 per cent were concerned about monitoring the efficacy of complementary medications.

Though physicians and patients agree on the importance of considering the safety and efficacy of complementary therapy, nearly half of the doctors who took part said they prescribed complementary medicines rather than orthodox medicines because of financial concerns among their patients.

The second study is titled, understanding support for complementary and alternative medicine in general populations: use and perceived efficacy (Stoneman, Sturgis and Allum, 2013). This study looked at the clear effectiveness of well-known complementary therapies like homoeopathy, as well as their widespread use, to gain a better grasp of the public's perceptions of complementary and alternative medicine. It appears that stated use and perceived effectiveness are not as close as previously thought. Based on recent data from the United Kingdom, it could be concluded that acclaimed use and perceived effectiveness should be reviewed to gain a clear picture of the motivations behind the rising public acceptance and support for complementary and alternative medicines.

The study goes further to show that, while the views of homoeopathic users and supporters vary, none of their outcomes is predicated on people's scientific awareness. Instead, the findings show that there is a need to give a better explanation as to how traditional medicine is gaining more acceptance

The third study, titled Hypochondriacal attitudes and beliefs, attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicine, and modern health issues by Fiona and Furnham (2014), In a typical medical appointment, this study highlights the various desires of patients. It goes on to say how important it is to learn about a patient's health beliefs and practises and how they relate to their medical history, attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicines, and current health concerns during a consultation to increase satisfaction.

The fourth study, titled General practitioners' belief regarding clinical value of current and alternative medicine, was conducted by Jarvis et al (2015). With a sample size of 19 general practitioners. It attempts to investigate General Practitioners' attitudes regarding complementary and alternative medicine, as well as the role these attitudes play in clinical practice. Much is unknown regarding general practitioners' attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and the impact it has on patient care when compared to conventional medicine. The available data revealed three main findings: insufficient evidence, patient pressure, and regulatory difficulties.

The rationale of the research

The rationale for this research hinges on the fact that a lot of studies have been done on the growing acceptance of complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) in recent times and this research aims to look further at the reasons that are making CAM more appealing and attractive to the population of the United Kingdom. While numerous studies have been undertaken in the past to investigate various causes for the acceptability of complementary and alternative treatments, this area of research is far from being exhausted.

More research is needed to understand the influence of beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions on the popularity of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)

among the UK public. Unfortunately, many of the studies were tiny, with varied or inconsistent outcomes and poor research methodologies. Many clinical studies evaluating complementary and alternative medicine contain serious faults, such as insufficient statistics, poor controls, treatment or product inconsistency, and a lack of comparisons with other therapies, placebo, or both, according to systematic reviews (Nahin, 2001) Before offering official recommendations, these assessments usually find that larger, well-designed investigations are required.

Methodology

The process of obtaining data from all relevant sources with the goal of solving the research problem, proving the hypothesis, and assessing the results. There are two types of data gathering methods: secondary and primary data collection methods. Regardless of the subject of study, data gathering is usually the first and most significant stage in conducting research. Depending on the information needed, different approaches to data gathering are used in different disciplines of study (Business Research Methodology, 2022).

This study is secondary research based on a systematic literature evaluation of four studies chosen from ten existing preliminary studies that looked at a similar topic from different databases, including PubMed/Medline, EBSCO and Scopus and Science Direct. They all researched the use and acceptance of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) among the UK population. A mixed technique approach was used in each of the four studies. After critically reading through several articles the four that met the eligibility criteria were selected from PubMed.

Participants in the three trials came from a variety of cultural backgrounds and included both doctors and patients and the total sample size of the three studies was nine hundred and eighty-three.

The keywords employed in this research are, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, contemporary, alternative, traditional, medicine, treatment, United Kingdom, England, Scotland, UK, Britain and British.

The inclusion criteria are, I consulted studies published between 2011 to 2021, looking at publications based in the UK, written in English, I also used empirical studies. The exclusion criteria are articles written before 2011, which also excludes studies not written in English, narrative literary reviews, were also excluded.

Thematic review will also be applied in conducting this research. The first study by Alison Chisholm (2012), titled Exploring attitudes towards unlicensed medicines use a questionnaire-based study of members of the public and physicians. It used questionnaires to research the attitudes and perceptions of doctors' and patients' regarding complementary and alternative medicines. The sample size was 749 patients and clinicians, the majority of whom were adults, and questionnaires were used. The study's primary conclusions are that both doctors and patients believe that safety and efficacy are the most important factors to consider when prescribing. Almost half of the doctors said they were concerned about their

patients' financial constraints and recommended complementary and alternative treatments as a result.

When conducting qualitative research to address the themes of a topic, a thematic review is always used to critically examine the many themes within the research. It's akin to a literature review, which is an analysis of the initial study on a topic (James Cook University, 2022)

The second study by Fionda and Furnham (2014), titled, Hypochondriacal attitudes and beliefs, attitudes towards complementary and alternative medicine and modern health worries predict patients' satisfaction. The study focused on patients' and doctors' attitudes and perceptions regarding complementary and alternative therapies, as well as modern health concerns. A total of 215 adults from varied backgrounds make up the sample size. Questionnaires were used to assess how satisfied individuals and their doctors were with their hypochondria beliefs and attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicines, modern health concerns, and personality. Complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) and contemporary health worries (MHW) were found to be associated with higher patient dissatisfaction in the study. Complementary and alternative medicine, on the other hand, had a higher rate of dissatisfaction. The study observed that, although the profile of those who use homoeopathy differs from those who support it, neither outcome is influenced by people's scientific knowledge. Instead, the findings show that necessity and worries about traditional medicine play a much larger part in the explanation (Stoneman, Sturgis and Allum, 2012)

The third study by Jarvis et al (2015), titled, General practitioners' belief about the clinical utility of contemporary and alternative medicine. The study's goal is to investigate general practitioners' attitudes on current and alternative medicine, as well as their role in clinical practice. This study used a qualitative method with a sample size of 19 general practitioners recruited from Northwest England. Semi-structured telephone interviews were analysed, as well as an inductive thematic analysis. The study discovered three primary findings: a) the amount of evidence provided was minimal. b) Patients were in high demand for complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), and c) there were obvious concerns about the lack of complementary and alternative medicine legislation.

The fourth study is titled, general practitioners' beliefs about the clinical utility of complementary and alternative medicine (Jarvis et al, 2014). The purpose of this study is to investigate GPs' attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicines.

Data analysis is the process of acquiring, analysing, and structuring information to enable the extraction of ideas that will aid decision-making. The methods and technologies that will be used are determined by the research goal, which is based on the data's area of study. There are two core areas of data analysis, that is quantitative and qualitative methods (University of Pretoria, 2021)

Quantitative data analysis is examining figures, sometimes known as hard data or real numbers, whereas qualitative data analysis is more abstract. It refers to things that are expressed through language. While quantitative data analysis focuses on numbers, qualitative data analysis takes a more subjective approach to data (Michigan State University, 2019)

In this study, the data analysis of replies from questionnaires given to all participants who were mainly patients and doctors inquired about their general health, lifestyle, and usage of complementary and alternative medications. The data analysis used in this study is a mixed data analysis.

Ethical considerations: All the ethical considerations, such as informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, participants not being at risk and avoiding using deceptive practices were followed by the four studies (Skills You Need, 2015). Ethical considerations are a very critical part of research writing. Failure to add ethical considerations is a big dent in any research work.

Results

The four articles in this study were all done in the United Kingdom. They all share the same goal, which is to look within to discover the factors that have led to the increased acceptance of complementary and alternative medicine among the British populace. All the studies are primary research because the authors did the surveys, observations, and interviews both on the phone and directly with questionnaires.

Two of the studies made use of anonymous questionnaires and their respondents were members of the public made up of patients and doctors, while the third and fourth used a semi-structured telephone interview and an inductive thematic analysis. All four studies attempted to determine the amount to which people's beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions influence their response to complementary and alternative therapies.

In considering the demands of patients for various complementary and alternative medicines, doctors came under severe pressure from their patients. This pressure ranged from not having the money to go for orthodox medicine, to outright belief in complementary and alternative medicine, doctors also faced the dilemma of prescribing complementary and alternative medicines reluctantly even with their concerns about safety and legal implications.

According to the findings of numerous research, some doctors are completely unaware of the guidelines governing the prescription and use of complementary and alternative medications. Due to the high cost of orthodox treatment, most patients are influenced to prefer complementary and alternative medicines.

Discussion

The four studies came up with various findings virtually pointing in the same direction. They all agree to the fact that complementary and alternative medicine is gaining more acceptance by the UK populace and gradually becoming part of prescription by doctors. Though it is gaining more acceptance, so is the dissatisfaction growing because of the non-availability of research and data on the efficacy and effectiveness of complementary and alternative medicine and as such, they are not evidence-based. The cost of complementary

and alternative medicine was acclaimed by all the studies to be cheaper than orthodox medical practice.

The lack of standardised regulatory bodies to control the practice, training and research into complementary and alternative medicine was also evident in the four studies.

In an earlier study, titled, Complementary and alternative medicine use in England: result from a national survey (Hunt et al, 2010), in their findings, posited that complementary and alternative medicine is being substantially used in England even among people who are sympathetic to taking orthodox medicines. It admonished medical practitioners to routinely enquire about their views on the use of complementary and alternative medicines with the aim of using the information to help in encouraging and hastening research into Complementary and alternative medicines.

The fact that all the studies were conducted in hospital settings with patients and doctors as the major participants is a significant limitation of the study. People from various areas of life in the community, not only those affiliated with the hospital environment, may have been included in the study.

Disaffection with orthodox prescriptions among the population was a crucial factor in predicting their adoption of complementary and alternative therapies, according to the four studies. The reality is that most general practitioners never saw their patients' complaints as medically tenable concerns, resulting in a medical failure to meet their expectations. This paved the way for a rapid acceptance of complementary and alternative medicine among the British public. In essence, the general practitioners were failing to connect with their patients, interact with them, and provide the necessary support.

Because all the studies were conducted in major cities, we can't get a balanced picture of the true reasons for the rapid rise in the acceptance of complementary and alternative medicines in the UK; the hinterlands, for example, may have a different attitude and perception of complementary and alternative medicines and may not have the same enthusiastic response.

Conclusion

This research looked at the rapid rise in the patronage of complementary and alternative medicines in the last two decades among the UK populace. They now see complementary and alternative medicines as a natural, effective, and less costly means of receiving medical treatment as opposed to orthodox medicine. The trend of patronising complementary and alternative medicines has also been boosted because of modern health worries (MHWs). Complementary and alternative medicines differ from orthodox medicine and their approach to treatment is quite different too.

Though there has been a lot of contention about the efficacy and effectiveness of CAM among medical experts, the interest of the public in CAM is still very much on the increase. There are four different articles used for this research. They all tried to look at the

acceptance of complementary and alternative medicines from the different perspectives of patients and doctors. Questionnaires and phone interviews were used among doctors and patients. Though many patients are happy with complementary, there are also some little fractions who still preferred orthodox medicines to complementary and alternative medicines, and they are ready to pay extra costs to get them.

This study used secondary research based on a systematic literature review of the four different primary studies that have looked at related topics on the attitudes, beliefs, and perception of the UK population towards contemporary and alternative medicines, using mixed methods. The thematic review was also applied. Keywords used are, attitudes, belief, perception, contemporary, alternative, traditional, medicine, treatment, United Kingdom, England, Scotland, UK, Britain, and British. Databases used include PubMed, EBSCO, and Scopus. The inclusion criteria are, ten years from 2011 to 2021, studies carried out in English, studies based on the UK and language is in English.

All four studies studied cast doubt on the effectiveness and efficacy of complementary and alternative medicines, and most doctors who agreed to prescribe CAM did so because it was much less expensive to prescribe and thus more accessible to the bulk of the population. So, in essence, the high cost of orthodox medicines is helping to sway the UK populace into accepting complementary and alternative medicine complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).

In addition, orthodox clinic waiting times and consultation times are too long, which has led to the UK population's interest in complementary and alternative medicine.

The paucity of research evidence on complementary and alternative medicine has been noted in all the studies, and they believe that it has been a stumbling barrier for many clinicians who believe in the efficacy and effectiveness of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), despite rising public acceptance.

Going by the positive responses recorded among a large section of the UK population, it would not be out of place to recommend that more effort be put into creating policies that will officially incorporate more aspects of complementary and alternative medicines into the health and social care sector. Integrating complementary and alternative medicines into the health and social care system would encourage and help patients gain confidence in their usage and application.

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