



# Prevalence and Pattern of Complementary and Alternative Medicine for Autism Spectrum Disorder in Tamil Nadu

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*To the Editor:* Autism is a disorder, not a disease, and as such, there is still no formal treatment [1]. Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies are supplemental remedies, and should be combined with behavioral therapy as well, according to The Autism Society [2, 3]. A survey was conducted among the parents/caregivers of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) children to estimate the prevalence and type of CAM use that they have used with their children. A total of 213 parents/caregivers of ASD children were interviewed about the type of CAM usage, recommendation source, reasons, expectations, effectiveness, harmful effects, if any and pediatrician's opinion on the usage of CAM. The data depict that the male gender is most affected by ASD in both CAM users (80.5%) and non-CAM users (68.6%) and children in the age range of 1 to 5 were mostly affected with ASD in both CAM users (63.4%) and non-CAM users (75%). Only 19.24% of the children were exposed to at least one CAM therapy by their parents/caregivers. The most commonly given CAM treatment was herbal medicines (*Zingiber officinalis*, *Curcuma longa*, *Phyllanthus emblica*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Syzygium aromaticum*, *Ocimum sanctum* and *Allium sativum*) followed by Ayurveda medicines such as Brahmi churnam, Rajanyadi churnam, Triphaladi churnam, Ashta churnam and Hinguvachadi churnam. All the CAM therapy was taken orally and no external or parenteral use was noticed. Parents/caregivers tried CAM therapy since the core problems of the ASD did not improve with the existing therapy and expected

CAM therapy to suppress the progression at least. No adverse effects are reported by any of the CAM treatments. No statistically significant difference exists between the usage of CAM and baseline characters except gender ( $p < 0.008$ ). Among the parents/caregivers of CAM given children, 56.1% of the parents/caregivers did not discuss about the usage of CAM to their child with the pediatrician. The usage of CAM therapy in ASD children was less when compared to other studies. Herbs and Ayurveda were frequently given CAM to ASD children. History of CAM therapy usage should be a part of medication history interview.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** None.

## References

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