

research snapshot

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Do Youths With Cerebral Palsy Use Complementary and Alternative Medicine Treatments?

What is this research about?

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a condition that affects a person's movement. The effects of CP are unlikely to change over time. People with CP use mainstream medicine and rehabilitation services to manage their symptoms. They may also use complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) to manage their symptoms. Families and people with CP can feel empowered by choosing CAM in addition to mainstream medical services.

CAMs are becoming more 'conventional' options for health care. Some common types of CAM are: meditation, vitamins, massage, acupuncture, and qigong. People with CP use CAM to manage pain, help with limb functionality, to assist with a lack of energy, to help with sleep, and to relax.

Little is known about the frequency that CAMs are used by children and youth with CP. This study explored how often CAMs are used by adolescents with CP. As well, the reasons for seeking these treatments were explored.

What did the researchers do?

The primary aim of the project was to explore the participation and quality of life for people between 12 and 19 years of age who had CP. This research was a secondary analysis from

What you need to know:

Complementary and alternative medicine services are used by some people to manage their health conditions. How often, or the reasons for using these treatments are unknown within the cerebral palsy population. This research aims to start answering these questions.

the data set. Parents filled out a questionnaire with details on their child with CP, including details on their child's ongoing treatments. These questionnaires had a section on CAM. These questions are the focus of the research presented. Standardized assessments of areas related to participation and quality of life were collected. Some other areas assessed were level of intelligence, degree of limb control, and family contexts. Statistics were used to analyze the data related to CAM.

What did the researchers find?

26.8% of youth with CP used at least one CAM in the last year. Massage therapy was the most commonly used, with 15.4% of youth with CP using massage in the past year. Youths with CP were more likely to use CAMs if they were

younger or if they had less control over their limbs. Level of support for CAM in medical research does not appear to affect the choice of what CAM is used. The researchers suggest that what CAMs are used may depend on local factors such as popularity and availability. To understand what factors affect the use of certain CAMs, more research would have to be done on this topic. Furthermore, more evidence is needed to support or refute their potential benefit to youth with CP.

How can you use this research?

Policymakers will learn about the common use of CAM by people with CP. Information is needed about cost, availability and research on how effective a CAM is. This information would support people with CP, and their families, so they can make informed decisions about the treatments they seek.

Practitioners should stay up to date on the current trends in CAM. This will ensure they can have open discussions related to CAM with people with CP and their families. Open discussions will help people with CP and their families make informed choices about their health care treatments.

About the Researchers

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