

## Holistic Mental Health

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## Definitions

- Holistic: Relating to the whole person
- Complementary: Unconventional treatment used *alongside* conventional treatment
- Alternative: Unconventional treatment used *instead of* conventional treatment
- CAM: Complementary and Alternative Medicine

## Why should we care?

- Increasing use of unconventional treatments
- Conventional treatments have limited efficacy and potentially serious risks
- We need to know what patients are taking, as CAM approaches may have their own risks and interactions with medications
- Desire to improve function and quality of life for our patients

## Issues with CAM

- Efficacy: what is the quality of the evidence?
- Safety: Lack of FDA oversight; Variable quality of practitioners
- Cost
- Access
- Bias (“Quackery”)
- Informed Consent (how much do *we* know?)

## FSMB Guidelines (Federation of State Medical Boards)

- Is it Effective and safe?
- Is it Effective, but with some real potential danger?
- Has it been inadequately studied but is safe?
- Is it ineffective and dangerous?

## Quality Issues (Supplements)

- Presence of synthetic drugs
- Pesticides
- Heavy metals
- Inaccurate labeling
- More/less amount of active ingredient(s)
- Check data at: [www.consumerlab.com](http://www.consumerlab.com) or U.S. Pharmacopeia ([www.usp.com](http://www.usp.com))

## Unconventional Treatments

- Herbals
- Nutritional supplements
- Breathwork
- Traditional Chinese Medicine:  
Acupuncture, herbs, quigong
- Ayurveda
- Homeopathy

## Unconventional Treatments

- Exercise/movement therapy
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Religion/Spirituality
- Aromatherapy
- Energy work (Reiki, Cranial-sacral)
- Guided imagery

## Common Herbal Treatments

- St. John's Wort
- Ginkgo
- Valerian
- Kava

## St. John's Wort

- Effective for mild-moderate depression
- Reliable Brands: Kira, Remotiv
- Dose: 300 mg 3x daily (up to 900 mg 2x/day)
- Adverse effects: Nausea, diarrhea, dizziness, fatigue, sedation, headache, dry mouth
- Potentially serious: Rash (sunlight sensitivity); Mania (in Bipolar pts); Increased blood pressure

## St. John's Wort (cont.)

- *Potentially Serious* drug interactions:
- Decreased effectiveness of Coumadin (increased clotting risk-strokes have been reported)
- Serotonin syndrome (when combined with SSRI's)
- Decreased effectiveness of HIV drugs

## Interactions (cont.)

- Decreased effectiveness of Cyclosporine (transplant rejection)
- Decreased effect of anticancer drugs
- Decreased effect of oral contraceptives (breakthrough bleeding and pregnancy)

## Ginkgo Biloba

- Evidence supports use in Dementia:
- Alzheimer's (greatest evidence base)
- Vascular (small evidence base)
- Little evidence for Depression
- Dose: 80-240 mg in 2-3 divided doses
- Use only standardized 50:1 leaf extract containing 24-25% ginkgo flavone glycosides and 6% terpenoids

## Ginkgo (cont.)

- 4-6 weeks needed to assess effects
- *Never* ingest ginkgo seeds! (seizures and deaths have been reported)
- Adverse effects: Allergic reactions; Possible reduced fertility (men and women); Bleeding (contraindicated in bleeding disorders or pts. taking blood thinners)

## Ginkgo (cont.)

- Drug interactions:
- Thiazide diuretics
- SSRI's (serotonin syndrome, bleeding)
- Drugs metabolized by CYP 2C9 and 3A4 (Long list, includes Glyburide, Allegra, Amitryptiline, Trazodone, Dilantin)

## Herbals (cont.)

- Valerian: Effective for mild insomnia
- Should not be combined with prescription sleep meds or alcohol
- Kava: Used in anxiety disorders
- Potentially fatal liver toxicity reported; FDA may pull it out of U.S. market

## Nutrients

- Folate
- Omega-3 Essential Fatty Acids
- 5-HTP
- SAM-e
- Inositol
- Acetyl L-Carnitine

## Folate

- Clear evidence for benefits in depression
- High percentage of elderly psychiatric patients are folate deficient
- Benefits patients whether or not there is evidence of deficiency
- Dose: 1 mg per day
- Take with vitamin B 12

## Omega-3 Fatty Acids

- Essential for brain development and membrane function
- Plant sources: Flax, walnuts (ALA)
- Fish Oil contains different Omega-3's than plants (EPA and DHA)
- Growing evidence for benefits in Unipolar Depression and Bipolar Disorder

## Omega-3's (cont.)

- Possible benefits in Schizophrenia, Dementia, and ADHD
- Anti-inflammatory and cardiac protective effects
- Dose: 1-3 grams daily for most depressed outpatients, Schizophrenia, ADHD
- Up to 9 grams daily for depressed inpatients, Bipolar Disorder

## Omega-3's (cont.)

- Adverse effects: GI upset, fish taste, irritability, hypomania
- Use with caution in bleeding disorders
- EPA and DHA balance should favor higher EPA in Bipolar Disorder
- Take with a fatty meal; take with a multivitamin (to get antioxidant effects)

## What to Avoid

- Kava: Liver toxicity
- Ephedra, Ma Huang: Mania, psychosis, sudden death (cardiac)
- Yohimbine: Psychosis
- Chelation: Deaths reported
- **\*\*Always** look up potential interactions with prescription drugs!

## Cases

- Mr. A: 22 y.o. Schizophrenic forensic inpatient. Stable on meds, but c/o sedation, poor concentration, and wt. gain.
- Obsession with supplement ads, multiple requests for "fat burners," "cognitive enhancers."
- Most contain caffeine

## Cases (cont.)

- Ms. B: 34 y.o. Bipolar outpatient, moderately stable on Lithium, c/o cognitive slowing and fatigue
- Omega-3 supplementation allowed her to decrease Lithium dose
- No episodes of mania, 1 episode of depression in 5 years (1-2 per year prior)

## References

- *Complementary and Alternative Treatments in Mental Health Care*: Lake and Spiegel; APPI, 2007
- *The Omega-3 Connection*: Stoll; Simon & Schuster, 2001
- [www.consumerlab.com](http://www.consumerlab.com)
- [www.usp.com](http://www.usp.com)

## Resources

- Dr. Andrew Weil's Self Healing (newsletter): [drweilselfhealing.com](http://drweilselfhealing.com)
- Breathing, The Master Key to Self Healing (CD): [www.soundstrue.com](http://www.soundstrue.com)
- Meditation for Optimum Health (CD with Jon Kabat-Zinn)