



The Roadmap for
European CAM Research

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Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) plays an important role in healthcare in Europe – but too little is known about it

Researchers of the EU project CAMbrella call for a coordinated approach in a “Roadmap for European CAM research”

Brussels, 29 November 2012 - The scientists of CAMbrella, an EU-funded pan-European research network for CAM, today present the findings of their three years’ work. They confirm that CAM is a much neglected area of research and that knowledge, provision and handling of CAM differs greatly in the different countries of Europe. Europe lags behind North America, Asia and Australia in its approach to CAM and there is an urgent need for a centralized and coordinated effort to enhance the knowledge about this field. The researchers called for a coordinated European approach, presenting a ‘Roadmap for European CAM research’.

CAM is in high demand by the citizens of Europe: as many as half of all citizens in Europe use complementary and alternative medicine for their healthcare needs; speaking at the final conference in Brussels today, project coordinator **Dr Wolfgang Weidenhammer**, centre for CAM research at the TU Munich said, “Citizens are the driver for the use of CAM. Their needs and views on CAM are a key priority and their interests must be investigated and addressed in future CAM research.”

There are more than 150,000 registered medical doctors with additional CAM certification in Europe and more than 180,000 registered and certified non-medical CAM practitioners, meaning up to 65 CAM providers per 100,000 inhabitants compared to the EU figures of 95 general medical practitioners per 100,000 inhabitants. However, regulation of and education in CAM is different in each of the 39 European countries. Speaking at the conference, **Prof. Vinjar Fonnebo**, director of the Norwegian Institute for CAM research at the University of Tromsø said: “The current EU regulation and education chaos for CAM provision makes it impossible for health professionals to give safety and security to their patients and clients.”

Substantial lack of data about CAM

To date, there has been no thorough investigation of this field of health care in Europe . There is almost no knowledge about the prevalence of CAM use by European citizens and patients. In most European countries, there has been no research into the needs of citizens regarding CAM provision and nothing much is known about the providers' concerns.

What is CAM and what do people use it for?

CAM is an umbrella term for popular treatment strategies mostly outside conventional medicine. Practices such as herbal medicine, homeopathy, manual therapy (massage, osteopathy and reflexology), acupuncture, anthroposophic medicine or naturopathy are applied in the care of chronic conditions, disease prevention and health management. Herbal medicine is the most frequently reported CAM practice, and musculoskeletal problems the most reported conditions for the use of CAM.

The CAMbrella “Roadmap for European CAM research”

The CAMbrella researchers call on the EU to support and implement CAM research that pays proper attention to the real world conditions of European healthcare. **Professor Jarle Aarbacke**, rector of University of Tromsø explains, “CAM is not part of the medicine we teach and learn in European universities – but it is nevertheless used by large numbers of patients and providers across Europe, so better we understand more about it.”

“If CAM is to be employed as part of the solution to the health care challenges we face in 2020, it is vital to obtain reliable information on its cost, safety and effectiveness in real world settings.

CAMBrella’s vision is for an evidence base which enables European citizens and policy makers to make informed decisions about CAM,” adds **Prof. Dr. Benno Brinkhaus, who led the roadmap workpackage**, at the conference today.

CAMBrella recommends the establishment of a European research centre for CAM, allowing researchers to develop a uniform and scientific approach to CAM research, and thereby to determine the prevalence of CAM in Europe, research the most promising CAM treatments for the most common health problems such as obesity, diabetes and cancer; review patient safety, and evaluate the integration of CAM into routine healthcare treatments.

And Dr. Weidenhammer sums up: “The CAMbrella project thus plays a central role for CAM and healthcare in Europe, it all depends now on taking up the proposals and put them in action.”

Notes for editors

1. In the CAMbrella project 16 partner institutions from 12 European countries have been working together to develop a 'roadmap for future European CAM research' that is appropriate for the health care needs of EU citizens and acceptable to the European institutions as well as their national research funders and health care providers.

2. CAMbrella consists of academic research groups which do not advocate specific CAM treatments.

3. CAMbrella's aim was to enable meaningful reliable comparative research and communication within Europe and help to create a sustainable structure and policy for CAM in Europe. The project was funded under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) of the European Commission since January 2010.

4. The project findings were presented at a final conference in Brussels, hosted by the Bavarian Representation, on November 29, 2012.

All documents generated by the project will be made available on the website:

<http://www.cambrella.eu/documents/>

5. A lack of data in the majority of member states meant that it was only possible to study 18 of the 39 member states and associated countries.

Contact

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