Utilization of Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Type 2 Diabetes Treated in Tertiary Care Hospital: Prevalence, Pattern, and Quality of Life

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Objective: Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a growing health problem with serious complications. The chronic and progressive nature of the disease often leads to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted from May 2015 to October 2017. Two hundred patients with DM type 2 were consecutively recruited from Diabetes Clinic in Maharaj Nakorn Chiang Mai Hospital. Interviews were done with the structured questionnaires.

Results: Approximately 84 (42%) patients used complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), and 63 (75%) used biologically based therapies with the most common type of CAM. A total of 31 (36.9%) patients used CAM to treat DM and 24 (28.6%) were recommended by family members and self-interest equally. Disclosure to doctor was only 13.7%. Majority of physicians did not support the use (92.9%). Few gave advice for risk/benefit/precaution (11.9%). No patients stopped conventional medicine. Few patients suggested other patients to use (36.9%). Most of the patients believed in the benefit of CAM (73.8%) and intended to further use (42.9%). Most patients had the costs of CAM (59.5%) (343.71± 786.78 THB). Glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) levels and diabetic nephropathy were significantly increased in patients using CAM (p=0.03, p=0.04, respectively). Whereas, regular exercise was significantly decreased in patients using CAM (p=0.00). No other significant differences was found between the two groups, including quality of life. CAM was assessed by GAD-7 and PHQ-9 (p=0.85, p=0.3, respectively)

Conclusion: A significant proportion of patients with diabetes type 2 use CAM. The biologically based therapies are the most common types of CAM. Most patients use CAM with complementary medicine and show no disclosure of the use to physicians. Quality of life and CAM are assessed by GAD-7 and PHQ-9, but no significant difference between the two groups.

Keywords: Diabetes mellitus type 2, Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), Quality of life