The use of herbal remedies, acupuncture, and other therapies that fall within the arena of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) are hardly new. In fact, some of these therapies have been used successfully in other parts of the world for thousands of years. What is new is Americans’ significantly growing interest and use of these therapies since the 1990s. When Eisenberg and colleagues reported on their findings that 40% of all Americans are using CAM and doing so without their physicians’ knowledge (Eisenberg et al, 1998; Neal 2001), many conventional (mainstream Western medicine) practitioners were surprised. Since then, the 2007 National Health Interview Survey, the most comprehensive and reliable to date describing the use of CAM therapies, found that 38.3% of U.S. adults and 11.8% of children aged 0 – 17 years had used some type of CAM in the past 12 months (Barnes et al, 2007).

The significance of CAM to health care was reinforced when the National Institutes of Health established a National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM). NCCAM conducts and supports research, trains CAM researchers, and provides information about CAM; their website provides a wealth of information (http://nccam.nih.gov). Display 1 provides a description of the categories of CAM.

Who Uses CAM?
The National Health Interview Survey (2007) revealed interesting information on the populations who used CAM. The highest users were:

- women
- adults aged 30-69
- well-educated individuals
- adults who were not poor
- adults living in the West
- people who had been hospitalized within the past year
- former smokers
- adolescents aged 12 – 17 years
- white children
- children whose parent used CAM

The most frequently used CAM therapies in adults in the past 12 months included: (Barnes, et al, 2007, p3)

- Natural products (nonvitamin, nonmineral) (17.7%)
- Deep breathing exercises (12.7%)
- Meditation (9.4%)
- Chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation (8.6%)
- Massage (8.3%)
Nurse Competence in Aging - American Holistic Nurses Association

The most frequently used CAM therapies in children in the past 12 months included: (Barnes, et al, 2007, p4)

- Yoga (6.1%)
- Diet-based therapies (3.6%)

The most frequently used CAM therapies in children in the past 12 months included: (Barnes, et al, 2007, p4)

- Natural products (nonvitamin, nonmineral) (3.9%)
- Chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation (2.8%)
- Deep breathing exercises (2.2%)
- Yoga (2.1%)
- Homeopathic treatment (1.3%)

The most common problems that CAM therapies were used to treat were:

- back pain or problems
- neck pain or problems
- joint pain or stiffness
- anxiety
- depression

Obviously, these are problems common among older adults.

Most users of CAM therapies did so without the knowledge or guidance of any health care professional. This certainly can pose a risk in geriatric care in that older adults may be:

- self-diagnosing and self-treating with CAM products and therapies which could delay the diagnosis and perhaps more appropriate treatment for a health condition
- unknowingly subjecting themselves to complications associated with interactions or adverse reactions to CAM therapies
- wasting limited funds on CAM products and services that are ineffective for their specific conditions

With the widespread use and potentially serious risks associated with some forms of CAM, wisdom and caution with CAM use are essential. On the other hand, CAM therapies can offer effective, reasonably-priced approaches to many of the health issues aging individuals face, so they do have a place in geriatric care. Nurses can make a critical difference in assuring that older adults receive maximum benefit at minimum risk as they integrate CAM and conventional therapies.

Benefits of CAM for Older Adults

Chronic conditions are realities for the lives of most older adults. When examining the impact of chronic conditions in the population over age 65 years of age the following is evident (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 2009):

- Nearly half suffer from arthritis.
- More than one-third have hypertension.
- Nearly one-third have a hearing impairment.
- More than one-fourth have a heart condition.
- More than 1 in 8 has a visual impairment.
- Nearly another 1 in 8 has a deformity or orthopedic impairment.
- Almost 10% have diabetes.
- Approximately 1 in 12 are affected by hemorrhoids and varicose veins
Not only do a majority of older adults experience a chronic condition, but most have to live with and manage several chronic conditions concurrently.

Despite the high risk of side effects and adverse reactions in older adults, medications are a major means of treating chronic condition in this population. However, many chronic condition could be aided by a variety of CAM therapies. There are several benefits to older persons in using CAM:

- **CAM builds on the body’s capabilities.** The human body has an amazing capacity to heal itself, as is witnessed with the production of antibodies to fight bacteria and the mending of broken bones and lacerations. Unlike most conventional treatments that act by doing something to the body to control a condition, most CAM therapies are aimed toward strengthening the body’s own defenses and healing abilities so that it can do for itself. Strengthened and healthy defenses offer older adults benefits that exceed symptom management.

- **Total health state is considered.** CAM does not view symptoms in isolation but rather considers total health practices. Healthful practices and a balanced lifestyle are promoted to not only control existing health conditions, but also to prevent new ones and enhance general health state.

- **CAM views the person holistically.** A focus on treating symptoms or body systems minimizes the reality that people are complex combinations of unique bodies, minds, and spirits. Each of these facets is inseparable from the others; they affect and are affected by each other. CAM considers this interconnectiveness as it assesses and addresses the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of a person.

- **Healing practices are tailored to the individual.** The unique composition of body, mind, and spirit that each individual represents means that the cause, manifestation, and treatment of similar illnesses or diseases can vastly differ from person to person. This is especially true for older adults, each of whom is the product of an individualized aging process. Whole-person CAM practices offer customized healing measures.

- **CAM encourages self-care.** Too often, people will ignore basic health promotion practices and then turn to a physician to “fix” a problem once it occurs. CAM, instead, encourages people to assume active roles in their health and healing. People are taught about self-care practices, guided in using them, and assisted in exploring obstacles that could stand in the way of doing so. Older adults are empowered when they are encouraged to take maximum responsibility for their care.

- **The older adult is honored by receiving the attention needed.** The abbreviated office visit, common in conventional practice, causes many older people to feel that they must be selective in what they share with their health care provider so as not to take too much time. As a result, questions, emotional problems, socioeconomic concerns, and spiritual issues that affect health may not be shared. In contrast, CAM practitioners are more likely to spend time learning about the total person—body, mind, and spirit—and address needs holistically. Affording older people the time and attention needed commnificates that they are viewed as important individuals rather than impositions.

- **Most CAM therapies are safer and gentler than conventional therapies.** A variety of age-related changes combined with the high volume and nature of medications used, cause drugs to carry many risks for older adults. Although there are conditions for which drugs provide remarkable benefit, there are other conditions which can be managed and improved through lower risk CAM approaches.
With the many benefits that can be derived from using CAM, geriatric nurses would benefit older adults by helping them to integrate CAM with conventional therapies. This requires that nurses understand the intended and safe use of various CAM therapies, educate older people in appropriate CAM use, and prepare themselves to offer selected CAM therapies as part of their practice.

**Specific CAM Therapies and Nursing Considerations**

There are numerous CAM therapies available, some with considerable supporting research and others with no more than limited testimonials. The fact that a CAM therapy doesn’t have research evidence of effectiveness, although important to note, must be put in perspective. Until the past decade, there was minimal interest in researching CAM. There was limited use of CAM by Americans, conventional medicine dominated as the legitimate form of care, and little incentive existed for the private sector to invest funds in CAM research. However, anyone who has used the internet probably has had the experience of seeing advertisements for “natural products for weight loss”, “herbal sexual stimulants”, and “revolutionary new diets”, rich with testimonials but not always as rich with solid supporting evidence of effectiveness and safety. Discernment, therefore, is necessary. Questions regarding product content, the credentials of CAM practitioners, and facts to back claims are needed. With that said, let’s survey what is known about some of the common CAM therapies that could prove useful in geriatric care.

**Acupuncture**

Acupuncture, although relatively new to the U.S., is a treatment that has been used in traditional Chinese medicine (Display 2) for over two thousand years. It involves placing special needles under the skin at acupoints along meridians to stimulate the flow of energy and restore the balance of Qi. Acupuncture stimulates a variety of responses, such as changing blood pressure, heart rate, immune system response, brain activity, and endocrine functions. Of all the CAM therapies, acupuncture is the most widely researched, with demonstrated benefit for many health conditions, including pain, angina, nausea, addictions, asthma, and depression. In fact, the World Health Organization has described more than one hundred different conditions that can benefit from acupuncture treatment.

Adverse reactions and complications from acupuncture are rare. Some people feel weak and dizzy after a treatment which is a consideration for older adults who are at higher risk for experiencing postrual hypotension when they rise from a lying position. Allowing the older person to slowly change positions and offering assistance as he or she rises from the treatment table are beneficial safety measures.

Acupuncture should be provided by a trained acupuncturist. Check your state health department’s licensing division to learn about requirements for acupuncturists in your specific state. For general information about acupuncture you can contact:

- **Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance**
  www.acuall.org

- **American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine**
  866-455-7999
  www.aaomonline.org

- **American Academy of Medical Acupuncture**
  310-364-0193
Aromatherapy
A branch of herbal medicine dating back thousands of years, aromatherapy is the therapeutic use of plant-derived essential oils. Real essential oils are either steam distillates or expressed extracts from aromatic plants. These oils are inhaled or applied to the skin surface (via baths, compresses, massage) and stimulate the release of neurotransmitters in the brain to produce specific results.

As benign as they seem, essential oils must be properly used or they can cause problems. Essential oils should not be administered orally unless done by a therapist who is trained to do so. Care needs to be taken to keep the oil away from the eyes; if oil does get in the eye, rinse with milk or a carrier oil followed by water (you would not rinse with water first as the oil will not dissolve in water). They should not be used undiluted on the skin; the fragile skin of older adults could be sensitive to any of these oils so observe for reactions. People with asthma and allergies may be sensitive to essential oils, therefore, it is best to not use aromatherapy with these individuals. Oils should be stored in a closed dark container, in a cool place.

Essential oils can interact with drugs. For example:
- West Indian lemongrass (cymbopogon citrates) can increase the effects of morphine
- Peppermint can reduce the effects of quinidine
- Lavender can increase the effects of barbiturates
- Oils with a calming, sedative effect can heighten the action of tranquilizers, anticonvulsants, and antihistamines

This small example of interactions demonstrates the potential risks involved in using aromatherapy without sound knowledge of the effects. It behooves nurses to research the effects of essential oils before recommending their use or using them with clients.

There are several programs in aromatherapy which can prepare nurses to responsibly use aromatherapy:

Clinical Aromatherapy for Health Professionals
Email: rjbinfo@aol.com
www.rjbuckle.com

The Institute of Integrative Aromatherapy
www.Aroma-RN.com

Institute of Aromatherapy, Aromatherapy Consultant Program
www.instituteofaromatherapy.com

National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy (NAHA)
509-325-3419
www.naha.org

Biofeedback
Biofeedback is the process of learning to bring bodily responses under conscious, voluntary control. The process enables people to identify changes associated with targeted symptoms and develop measures to alter those changes. Although relaxation is an outcome of doing biofeedback exercises, the focus is on a specific response rather than achieving general relaxation.

Initially, equipment (e.g., electromyelogram, galvanometer, thermistor) is used to assist in gaining sensitivity to internal changes. As the person becomes familiar with symptoms and ways to elicit responses, the need for the equipment to provide feedback diminishes.

Biofeedback has proven beneficial in the treatment of tension headaches, hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, Raynaud’s syndrome, urinary and fecal incontinence, cardiac arrhythmias, anxiety, and stress. People who have suffered strokes have been shown to improve gait, grasp, and grip with the use of biofeedback.

In order to use biofeedback, people need to have the cognitive ability to learn, retain information, and follow directions, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive mental status evaluation before initiating treatment.

Although biofeedback has a low risk for adverse reactions and nurses can implement forms of it safely, training is needed to gain knowledge and skill in this therapy; there are special programs to enable practitioners to be certified. For more information you can contact:

Association of Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback and Biofeedback Certification Institute
800-477-8892
www.aapb.org

**Chiropractic**

Although there is evidence that the Chinese and Greeks used spinal manipulation to treat various health conditions several centuries ago, it wasn’t until the 19th century that chiropractic therapy became a recognized specialty in the U.S. This manual healing therapy is based on the belief that misalignments of the spine (subluxations) can create pressure on nerves, causing pain and dysfunction of body systems.

Typically, a chiropractor will obtain a detailed medical history and examine the spine. Findings will determine the treatments used. Many chiropractors combine other therapies with their spinal adjustments.

Because chiropractic has been accepted in the U.S. for over a century and often is reimbursed by insurers, many people have experience with this therapy. In fact, approximately 8% of American adults have used the services of a chiropractor (National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, 2012). Back pain is the most frequent reason people visit a chiropractor although this therapy also can benefit other conditions, such as asthma, arthritis, addictions, headaches, and muscle spasm.

Older adults may need to be careful about chiropractic. Osteoporotic bones, common in the older population, can fracture very easily, and persons with degenerative joint disease could experience increased joint damage and pain.

Considerable training is required to become a chiropractor. Practitioners without this training should not attempt spinal manipulation as serious complications can occur. Organizations that can provide additional information about this specialty include:

American Chiropractic Association
703 276 8800
www.acatoday.org
Energy Healing / Touch Therapies

Energy healing is based on quantum physics laws that recognize that energy is matter and all living things generate vibrational fields. A healthy state exists when energy is free flowing within the individual and between the individual and the environment. Symptoms and illness arise from a disruption in the quality and quantity of energy flow. To treat this situation, the practitioner transfers energy to stimulate healing.

Nurses’ first major exposure to energy healing was through the work of Dolores Krieger and Dora Kunz who developed the technique of Therapeutic Touch (TT) in the 1970s. The term Therapeutic Touch is a misnomer in that the therapy doesn’t really involve direct physical contact, but rather, touching of the energy field. Prior to beginning a treatment, practitioners center themselves and mobilize their own healing resources. They focus on the client with undivided attention and intentional thought to healing the client. Their hands are held a few inches from the client’s skin, moving in purposeful ways. As universal energy is drawn in, practitioners transfer that energy to the client.

Healing touch, a technique later developed by Janet Mentgen, incorporates components of TT and other energy therapies, and Reiki, an ancient Buddhist practice that is based on the belief that spiritual energy can be channeled through the practitioner, are other forms of energy healing.

Reiki means universal life energy and is a form of energy healing developed in Japan. If differs from TT and HT in that the practitioner channels energy to the recipient by actually laying his or her hands on the person for several minutes, as well holding the hands above the body. Practitioners are taught by a Reiki master in a series of intensive sessions in which the master’s knowledge is passed to the learner through attunements.

Energy healing therapies can assist with relief of pain, anxiety, and stress. Most recipients of these therapies report a feeling of relaxation after treatment.

Although the potential for physical complications is nearly nonexistent, caution must be taken to assure people don’t substitute these treatments for diagnostic workups and essential conventional care. Also, some clients may feel spiritual distress if they receive energy healing as they may be concerned about what and who the source of the energy is. For example, a Christian who believes that healing comes directly from Jesus Christ may react negatively to receiving healing energy that is drawn from a vague universal force. The Catholic church has taken the position that Catholics should not engage in this therapy (Committee on Doctrine, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009). Assessing spiritual beliefs, explaining the therapy clearly, and obtaining consent before offering the treatment are useful.

Most practitioners of energy therapies are nurses. To learn about training programs contact:

Healing Touch International
303-989-7982
www.healingtouchinternational.org
Guided Imagery

If you’ve ever been able to feel joy by closing your eyes and imagining that you’re with someone you care about or at a place that is special to you, you have experienced the effects of imagery. Imagery is a process in which a mental representation of an object, place, or situation creates a specific response in the body. When the nurse aids the client in using images for therapeutic purposes it is considered guided imagery. It differs from hypnosis in that the individual creates his or her own images rather than being suggested one by the therapist.

Imagery begins by establishing the desired goal or result. The client then is guided in achieving a state of deep relaxation; progressive relaxation exercises are beneficial for this. When fully relaxed, the client focuses on an image that reflects the desired outcome. For example, during a diagnostic test that the client is nervous about, the nurse can guide the client to relax and then ask him to think about being in a peaceful place he has visited. Or, when an analgesic is administered, the nurse can ask the client to close her eyes and image the medication traveling through her blood, reaching the painful area, and slowly dissolving the pain. Affirmations can be coupled with the imagery.

Imagery is effective for pain management and stimulating healing responses. There are tapes with guided imagery scripts that clients can use. Nurses can receive special training in Imagery:

- Imagery International
  541-632-4197
  http://imageryinternational.org

- Academy for Guided Imagery
  800-726-2070
  www.interactiveimagery.com

Herbal Medicine (Botanical Medicine, Phytotherapy)
Herbs have been used as healing remedies for centuries in all cultures. When used therapeutically, they are classified by their effects (e.g., anti-inflammatory, hypotensive, laxative, stimulant, tonic). Herbs can be taken internally in the form of teas, capsules, tablets, tinctures, and syrups, or used externally in baths, compresses, poultices, ointments, and oils.

Not only are there numerous herbs, each with their specific actions, but also, different parts of the same herb can have different effects. For instance, the leaf of the dandelion plant has a diuretic effect while its root is a laxative. This demonstrates the significance of knowing and researching herbs before using them therapeutically.

In addition to assuring you’re using the correct herb for the intended purpose, knowledgeable use of herbs can aid in reducing complications that could occur when using these remedies improperly. Consider these examples:

- bayberry can elevate blood pressure and cause edema
- extended use of black cohosh can cause liver dysfunction
- garlic and ginkgo biloba can delay clotting time
- hawthorne, in large doses, can cause dramatic drops in blood pressure
- St. John’s wort can interact with asthma inhalants, smoked foods, and coffee; it may cause photosensitivity
- large amounts of licorice over a long period can cause sodium retention and potassium depletion

Herbal medicines can prove useful in improving health states and managing symptoms of many geriatric conditions. For example, echinacea can boost the immune system and reduce the need for antibiotics, thereby sparing older persons the problem of developing antibiotic-resistance infections; ginkgo biloba can enhance cognitive function in some individuals; hawthorne can manage some high blood pressure without the side effects of antihypertensive drugs. Nurses can advocate for the use of herbs where appropriate and assure they are being properly used; however, nurses need to assure that they are not prescribing herbal remedies as this could be interpreted as being beyond the scope of nursing practice and practicing medicine or nutritional therapy without proper licensure. There are many fine herbal reference books available that would be useful additions to a nursing library. Additional information can be obtained through:

- Herb Research Foundation
  303-449-2265
  www.herbs.org

- American Botanical Council
  512-926-4900
  www.herbalgram.org

- American Herbalist Guild
  617-520-4372
  www.americanherbalistsguild.com

**Homeopathy**

The foundation of homeopathy grows from its root words: *homoios* meaning similar and *pathos* meaning suffering. This system of healing is based on the principle that suffering is helped by giving a biological substance (plant, animal, or mineral) that produces symptoms similar to that caused by the condition. This principle, known as the “Law of Similars,” may seem baffling until we realize that it is the same principle on which vaccines work.
Homeopathic remedies are highly diluted ones; the more dilute the substance, the more potent it is. After taking an extensive history and assessing the person, the homeopath will prescribe and, often, prepare a specific remedy (although many people use generic over-the-counter preparations for a general purpose, such as hayfever or muscle ache). The reactions to the substance are evaluated using the Law of Cure that states that symptoms:

- move from vital organs to less vital parts of the body
- move from within the body outward
- disappear in reverse order of appearance

The substance is effective and healing is taking place if symptoms are responding in this manner. In addition, symptoms may worsen which could be a sign that healing has begun.

As mentioned, homeopathic remedies are diluted substances, so diluted, in fact, that a bare trace of the original substance exists. Although it runs contrary to logic, these diluted substances do work—for reasons not fully understood. Homeopathic remedies have been found to be effective for the treatment of arthrits, allergies, headaches, muscle aches, sinusitis, cardiovascular problems, endocrine disturbances, and other conditions. Because of their diluted nature, the risk of complications is extremely low. The greatest risk lies in avoiding or postponing necessary medical attention due to self-treatment with homeopathic remedies.

Homeopathic remedies are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. The names of prepared homeopaths and information on the use of homeopathic substances can be obtained through the:

- National Center For Homeopathy
  703-548-7790
  www.homeopathic.org
- North American Society of Homeopaths (NASH)
  206-720-7000
  www.homeopathy.org

**Hypnotherapy**

Hypnosis is an induced trancelike state in which a person is open to suggestion. Anthropologists have found evidence of the use of trance states as part of healing practices in virtually every primitive culture, however, it was just a half century ago that Western medicine recognized hypnotherapy as a valid medical treatment.

A hypnotic state is achieved by the body being guided into a highly relaxed state. Suggestions are offered to the person during this trance state. If the state is superficial, the person will most likely not follow a post-hypnotic suggestion whereas in a deep state (somnambulism) the suggestion will be followed. A session can last from 60 to 90 minutes. Most people are able to be hypnotized; the success of the session is influenced by the willingness of the person to engage in the therapy, the degree of trust between the therapist and the client, and the control of environmental distractions.

There are a wide range of conditions that hypnotherapy can help, including chronic pain, migraines, anxiety, addictions, irritable sound syndrome, and behavioral problems. Hypnotherapy is contraindicated in people with psychosis, antisocial personality disorders, and organic psychiatric conditions. The following organizations can assist in locating reputable hypnotherapists:

- American Board of Hypnotherapy
  800-800-MIND
  www.hypnosis.com
- American Society of Clinical Hypnosis
  630-980-4740
  www.asch.net
Massage
Therapeutic massage is the manipulation of soft tissue by rubbing, rolling, pressing, slapping, and tapping movements. When massage is combined with deep tissue manipulation, movement awareness, and energy balancing it is referred to as bodywork. There are a variety of techniques that constitute massage and bodywork, such as Swedish massage, lymphatic massage, Alexander Technique, Rolfing, Trager Approach, and Reflexology. Depending on the type of technique used, massage can promote relaxation or unblock energy channels.

Massage stretches and loosens muscles and connective tissues, improves blood and lymph flow, and stimulates the release of endorphins and serotonin in the brain and nervous system. These effects make massage beneficial for the relief of pain, edema, respiratory congestion, constipation, depression, and anxiety.

Some massage can cause alterations in pulse and blood pressure which could predispose older adults to falls when they attempt to rise after receiving the treatment. The fragility of older skin also must be considered to assure aggressive rubbing and kneading do not cause skin tears.

Therapeutic massage exceeds the technique of the basic backrub; nurses need additional training to offer this type of therapy. Some states require that anyone offering massages be a licensed massage therapist. To assure they are not violating laws, it is beneficial for nurses to check the requirements for providing massages within their specific states. In addition, information can be obtained from:

- American Massage Therapy Association
  877-905-2700
  www.amtamassage.org

- Massage Bodywork Resource Center
  www.massageresource.com

- Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals
  800-458-2267
  www.abmp.com

Meditation
As with many other CAM therapies, meditation has been practiced in other parts of the world for thousands of years yet has only risen to fame in the U.S. since the 1970s. It was at that time that Dr. Herbert Benson (1975) shared his research on the positive physical and mental health effects of this practice. Interest in and the practice of meditation has grown since.

Meditation is an activity that calms the mind and deepens attention and awareness. There are several forms of meditation:
- **Concentrative meditation** in which the person focuses on breathing, an image, or a sound (e.g., mantra) in order to deepen attention and awareness.
Mindfulness meditation whereby one pays attention to the sensations, feelings, and thoughts that are being experienced. This helps to bring awareness to the present moment.

Because meditation relaxes it can prove useful for any condition that could benefit from stress reduction, such as high blood pressure, anxiety, and depression. It has been shown to reduce seizure activity and enhance immune function. Most people who meditate report higher levels of energy, enhanced mental function, and improved self-esteem.

Older adults with compromised cognition or poor attention spans are not good candidates for meditation. Likewise, individuals with certain psychiatric problems may not be appropriate for this practice. In addition to screening for cognition and mental conditions that could affect the success of meditation, it is useful to evaluate the compatibility of meditation with a person’s spiritual beliefs. There are some individuals who believe that idling the mind provides an opportunity for evil forces to influence; this type of issue needs to be explored before suggesting and teaching meditation to clients to avoid causing spiritual distress.

There are many books and audio tapes that can guide people through meditation exercises. In addition, information on this practice can be obtained through:

American Meditation Institute
518-674-8714
www.americanmeditation.org

The Center for Mind-Body Studies
202-966-7338
www.cmbm.org

Naturopathy

The belief has been held by healers for centuries that the body could heal naturally if proper nutrition, pure water, fresh air, exercise, adequate rest, and sunlight were provided. In the 19th century, a medical system was developed from this belief known as naturopathy. In the early 1900s naturopathy was popular; however, as medical technology and wonder drugs provided dramatic cures for illnesses, naturopathy went the way of the Model-T Ford. Just in recent decades, as consumers regained interest in natural cures and healthful living, and the dangers of medical technology and drugs grew, has naturopathy regained some status.

Naturopaths emphasize practices to prevent disease. If disease is present, they help the client establish practices that facilitate healing and use natural remedies (e.g., herbal remedies, diets) as appropriate. Much of the naturopaths work involves educating clients, partnering with them in the development of improved health habits, and coaching and reinforcing behaviors. Some naturopaths integrate practices with conventional medicine while others reject the use of medications.

Naturopathy offers gentler options for older people than many conventional therapies and emphasizes health promotion practices that can be highly beneficial, therefore, it could serve as a wonderful complement to nursing skills in geriatric care. There are several ways in which naturopaths are prepared. The most intense training is from the handful of naturopathic medical colleges that require residency; the least intense is from correspondence programs. Schools like the Clayton College of Natural Health (www.ccnh.edu) offer a distance learning program for naturopathy that provides the theory to complement nurses’ clinical skills and educational background. Additional information can be obtained through:

American Association of Naturopathic Physicians
Tai Chi
Like other practices within traditional Chinese medicine, tai chi has been practiced for centuries as a means to increase the flow of Qi. This slow-moving exercise combines physical movement, breathing, and meditation. It has shown beneficial for many geriatric conditions including balance, high blood pressure, dizziness, back problems, and depressed immunity. The slow stretching and turning of the body provide beneficial exercise that most older adults can perform without difficulty. The fact that many nursing homes are helping older people practice tai chi supports the fact that it is not a highly taxing exercise. Older adults do need to be able to safely stand and follow directions. There are videos that can guide older people through this exercise. Resource information is available through:

- International Taoist Tai Chi Society
  +1 (416) 656-2110 (Canada)
  www.taoist.org

- Tai Chi for Health Purposes
  http://nccam.nih.gov/health/taichi/

- World Tai Chi & Qigong Day
  1-913-648-2256
  www.worldtaichiday.org

Yoga
When some people think of yoga they envision bodies in contorted positions. Actually, yoga combines breathing exercises, meditation, and the various poses (asanas). This 5000 year-old practice works to integrate the body, mind, and spirit so that balance and health are achieved.

The various yoga postures stimulate the endocrine glands, circulation, and nervous system, and improves immunity, balance, endurance, flexibility, and range of motion. Yoga has shown to be helpful in the management of headaches, asthma, back pain, insomnia, and high blood pressure. The multiple health benefits support yoga being a practice that should be encouraged with all aging individuals.

There are many videos and books that can provide guidance in doing yoga. Modifications of the asana can be made for older adults. Even chair-bound older people can perform stretches that can be beneficial. For more information you can contact:

- American Yoga Association
  800-226-5859
  www.americanyogaassociation.org

- Yoga Alliance
  877-921-YOGA (9642)
  www.yogaalliance.org

- Yoga Research Foundation
  (305) 666-2006
  http://yrf.org

Considerations in Using CAM in Geriatric Care
CAM can prove to be beneficial for many of the health conditions common in late life. Nurses have an important role in identifying conditions for which CAM therapies could be used and assisting in their appropriate implementation (see Display 3).

Many of the CAM therapies that could have a role in geriatric care could be integrated in nursing practice. In fact, there are sound arguments for nursing holding a leadership role in the implementation of CAM because they:

- represent the greatest number of health care professionals
- provide comprehensive, holistic care
- are employed in more diverse clinical settings that any other health care professional
- are uniquely prepared to differentiate normality from illness, provide interventions for health promotion and illness-related care, and use a wide range of medical technology and the healing arts
- are advocates for clients rather than specific products or practices
- are trusted and held in high esteem by consumers

With the right to leadership in this arena of care, nurses also have responsibilities which include:
- assuring CAM interventions are integrated into a comprehensive holistic nursing practice
- obtaining additional education and experience for the use of CAM therapies, as needed
- operating within the legal scope of practice of their license
- staying current of the growing body of knowledge about CAM therapies
- advocating for and conducting research on the effects of CAM therapies in older adults

References


Bibliography
Nurse Competence in Aging - American Holistic Nurses Association


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Display 1 - Classifications of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Therapies

1. Alternative Medical Systems

Alternative medical systems are built upon complete systems of theory and practice. Often, these systems have evolved apart from and earlier than the conventional medical approach used in the United States. Examples of alternative medical systems that have developed in Western cultures include homeopathic medicine and naturopathic medicine; examples that have developed in non-Western cultures include traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurveda.

2. Mind-Body Interventions
Mind-body medicine uses a variety of techniques designed to enhance the mind's capacity to affect bodily function and symptoms. Some techniques that were considered CAM in the past have become mainstream (for example, patient support groups and cognitive-behavioral therapy). Other mind-body techniques are still considered CAM, including meditation, prayer, mental healing, and therapies that use creative outlets such as art, music, or dance.

3. Biologically Based Therapies

Biologically based therapies in CAM use substances found in nature, such as herbs, foods, and vitamins. Some examples include dietary supplements, herbal products, and the use of other so-called natural but as yet scientifically unproven therapies (for example, using shark cartilage to treat cancer).

4. Manipulative and Body-Based Methods

Manipulative and body-based methods in CAM are based on manipulation and/or movement of one or more parts of the body. Some examples include chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation, and massage.

5. Energy Therapies

Energy therapies involve the use of energy fields. They are of two types:

- **Biofield therapies** are intended to affect energy fields that purportedly surround and penetrate the human body. The existence of such fields has not yet been scientifically proven. Some forms of energy therapy manipulate biofields by applying pressure and/or manipulating the body by placing the hands in, or through, these fields. Examples include Therapeutic Touch, Reiki, and qi gong.

- **Bioelectromagnetic-based therapies** involve the unconventional use of electromagnetic fields, such as pulsed fields, magnetic fields, or alternating-current or direct-current fields.


**Display 2 - Traditional Chinese Medicine**

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is based on the principle that the body must be in balance to be healthy. Illness is seen as a result of imbalance and disharmony of the person’s internal environment. However, TCM doesn’t view the internal environment merely as a group of systems, but as a series of invisible pathways (meridians) through which energy flows. This energy, or vital life force, is referred to as Qi (chi) and encompasses all physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental activities. Qi ensures a balance of yin and yang, opposing and complementary forces. Yin is the negative female energy associated to that which is soft, cold, dark, and wet. Yang, the positive male energy, is represented by that which is hard, hot, bright, and dry. Different organs are associated with yin and yang; for example, lungs, kidneys, heart, and spleen are yin organs while yang organs include the gallbladder, stomach, colon, and bladder. Yin and yang must be kept in balance. TCM restores the imbalances that occur during illness, which can be done with therapies such as acupuncture, acupressure, herbs, tai chi, and massage.

TCM also considers the body’s balance in relation to the five elements or phases which are categorized by wood (spring), fire (summer), earth (long summer), metal (autumn), and water (winter). Body organs correspond to each of the five elements. Herbs can be used to correct imbalance of the elements as each element is associated with a specific taste (e.g., sour-wood, bitterness-fire, sweetness-earth, acidity-metal, saltiness-water). Temperatures are ascribed to each herb, as well.
Display 3 - Measures to Promote Safe Use of CAM in Geriatric Nursing Practice

- Assess for CAM use during every assessment. Questions that could aid in disclosing CAM use include: *What other types of things do you do or take for your health or health condition? Do you see a chiropractor, acupuncturist, or other type of practitioner? Are you following a special diet?* Be sure to document this information in the client’s health record.
- Identify CAM therapies and products that could assist clients and discuss their use with the health care team.
- Explain the therapy to clients before implementing it, regardless of how safe or benign it seems.
- Educate clients in the safe use of CAM therapies, risks, and precautions.
- Provide information (e.g., articles, supporting research) to educate colleagues who may not have knowledge about or comfort with CAM.
- Identify CAM therapies that could be beneficial in your practice and learn to use them.
- Be a responsible CAM user and practitioner. Keep current of research findings. Obtain proper training/credentials/licensure to practice CAM therapies.
- Advocate the integration of CAM and conventional care so that clients can use the best of both worlds.