Healing Theory and Holistic Practice/Research Articles


  The purpose of the study was to describe nursing students' perceptions of their experiences at the 2007 annual conference of the American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA), and identify benefits of professional conference attendance as an educational strategy for undergraduate nursing students. Sixteen nursing students attended the 2007 AHNA annual conference and made daily journal entries about their perceptions of the conference. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, researchers analyzed their journal entries for recurring themes.


  Various investigators have proposed that nonlinear systems theory, notably chaos and complexity theory, provides a heuristically useful model for conceptualizing the way in which complementary and alternative medicine therapies, which purport to modify subtle energies, effect change throughout the individual as a whole. In this paper we apply this theory to classical homeopathy and outline an empirical approach for testing the resultant hypotheses. Such research may advance understanding of the mechanisms of homeopathic remedy effects and provide a direction for homeopathic research that expands the previous emphasis on clinical trials and the remedies themselves. In refocusing attention on the dynamics of the patient as a nonlinear complex system, the proposed research program is consistent with the homeopathic emphasis on the individual rather than the disease. This approach may have additional applications that can elucidate similar effects of other energy medicine modalities (eg, acupuncture) on the healing process of the person as a unified whole.


  Use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is growing quickly in the USA, prompting hypotheses about why people turn to CAM. One reason for increasing use of CAM modalities may be dissatisfaction with the conventional care system. However, recent studies suggest that dissatisfaction is not a major factor. This paper provides another perspective on the possible relationship between dissatisfaction with conventional care and the use of CAM. Qualitative data collection, in the form of 12 focus groups with 100 CAM users, was used to inquire about issues surrounding the use of CAM. Focus group participants were military veterans enrolled in the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, and their significant others. Qualitative analysis identified key themes emerging from the focus groups.

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Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use and expenditures are on the rise in the United States. Although civilian users of CAM have been well described, little is known about military veteran users of CAM. The purpose of this study is to describe military veteran CAM users in the southwestern United States. The study population comprised 508 military veterans randomly selected from Southern Arizona Veterans Administration Health Care System (Tucson) primary care patient lists, who had agreed to participate in a telephone interview. The χ2 test was used to analyze CAM use by demographic characteristics, military service, military-related health outcomes, and physician-diagnosed health complaints. Logistic regression was used to determine predictor variables.

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Despite the substantive literature from survey research that has accumulated on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in the United States and elsewhere, very little research has been done to assess conceptual domains that CAM and conventional providers would emphasize in CAM survey studies. The objective of this study is to describe and interpret the results of concept mapping with conventional and CAM practitioners from a variety of backgrounds on the topic of CAM. Concept mapping, including free sorts, ratings, and multidimensional scaling was used to organize conceptual domains relevant to CAM into a visual "cluster map." The panel consisted of CAM providers, conventional providers, and university faculty, and was convened to help formulate conceptual domains to guide the development of a CAM survey for use with United States military veterans.

Read the full article here.


A systematic review of nursing literature was conducted to determine the state of the science with respect to the use of intuition in nursing practice and nursing education. The Cumulative Index for Nursing and Allied Health database was used to identify the priority population. From this database, 45 research articles that were written in English, published in nursing journals, and that contained the word intuition in the title and/or abstract and in which intuition was a major term were analyzed. Findings show that, to date, most studies are descriptive, exploratory in design. Nurses affirm that intuition is salient to expertise in clinical practice and should be carefully taught to students and novice nurses.


*Ua neeb khu* (pronounced “oo-ah neng kue”) is a ceremonial healing practice engaged in by Hmong Americans for the treatment of various health problems involving spiritually focused concerns that only a shaman practitioner is qualified to treat. A qualitative ethnographic case study method with participant observation was used to analyze a spiritual healing ceremony performed by a shaman healer (txiv neeb) for an elderly Hmong American male residing in a midwestern city in the United States. The healing ritual was filmed and reviewed with the shaman healer to identify symbolic meanings and processes. Through ritual exchange and reciprocal transaction between the spirit and living world, the shaman facilitated the resolution of the spiritual problem and promoted the patient’s healing and sense of well-being. Awareness of the symbolic aspects of ritual in *ua neeb khu* and the relationship to the patient’s world view is useful to health practitioners for a holistic understanding of Hmong American healing practices.

Hatha yoga increases self-awareness and well-being. Intentionality is creating motivation and then action. This qualitative study explored intentionality during hatha yoga sessions using narrative analysis. The results supported and expanded Zahourek’s theory of intentionality, the matrix of healing, and provide new insights into intentionality in healing.


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A phenomenological study was conducted to investigate RN to BSN students' experiences in a holistic nursing course. A purposive sample of 19 RN to BSN graduates participated. Five theme clusters emerged when the formulated meanings were organized into categories: (1) uncertain beginnings, (2) shifting perspectives and power, (3) ripples of caring, (4) seeing the body, mind, spirit connection, and (5) from everyday practice to caring praxis. Findings provide evidence of the power of holistic nursing education to facilitate personal development and enhance professional practice.


The purpose was to understand the experience of being an Anishinabe man healer. Of particular relevance, healers explained how they provide Indigenous health care in a world dominated by Western biomedicine. A phenomenological approach was utilized to interview four Anishinabe men healers who reside in the United States and Canada. In-person interviews were conducted using an interview guide. The interviews were audiotaped when permitted; otherwise notes were taken. Data analysis was conducted using techniques from Colaizzi and van Manen.

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies, products and practices are increasingly being used across the United States and worldwide by individuals who are healthy, as well as by those who are ill (Barnes, Powell-Griner, McFann & Nahin et al., 2004; Burstein, Gelber, Guadagnoli, & Weeks, 1999; Eisenberg, et al., 1998; Ernst & Cassileth, 1998; Kessler, et al., 2001; Richardson & Straus, 2002). This trend, which is anticipated to continue, reflects changing health care behavior. Individuals, who are experiencing illness, use CAM for treatment, management of illness related symptoms and to enhance quality of life. Those who are well also use CAM to promote health, and prevent disease. This increasing prevalence of CAM has created a need to identify patterns and predictors of use among the diverse populations of users. Concurrently, this trend evokes questions about the effect of CAM on the utilization of conventional health services and providers, health outcomes and quality of life. This paper presents an emerging conceptual framework, referred to as the CAM Healthcare Model. This model aims to identify factors associated with the use of CAM providers, therapies, products and practices within a health services framework, thereby providing a guide for CAM research and practice. The CAM Healthcare Model is a modification of Andersen's Behavioral Model for Health Service Use, a framework that has guided research on conventional health services for more than three decades (Andersen, 1969, 1995). The CAM Healthcare Model identifies factors influencing the use of CAM health services and resources that are provider-directed, and CAM use as a self-directed health care activity and/or practice. The authors propose that CAM use, with or without a provider, has the potential to affect utilization of conventional health services as it offers more choices to healthcare consumers. These choices ultimately affect healthcare outcomes, research, health service delivery and policy, hence the importance of this work.

Understanding the trends and implications of CAM use further emphasizes the need for a model to study CAM within a health service/resource context.


Holistic nursing is a discipline focused on healing the whole person and dedicated to understanding and supporting the premise of holistic health of the patient and promoting healing in practitioners, patients, families, social groups, and communities. An explication of knowledge related to caring and healing in the human health experience and in holistic nursing is informed by the individual nurse's paradigmatic stance. Holistic nursing research is complex and focuses on healing, particularly healing of self, others, systems, and communities at large. This article discusses the competing paradigmatic perspectives, theoretic perspectives supporting holistic research, fundamental patterns of knowing and knowledge generation, a framework for holistic research, and the challenges of conducting holistic research. Recommendations for future research agenda are presented. Read the full article here.


Consciousness and intentionality often have been related and studied together. These concepts also are readily viewed and understood for practice, research, and education in a unitary paradigm. How these ideas relate to community is less known. Considering the expansion of our capacity for communication through the World Wide Web and other technologic advances and appreciating recent research on the nonlocal character of intentionality and consciousness, it is more apparent how concepts of community can be seen in the same unitary context. The authors address these issues and review relevant nursing research.
This paper explores the role of story for healing. Specifically, this paper describes story and healing in cultural or whole medical systems, including Latino/Hispanic traditions, Native American/Indigenous traditions, and Homeopathy. In addition, the authors provide a brief overview of story and healing in the nursing and medical literature, and evaluate the value of story in our current practice as holistic nurses. It is important for the holistic nurse to be aware of the role of stories for healing in diverse systems of healthcare. This awareness can help bridge the knowledge gap between cultural or whole medical systems and Western Medicine, thus optimizing the healing environment for the patient, nurse, and other providers of care.

Homeless adolescents are vulnerable to poor health outcomes owing to the dangerous and stressful environments in which they live. Despite their vulnerability, many of them are motivated to engage in self-care behaviors. The specific aim of this study was to explore self-care attitudes and behaviors of homeless adolescents. Individual interviews were conducted with 15 homeless adolescents. Interviews were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using the constant comparative method of grounded theory.

The purpose of this study was to develop and validate a scale to measure nurses' acknowledgment of using intuition in clinical decision making. Development and validation of the scale was carried out in three phases. In Phase 1, scale items were generated from the published literature in nursing and management and a Content Validity Index (CVI) of .96 was computed on responses from a panel of five experts. In Phase 2, the scale was pilot-tested on a random sample of 106 psychiatric mental health nurses. In Phase 3, the revised scale was presented to a convenience sample of 112 nurses attending continuing education programs. Seven items were found to explain 40.6% of the variance in scores and were retained as the final unidimensional scale. Construct validity was supported by a difference in means of two groups that also differed on another measure of intuition.

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Understanding and studying healing is one of our challenges as healthcare providers. This study is a presentation of a secondary analysis of data collected to study intentionality in the context of healing. Six healers and six healees, five of each who participated as dyads, described their experiences and their concepts of healing. The theory, Intentionality: The Matrix for Healing (IMH), is presented, along with a more expanded definition of healing as an awareness of shift and a transformative process. Read the full article here.