

The Role of Complementary and Alternative Medicine: CAM in Healthy Ageing.

- European Parliament CAM Interest Group Meeting
April 12th 2011.
- Seamus Connolly, President, EFCAM on behalf of
the European CAM Stakeholders, EUROCAM.

Introduction

- By 2025 about one-third of Europe's population will be aged 60 years and over and there will be a particularly rapid increase in the number of people 80 years and older.
- Neither the positive nor negative implications for community, commerce and society are fully understood yet.
- As far as State services-including pensions and health and social care are concerned, ageing is a burden they are ill equipped to cope with.
- European societies need healthy people living longer and productive lives but the pathways to achieve this goal rely on outdated models of social and work participation and healthcare provision.
- Without a sea change in strategic awareness and action in relation to achieving Healthy Ageing, the burden may become intolerable.

Vision for Healthy Ageing

- “Independence, participation, care, self fulfilment and dignity” (UN Principles for Older People) should be the core of all policy and service provision.
- “Healthy ageing is the process of optimising opportunities for physical, social and mental health to enable older people to take part in society without discrimination and to enjoy an independent and good quality of life.” *

CAM can contribute to this vision

* Healthy Ageing: A Challenge for Europe, Swedish Institute for Public Health Report 2007.

CAM Contribution: Summary

Our aim today is to outline some of the ways in which CAM can contribute to healthy ageing:

- 1) Health maintenance and health literacy and self-care
- 2) Prevention of illness
- 3) More personally and financially sustainable treatment methods for chronic diseases
- 4) A paradigm shift in provision of healthcare from cradle to the grave
- 5) Integration of the services of a large cohort of health workers currently operating outside formal health systems

Healthy Ageing: A Challenge for Europe, 2007 Report Recommendations*

1. Older people are an intrinsic value to society
2. Evidence indicates that health promotion interventions can extend both length & quality of life
3. It is never too late to promote health, even in very old age
4. Tackling health inequalities should be at the core of any healthy ageing strategy
5. Respect autonomy and personal control – involve older people in the design of healthy ageing strategies
6. Respect individuality and heterogeneity

* Swedish National Institute of Public Health 2007.

What we know already

- Promote healthy lifestyles in the workplace
- Promote healthy eating habits: low intake of saturated fats, high consumption of fibers, green vegetables and fruits, high value nutrition and balanced nutrition
- Increase physical activity: 30 minutes a day
- Promote smoking cessation and reduction of harmful alcohol consumption
- Use quality indicators to prescribe medications
- Promote use of preventative health services
- Increase health literacy

Health maintenance and Prevention: Key Issues

- “ The key issue is how to persuade people to change habits, especially, those who for cultural, social and/or economic reasons are least inclined to do so.”
- “The potential health gains of a prevention programme are greater in the older population than among young people”
- “Even among older people, more health gain (i.e. productivity) can be achieved with a **wider health promotion approach, rather than just** preventative measures to tackle diseases.” *

* Healthy Ageing: A Challenge for Europe 2007.

CAM Contribution - 1

Complementary and Alternative Medicine, CAM, straddles the gap between prevention - through lifestyle modifications - and the management and treatment interventions of conventional medicine.

If lifestyle modifications, health psychology and/or mind-body techniques alone are not sufficient to restore health, full systems of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (complete systems of assessment and treatment) such as acupuncture, anthroposophic medicine, homeopathy, naturopathy, phytotherapy, reflexology or shiatsu, and many others, are especially appropriate first options to support and induce the self-regenerating process of the person.

CAM Contribution - 2

- Staying healthy and preventing disease requires the development of personal self-awareness and personal responsibility in citizens.
- The concept of self-care requires a daily conscious focus on one's physical, mental and emotional state and the ability to take corrective action whenever imbalance is sensed.
- An important and essential aid to achieve this awareness lies in being able to consult with health practitioners with an understanding of motivating changes in lifestyle factors that support good health, as guides to understanding their situation and arraying options, rather than as a technical expert expected to 'fix' it.

CAM Contribution - 3

- CAM's twin objectives of:
 - i. Maintaining health and treating illness in an individualised way where the focus is on salutogenesis, and
 - ii. Sustainable and safe treatment of illnessare inherently geared to:
 - fostering good health
 - strengthening health for resistance to health threats
 - sustainable, safer and more cost-effective health delivery systems.

CAM Contribution - 4

- A cohort of CAM health professionals are potentially available to healthcare systems to bring this changed health agenda about i.e:
 - They can be offered additional training to prepare them to work within or alongside existing healthcare systems
 - Existing frontline health staff can similarly be offered re-training in working with patient's in a more holistic prevention focused approach.

CAM Contribution - 5

Health Inequalities

- Bulk of CAM is offered outside national healthcare provision:
 - only those who can afford to pay for it can potentially benefit from it.
- Research evidence shows that health maintenance is a primary reason for the use of CAM by those who can afford it.
 - Statistically proven that the better-off have better health
- The potential added value of the availability of CAM to all citizens would appear to be very significant.
 - Due to the uncertain and uneven legal circumstances across the Community in which CAM is practised, patients are not able to access treatment across Member States.
- The Healthy Ageing Innovation Partnership could include specific projects that could address this question in itself and contribute to the healthy ageing agenda.

CAM Contribution - 6

- For CAM professionals:
 - there is an obvious synergy between the underlying values and the practice objectives of the various CAM modalities and the key requirements of promoting healthy ageing.
- For CAM users:
 - Citizens begin to regularly use CAM when awareness about the need to stay healthy and the onset of chronic illness tend to coincide, and when they are seeking methods to take care of their health in a positive and sustainable way.
- User Satisfaction surveys report high levels of satisfaction and a range of benefits beyond the care of specific symptoms to those that promote health literacy, self responsibility for health and which motivate lifestyle change.

Integrated healthcare in Europe

A number of possible models:

1. Extending the current primary care system to include the concept of salutogenesis, lifestyle modifications, and the holistic approach of complementary medicine.
2. Integrated Primary Care Health Centres focussing on prevention, self-care, lifestyle modifications, use of complementary therapies where possible, conventional treatment where necessary.
3. Teams of conventional doctors, psychologists & psychotherapists, dual trained CAM physicians & practitioners, lifestyle coaches, nutritionists, mindfulness/yoga instructors, body work and art therapists.
4. Parallel systems with interfaces for privately operating CAM practitioners and conventional care systems to work together for individuals.

This way healthcare becomes simpler, more effective and affordable.

Healthy Ageing Challenges

- The challenge of promoting healthy ageing will be to put *health itself* and health maintenance at the centre of Member State and EU policies, programmes, staff training and recruitment, service provision and organisation.
- For the proposed healthy ageing targets of the Innovation Partnership to be achieved, a paradigm shift in the provision of healthcare will be necessary.
- Need to move from a treatment-oriented framework of public health and a system of medical prevention that encourages passive citizens - to one where time, money and effort are invested in citizens being actively engaged staying healthy and preventing disease - i.e. prevention-focused society in which healthy lifestyles are promoted and sustained.

Thank you.

