

## **Attitudes towards complementary and alternative medicine among second year medical, dental nursing and physiotherapy students at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka**

**B.R.R.N. Gunaratne<sup>1\*</sup>, C.N.R.A. Alles<sup>2</sup> and N.S. Soysa<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Oral Medicine and Periodontology, Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka,* <sup>2</sup>*Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*  
<sup>1\*</sup> *gunaratne.rukshani@gmail.com*

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) includes a broad range of therapies that fall outside conventional western medicine. With the introduction of western medicine, the usage of CAM has markedly reduced among Sri Lankans. The attitudes of students belonging to the health care professions have a strong impact on the way they ultimately practice medicine. The aim of this study was to assess the attitudes of 2nd year medical, dental, nursing and physiotherapy students of the University of Peradeniya towards CAM.

A self-administered questionnaire consisting of 6 sections; general attitudes, barriers, effectiveness, personal use, sources of information, and importance of evidence to consider CAM was distributed among 317 2nd year medical, dental, nursing and physiotherapy students of the University of Peradeniya at the end of a lecture/meeting. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. The 15 attitude questions in section one used a 5-point Likert rating scale (5- strongly agree and 1- strongly disagree).

Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 20. The response rate was 91.74%. The composition of the group was as follows: 2nd year dental (18%), medical (61%), physiotherapy (11%) and nursing (10%) students. In this study 64.2 % were females. The majority of nursing students (83.3%) agreed that CAM is useful as a supplementary therapy whereas only 77.8% of dental, 54.6% of medical and 81.9% of physiotherapy students agreed to this. 36.4% of physiotherapy students perceived CAM as a threat to public health. More than 60% of nursing students agreed that CAM should be discouraged unless it is scientifically proven. With respect to the effectiveness of CAM modalities, majority of students agreed that nutritional supplements and meditation were more effective than other modalities such as ayurveda, herbal medicine, and acupuncture. A majority of students (86.9%) used mass media as a source to gather information on CAM. 95.0% of students suggested that a proven mechanism is important for recommendation or usage of CAM therapies. Taken together our study indicates that the students have a neutral attitude towards CAM highlighting the importance of education on CAM for students of health care professions.