



The role of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) in reducing the problem of AMR

EUROCAM supports and encourages integrated and fully informed healthcare choices for patients and recognises that conventional antimicrobial treatment, when appropriately prescribed, plays a vital role in managing public health. However, the severity of the threat posed by AMR to global health means that all potential measures, particularly novel solutions, must be explored as a matter of urgency.

There is no question that antibiotics have dramatically and successfully reduced illness and death from serious infectious diseases. However, the vital role of the host's ability to repel invaders based on a properly functioning immune system, has been neglected. In practice, infection is always the result of two factors: exposure to a pathogen *and* a person's individual susceptibility.

The partial approach which focuses only on the infecting organism is also reflected in research, which has been directed at finding the most potent way to kill the germs, whereas there is little research that investigates ways and means in raising the effectiveness of the immune system.

Both of these approaches have their own merits. For a patient who is seriously ill and affected by highly virulent bacteria, there is no argument, that antibiotics can be live saving. On the other hand, antibiotics do not offer an adequate solution for a patient who has had recurrent infections and has taken several courses of antibiotics. In this case it is the patient's susceptibility that needs to be addressed. Antibiotics are also not the most appropriate treatment for patients with minor acute infections.

When it comes to the host's ability to repel invaders, basic requirements to keep the immune system strong include quality sleep, regular exercise, healthy food, relaxation practice and healthy relationships. In building and maintaining resistance to infectious illness, Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) therapies have an important role to play here because they mobilise and stimulate the self-regulating capacity of the organism, thus increasing its resilience. Greater resilience leads to a swift and sustained recovery from infections and a reduced susceptibility to future infections and less reliance on antibiotics.

EUROCAM therefore recommends that the potential of CAM in reducing the problem of AMR is given serious consideration and that further research is carried out in this area to determine in which conditions, both in human and veterinary healthcare, specific CAM modalities are particularly effective. Compared with other avenues of such as the identification and development of new antibiotics, such trials would be relatively easy and inexpensive to carry out, yet in return for this small investment, the potential rewards could be highly significant.

To date, there has been a huge disparity between public funding for conventional drug research and that for CAM research. Whilst CAM may improve health, reduce disease, reduce health costs and help reduce the problem of antimicrobial resistance, the CAM sector alone cannot be expected to fund the research to investigate these possibilities. Like mainstream medical research, there is a social responsibility for government to fund such research. As for conventional medicine there should be industry-independent funded research.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine can support the EU strategy to conserve and steward the effectiveness of existing antimicrobial treatments and offer an avenue for the development of novel future therapies. It is time for serious consideration and investment to be given here.

EUROCAM's report "The role of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) in reducing the problem of antimicrobial resistance" is available from EUROCAM's website at www.cam-europe.eu/what-we-do/antimicrobial-resistance