

What complementary and alternative medicine are being used for acute respiratory tract infection in Australian children?

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Background

Internationally acute respiratory tract infection (ARTI) is a common illness in children and sometimes with dire consequences. ARTI not only affects children's physical health status, but it also impacts on the hospital system and community healthcare providers. Some parents use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in their children for ARTI.

What are Acute Respiratory Tract Infections (ARTI)? It has been defined as the presence of one or more of the following symptoms: cough, sore throat, fever, blocked nose, and feeding problems in babies. Conditions that may be considered acute respiratory tract infections include laryngitis, tonsillitis, middle ear infection, sinusitis, bronchitis and pneumonia.

What is Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)? It is underpinned by a holistic model of care, encompassing body, mind and spirit, where the practitioner-client relationship is central to therapy. CAM is not considered an integral part of conventional (biomedical) medicine.

Questions

- What CAM treatments are utilised by parents for the treatment of ARTI in children from birth up to the age of 12 years?
- What factors influence a parent's decision to use CAM for the treatment of ARTI in their children from birth up to the age of 12 years?

Method

National study, quantitative descriptive survey design using cross-sectional data from an anonymous online survey.

Results

- 246 respondents with female (n = 220, 89.4%), aged from 25-65 years old, with a mean age of 35.3 years.
- The most common treatment ARTI for children utilised by parents for ARTI was home remedies – 1st chest rub or herbal liniment, 2nd drinks (e.g. lemon and honey), 3rd probiotics, 4th honey, 5th vitamin C, 6th foods, 7th aromatherapy, 8th changes in clothes, 8th garlic, and 10th changes in activity.
- The principal reason for a parent to utilise CAM for ARTI was personal health philosophy. Formal education, CAM practitioners and journals influenced their decision-making.
- Many of the parents consulted CAM and biomedical practitioners with a desire for integrated healthcare.

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Conclusion

Home remedies dominate parents choice of management strategies.

This research shone a light on the concept that this group of parents are making well-informed decisions influenced by education and journals driven by their underlying personal philosophy.

Finally, the parent preferred a truly integrated approach to healthcare utilising both biomedicines and CAM.



Reference

1. Lucas S, Kumar S, Leach MJ, Phillips AC. Complementary and alternative medicine use in Australian children with acute respiratory tract infection - A cross-sectional survey of parents. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice.* 2020;39.