

## ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE: A REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT:

Natural products have been used for several years in folk medicine. Holistic dentistry or biologic dentistry is an age old alternative approach that is based on the assertion that the whole body is one unit and any changes in one part of this unit can have an impact on the whole unit.

Over the last decade herbal medications in both prophylaxis and treatment of various diseases turned to be a popular form of therapy throughout the world. Although this concept and practice has brought about a tranquil revolution but some of the complementary methods followed by holistic dentists are under criticism.

**Keywords:** Alternative medicine, holistic approach, oral health



### INTRODUCTION

“The art of medicine consists in amusing the patient while nature cures the disease” stated by Voltaire. The sole purpose of any branch of medicine is to strive to make human life happier and healthier. From time immemorial, we have been using our natural resources to attain the state of well-being. Alternative medicines is defined as therapeutic practices that are based on natural and traditional methods.<sup>[1]</sup> Health sector has undergone tremendous advancement in the recent past and has seen the rise of many new trends.<sup>[2]</sup> Many side effects associated with traditional medicines have been averted by using herbal medicines and thus they are safer to use. Natural products have been used for

several years in folk medicine. Over the last decade herbal medications in both prophylaxis and treatment of various diseases turned to be a popular form of therapy throughout the world.<sup>[3]</sup> Taking care of the whole human body healing and treating the underlying causes of diseases is one of the major advantages seen having the holistic approach in treating a disease. Alternative medicine improves the individual’s health and quality of life.<sup>[1]</sup> Complementary and alternative medicine [CAM] is any medical system, practice, or product that is not thought of as standard care. Standard medical care is the one that is based on scientific evidence. Alternative medicine is used in place of standard

medical treatments. Terms such as “natural,” “holistic,” “home remedy,” or “Eastern medicine” are referred to CAM.<sup>[4]</sup>

## HISTORY

The origin of holistic dentistry dates back to 1800, when the National Dental Association recognized the harmful effects of amalgam restoration and mandated that the members of the association should not use it on their patients. This was followed by many countries that have banned the use of mercury. Holistic dentistry rose further in between 1870 to 1948 with Weston A Price. He conducted research and came to the conclusion that degenerative diseases like heart problems, kidney and bladder disorders, arthritis, rheumatism, mental illness, lung problems and many other bacterial infections arise from root canal therapy and endodontic treatments. His concept was widely known as “focal infection theory”. Support of Price's theories continued further from a dentist named Melvin Page. He coined the phrase "balancing body chemistry" and considered tooth decay an "outstanding example of systemic chemical imbalances." He marketed a mineral supplement with claims that widespread mineral deficiencies were an underlying cause of several health conditions, including goitre, heart diseases, tuberculosis, and diabetes. These medications are widely used today as a safe approach towards overall health.<sup>[2]</sup>

## CLASSIFICATION

National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine has developed one of the most widely used classification systems for the branches of complementary and alternative medicine. It classifies complementary and alternative therapies into five major groups<sup>[1,4]</sup> [figure 1]. They are:

1. **Mind-body interventions:** These are based on the belief that your mind is able to affect your body.
  - a) Meditation: Focused breathing or repetition of words or phrases to quiet the mind
  - b) Biofeedback: Using simple machines, the patient learns how to affect certain body functions that are normally out of one's awareness (such as heart rate)
  - c) Hypnosis: A state of relaxed and focused attention in which the patient concentrates on a certain feeling, idea, or suggestion to aid in healing
  - d) Yoga: Systems of stretches and poses, with special attention given to breathing
  - e) Imagery: Imagining scenes, pictures, or experiences to help the body heal
  - f) Creative outlets: Such as art, music, or dance

1. **Biologically based practices:** These things are found in nature, eg Vitamins, Herbs, Foods, Special diet
  - a) Ayurvedic medicine: A system from India emphasizing balance among body, mind, and spirit
  - b) Chinese medicine: Based on the view that health is a balance in the body of two forces called *yin and yang*.
  - c) Acupuncture is a common practice in Chinese medicine that involves stimulating specific points on the body to promote health, or to lessen disease symptoms and treatment side effects;
  - d) Homeopathy: Uses very small doses of substances to trigger the body to heal itself;
  - e) Naturopathic medicine: Uses different methods that help the body naturally heal itself.
2. **Manipulative and body based practices:** These are based on working with one or more parts of the body.
  - a) Massage: Manipulation of tissues with hands or special tools
  - b) Chiropractic care: A type of manipulation of the joints and skeletal system
  - c) Reflexology: Using pressure points in the hands or feet to affect other parts of the body.
3. **Energy medicine:** It involves the belief that the body has energy fields that can be used for healing and wellness. Therapists use pressure or move the body by placing their hands in or through these fields.
  - a) Tai Chi: Involves slow, gentle movements with a focus on the breath and concentration;
  - b) Reiki: Balancing energy either from a distance or by placing hands on or near the patient;
  - c) Therapeutic touch: Moving hands over energy fields of the body.
4. **Whole medical system:** These are healing systems and beliefs that have evolved over time in different cultures and parts of the world.
  1. **Mind body interventions:** These are based on the belief that our mind is able to affect our body. They enhance the mind's capacity to affect bodily function and symptoms. There are various therapies which can be used in dentistry as mind-body interventions. Cognitive therapy includes behavioural therapy, meditation, prayer, mental healing, yoga and other therapies that use creative outlets such as art, music or dance, Relaxation is a state of altered consciousness, a slowing of breath and heart rate, Meditation is a process of training one's mind to be attentive, to focus in a non-

analytical way or an attempt to refrain from rumination, Hypnosis is induction of trance states by therapeutic suggestions. Other therapies which can be included are imagery, autogenic training, aromatherapy, biofeedback, psychotherapy, counselling, yoga, dance and exercise movements.<sup>[1]</sup>

2. **Biologically based practices:** It uses substances found in nature- herbs, foods, and vitamins, dietary supplements, herbal products, and the use of other so-called natural but as yet scientifically unproven therapies. [table 2]<sup>[1]</sup>
1. **Manipulative and body based practices:** System of therapies that use either manual manipulation or movement of one or more parts of the body to address structural or systematic imbalances of the bones and joints, the soft tissues, and the circulatory and lymphatic systems. For example chiropractics, massage therapy.<sup>[1]</sup>[Figure 2]
2. **Energy medicine:** Energy medicine involves the belief that the body has energy fields that can be used for healing and wellness. Therapists use pressure or move the body by placing their hands in or through these fields.<sup>[4]</sup> A healer is able to channel healing energy into the person seeking help by different methods: hands-on, hands-off, and distant (or absent) where the patient and healer are in different locations.<sup>[1]</sup> The **veritable** energies employ mechanical vibrations (such

as sound) and electromagnetic forces, including visible light, magnetism, monochromatic radiation (such as laser beams), and rays from other parts of the electromagnetic spectrum. They involve the use of specific, measurable wavelengths and frequencies to treat patients. [figure 3]. The **putative energy fields** have defied measurement by reproducible methods. Therapies involving putative energy fields are based on the concept that human beings are infused with a subtle form of energy. Therapists claim that they can work with this subtle energy, see it with their own eyes, and use it to effect changes in the physical body and influence health. Reiki and Johrei from Japanese origin, Qi gong which is a Chinese practice, healing touch in which the therapist is purported to identify imbalances and correct a client's energy by passing his or her hands over the patient and prayer specifically for health purposes-- such as intercessory prayer, in which a person intercedes through prayer on behalf of another are some of the examples of biofields.<sup>[5]</sup>

## 1. Whole medical system:

### 1. Ayurveda:

1. Herbal medicines are drugs of plant origin used to treat diseases or to attain or maintain a condition of improved health.

Herbs with medicinal properties are a useful and effective source of treatment for various disease processes. The word '**Ayurveda**' is derived from '**Ayu**' meaning '**life**' and '**veda**' meaning '**knowledge**'. In its true sense, Ayurveda literally means the science that imparts all the knowledge of life.

**Basis of Ayurveda:** The body of man and all the objects in the universe are composed of some base elements namely earth, water, energy, air and space. '**Vata**', '**Pitta**' and '**Kapha**' molecules are the three biological elements which constitute the cells and tissues of all the living organisms in the universe. The biological combination of Earth and Water gives rise to '**Kapha**', Water and Energy to '**Pitta**' and Air and Space to '**Vata**'. Kapha molecules make up the main structural units of the body. Pitta molecules represent the various enzymes and hormones and are responsible for digestion and release of energy impulses and all the movements of the body. When quantitatively and qualitatively normal, these three doshas (namely Vata, Pitta and Kapha) constitute the three pillars which stabilize life. But in a state of imbalance, the same three elements are responsible for disease, or even death. Ayurveda has imparted a lot as far as dental health is concerned. Ayurveda is an evolved system of medicine in India and it is a rich reservoir for Dental Science.

- a) Toothbrush or 'datun': A soft brush can be made by biting and chewing the tips of fresh stems of 'Akra', 'Catechu', 'Banyan', 'Karanja' or 'Arjuna'. The stems should be healthy, soft, straight, without any leaves and knots and picked from a tree growing in a clean surrounding. Fresh twigs of the following trees are used as Datun: neem, babul, mango, guava, roots of pillu and dandrasa. Vata is predominant in the monsoon and summer seasons, Pitta in monsoon and autumn and Kapha in spring and winter season. So, one should select the stem suited to the season.
- b) Toothpowder and toothpaste: One can use powders of triphala (amalaka, haritaki and bibheetaka) or trijataka (cinnamon, cardamom and tamal patra) with honey and saindhava salt for persons with Kapha and Pitta constitutions. Toothpowder consisting of equal quantities of ginger, pepper, pippali, cinnamon, cardamom, tamalpatra, tejovati, triphala, catechu and saindhava salt, which can be used as a paste after mixing with til oil maintains them in a healthy state. Contraindications for brushing teeth with Stems: fever, cough, breathlessness, diseases of lips, tongue, teeth, mouth and palate, indigestion, constipation, trushma (diseases characterized by excessive thirst), diseases of eyes, head and neck, facial palsy, diseases of heart,

- bleeding disorders and syncopic episodes.
- c) Gargling of the mouth or 'Mukh Prakshalan': One should use cold/hot water, til oil or cold milk for gargling. Gargling with hot water exerts cleansing action on the mouth, teeth, gums and the tongue. It imparts a light and fresh feeling to the mouth. Gargling with cold milk has a cooling and cleansing action on the mouth and is useful in stomatitis. Gargling with til oil exerts a cleansing and strengthening action on the tongue, gums, teeth etc. It also prevents stomatitis and is helpful in curing hypersensitivity of the gums to sour foods. It also improves the sense of taste. Contraindications for gargling are bleeding disorders, unconsciousness, poisoning, general weakness, conjunctivitis and miasmatic persons.
- d) Tongue cleaning: A thin plate of gold, silver, copper, a leaf or a thin wooden plate may be used to clean the tongue. It should be soft and smooth with rounded edges. Its length should be about equal to ten fingers.<sup>[6]</sup>
2. **Chinese medicine:** It is based on Yinyangism the combination of Five Phases theory with Yin-yang theory which was later absorbed by Daoism. Chinese herbs inhibit proliferation, induce apoptosis, suppress angiogenesis, retard metastasis and enhance chemotherapy, exhibiting anti-cancer potential.<sup>[7]</sup>
3. **Acupuncture:** The pathogenesis of disease according to Traditional Chinese Medicine [TCM] is pictured in figure 4.
- According to TCM theory, the location of acupuncture points is found along meridians which are unlike tangible anatomical structures like blood vessels or nerve trunks. Some of the dental applications by TCM therapy include
- i. Managing Dental Pain, Analgesic Effect and Postoperative Pain Relief: According to TCM theory, local acupuncture points on facial regions such as ST6 jiache, ST7 xiaguan and distant points like LI4 hegu can be used to treat dental pain. They belong to the stomach and large intestine meridians which converge at the facial region and link up with the maxillary and mandibular teeth, respectively. The role of acupuncture in dentistry may not involve removing the cause of dental pain, but rather, as an adjunct in achieving anaesthesia during dental procedures as well as providing postoperative pain relief.
- ii. Management of Temporomandibular disorders and orofacial pain: While acupuncture therapy may not be useful in eliminating the cause of TMD if it is due to structural anomalies like disc displacement and degenerative changes, it may help to relieve the

- pain and discomfort associated with the conditions, especially if they are muscular in origin. Relaxing the lateral pterygoid muscles can reduce the anterior displacing force on the meniscus of TMJ and help to minimise TMJ clicking. There are several case reports and case series in Chinese literature on successful acupuncture treatment for patients with trigeminal neuralgia. These acupuncture points seem to coincide with the distribution of the nerve branches.
- iii. Management of Xerostomia: The use of acupuncture as an alternative treatment modality for xerostomia has been documented in the Western medical field since the 1980s. Observational studies have demonstrated that acupuncture treatment may increase salivary flow in healthy volunteers, patients with Sjogren's syndrome and patients who have undergone radiotherapy in the head and neck region. Johnstone and co-workers found that acupuncture treatment may provide relief for pilocarpine resistant xerostomic patients following radiotherapy for head and neck malignancies.
- iv. Management of Bell's palsy: According to TCM concept, Bell's palsy is caused by the invasion of external wind pathogens into the meridians of the face. The use of acupuncture to treat Bell's palsy is based on the TCM concept that needle manipulation at both the local and distal sites can regulate the flow of qi in the meridians, harmonise qi-blood balance and strengthen the body's resistance to external wind pathogens. It may also help to increase the excitability of nerves and to promote the regeneration of nerve fibres.
- v. Management of Dental anxiety and gag reflex: A recent Cochrane Review showed that 31% of adults are fearful of dental treatment. The use of acupuncture may provide an alternative treatment modality for anxiety without possible adverse drug reactions. The use of acupuncture points like PC6 neiguan and CV24 chengjiang have been reported to significantly reduce gag reflex. Auricular acupuncture has also been suggested for treating severe gag reflex. According to TCM theory, the acupuncture point PC6 neiguan, located on the palmar side of the forearm — two inches above the transverse crease of the wrist, belongs to the pericardium meridian, which has the effect of "calming the heart which houses the spirit". It is often used to treat heart palpitation, nausea and vomiting.<sup>[8]</sup>

## 2.Homeopathy:

It is a form of alternative medicine in which the practitioners treat patients using highly diluted preparations that are believed to cause healthy people to exhibit symptoms that are similar to those exhibited by the patient. The basic principle of homeopathy, is known as the "law of similars", which means "let like

be cured by like. Homeopathic medicines such as Belladonna, Hepar sulphuris calcareum, Silica, Myrsilica, Calendula are widely used in acute cases of periapical and periodontal abscesses. Gelsenium, Aconite, Coffee cruda, Chamomilla are used for apprehensive or fearful patients. Phosphorus and Arnica can stop the bleeding while extraction, Belladonna, Ruta graveolens and calendula are used in "dry socket" cases. Chamomilla can be used in children at the time of teething, Belladonna, Magnesia phosphorica, Coffee cruda, Chamomilla are used as "painkillers". Arnica, hypericum, ledum, staphysagria, chamomilla and magnesia phosphorica are used in wide range of dental traumas and also as post-operative remedies.<sup>[3,9]</sup>

### 3. Naturopathic medicine:

It is a form of alternative medicine based on a belief in vitalism, which posits that a special energy called vital energy or vital force guides bodily processes such as metabolism, reproduction, growth, and adaptation. It includes procedures like acupuncture, applied kinesiology, botanical medicines, colour therapy, nature cure, nutrition, and ozone therapy.

### 4. Unani:

Unani in Arabic, means Greek Medicine, and is a form of traditional medicine widely practiced in South Asia, which is based on the teachings of Greek physician Hippocrates, and

Roman physician Galen proposed 4 element concept, i.e., earth, air, water, and fire are the four elements, cold, hot, wet, and dry are the four natures, blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile are the four humours.<sup>[1]</sup>

### ADVANTAGES

- Alternative medicines are aesthetic, relatively non-toxic, biocompatible approach of treatment.
- The proponents of alternative dentistry believe in treating the root cause of the problem rather than just treating the symptoms.
- Holistic dentistry is a clean dentistry, i.e., it rejects the use of any materials or treatments which could be toxic.
- Holistic dentistry is a holistic solution as it considers every aspect of the human body, not just the oral cavity.
- Holistic dentistry does not use quick fixes and takes time to decide on the best long-term approach to treating our patients and ensuring they are in the best health possible for as long as possible.
- Besides all, Herbal medicines are very cheap
- These medicines can be consumed without the aid of any kind of

prescription and can be found very easily from a local drug store.

- There is non-existence of side effects with the use of these medications.<sup>[10,11]</sup>

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Although several herbal products have been tested, yet conclusive results are still lacking
- Patients, who were treated with acupuncture, have experienced complications from unsterile needles.
- When correcting a "bad bite," alternative dentists often place a plastic appliance. The long-term use

of this device has been reported to cause the patient's teeth to move out of proper alignment.<sup>[12]</sup>

**CONCLUSION**

Alternative medicine improves the individual's health and quality of life. Patients are more interested in Alternative medicine for many reasons; one of which is the high costs of conventional medicine; not all people can get access to medical treatment. Secondly conventional medicines can actually have mild to more serious side effects ranging from nausea, vomiting, and ulcers to anaphylactic reactions. CAM procedures may eventually become standard practice after scientific verification of efficacy.

**FIGURES:**

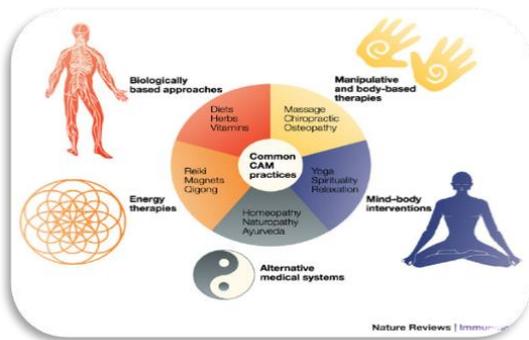


Figure 1: pictorial representation of classification



Figure 3: Treatment by energy medicine

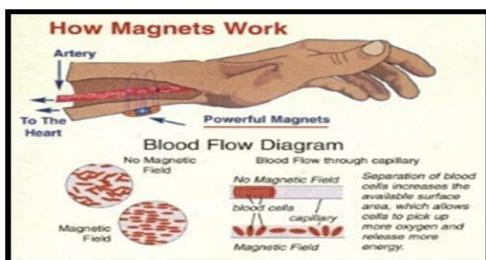


Figure 2: Chiropractic treatment

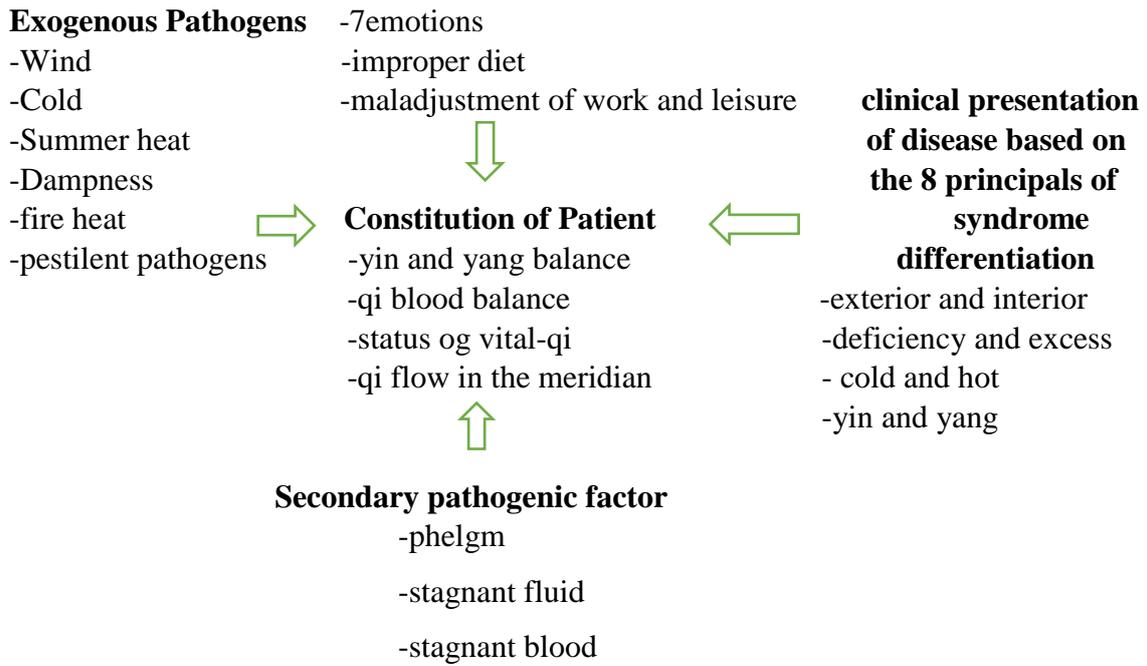


Figure 4: Pathogenesis of disease according to TCM philosophy

**TABLE:**

Herbal agent	Active ingredient	Properties
Peppermint	Menthol oil	Analgesic
Garlic	Allicin	Antiseptic
Ginger	Gingerols	Analgesic
Turmeric	Cucurmin	Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimutagenic
Coconut oil	Caprylic acid	Analgesic, faster healing
Clove	Eugenol oil	Analgesic
Guava	Guercetin	Antiseptic, anti-inflammatory
Aloe vera	Alloins, mannols	Induces healing emollient, anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial

Table 1: herbal agents used in dentistry

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