



## **EXPERIENCE OF PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC DISEASES IN COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE AND INTEGRATIVE HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIORS**

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ABSTRACT	Keywords
<p>Chronic diseases including heart disease, cancer, COPD, and diabetes, are the main causes of death worldwide. Nearly half of all global deaths are caused by such diseases. Complementary medicine and integrative healthcare are believed to have great potential benefits to public health. This study aimed to determine the experience of adult patients with chronic diseases in seeking for complementary medicine and integrative healthcare</p> <p>This study was a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. Data were collected by in-depth interviews with 8 participants who experienced chronic diseases (heart disease, cancer, COPD, or diabetes).</p> <p>In this study there were 5 themes found related to the experience of patients with chronic diseases in the behavior of seeking complementary medicine and integrative healthcare which includes 1) economic factors and doubts to the conventional medicine, as well as the values of traditional medicine 2) support from family, community, and social media for seeking another option of therapy. 3) The dominant of Positive values more than the negative impacts of the results therapy. 4) The perception that traditional medicine is better than the conventional one. 5) Being Closed minded for seeking healthcare service to doctors after undergoing the traditional medicine.</p> <p>It is conclude that the use of traditional medicine for patients with chronic diseases can be have variety reason which is a part of patients belief that need to be facilitated by providing assistance hoping that possible of harm risks can be avoided</p>	<p><b>Experience, chronic disease, seeking treatment, complementary, integrative health</b></p>

## **INTRODUCTION**

Chronic diseases are difficult diseases to cure, which usually reach over 6 months,

are difficult to control, and threaten to death (Meetoo, 2014). Chronic diseases are divided into two parts, infectious and noninfectious diseases. Noninfectious diseases include asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cancer, DM, hyperthyroidism, hypertension, coronary heart disease, heart failure, stroke, chronic kidney failure, renal lithiasis, and joint/rheumatic diseases. Infectious diseases, on one hand, include ARI (Acute Respiratory Infections), diarrhea, pneumonia, malaria, tuberculosis/pulmonary TB, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis/liver/jaundice (RISKESDAS, 2013).

Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) show the mortality rate increased in 2018 by around 71% or around 57 million deaths and 41 million deaths were caused by noninfectious diseases with the highest ratio including cardiovascular disease by 44%, cancer by 22%, chronic respiratory disease by 9%, and diabetes by 4% (WHO, 2018).

Complementary medicine is a medical treatment that uses traditional medicine to support conventional medicine while integrative health is a combination of conventional and traditional approaches that complement each other by emphasizing a holistic approach and values that focus on patients for health care and well-being which include mental, emotional, functional, spiritual, social and community aspects (NCCIH, 2018).

The results of the literature review conducted show that there has been no specific research that examines the experience of patients with chronic diseases in seeking complementary medicine and integrative health in Banyumas Regency. Until now, there are no valid data related to the prevalence of patients with chronic diseases in performing traditional medical treatment. However, the results of the

preliminary research conducted on patients with chronic diseases at Prof. Dr. Margono Soekarjo Hospital, the only referral hospital, show 80% or 8 out of 10 patients with chronic diseases interviewed said that besides undergoing conventional treatment, they also performed routine traditional treatment simultaneously. This research aims to determine the experience of patients with chronic diseases in seeking complementary medicine and integrative health.

Therefore, the authors are interested in conducting a research entitled "experience of patients with chronic diseases in seeking complementary medicine and integrative health".

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative design with a phenomenological research design approach. Data collection in this research was carried out by in-depth interviews with 8 patients with chronic diseases (cancer, heart disease, COPD, DM) selected purposively with the inclusion criteria of participants who had chronic diseases (cancer, heart disease, COPD, DM) diagnosed by doctors taken from medical records, who domiciled in Banyumas Regency, and who got traditional, skilled, and supernatural treatments (Table 1).

The instrument in this research is the researchers themselves with the semi-structured in-depth interview method. The assistive devices used during the interview process are voice recorder, field notes containing interview guides, and blank notes to describe facial expressions, attitudes or conditions of the participants.

The data were analyzed using a method adapted from Collaizi in determining keywords, categories, and themes obtained from interviews during the research until the end of the research part of

the data analysis process where the researchers returned to the participants to clarify the themes obtained to obtain truly accurate results.

Participants in this study were patients with chronic diseases (heart disease, cancer, COPD/Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, DM/Diabetes Mellitus) who underwent traditional medicine besides doing conventional one or commonly known as complementary medicine and integrative healthcare, with a total of 8 participants with the following characteristics:

## RESULTS

**Table. 1** Characteristics of Research Participants

Cod e	Initia l	Gend er	Age	Education	Occupation	Diagnosis	Frequency of Convention al Medicine	Types of Tradition al Medicine	Frequenc y of Tradition al Medicine
P1	Mrs. S	Femal e	35 Year s Old	High School	Housewife	Breast Cancer	+/- 2 Years	Herbal	+/-1 Year
P2	Mrs. A	Femal e	31 Year s Old	Undergradua te	Midwife	Cervical Cancer	+/-1 Year	Herbal	+/-3 Months
P3	Mrs. N	Femal e	28 Year s Old	Middle School	Housewife	DM	+/- 8 Months	Herbal	+/- 1 Month
P4	Mr. S	Male	42 Year s Old	Vocational School	Entreprene ur	Myocardi al Infarction	+/- 1.5 Years	Shaman	+/-3 Months
P5	Mrs. W	Femal e	39 Year s Old	Elementary School	Housewife	DM	+/- 5 Years	Massage, herbal	+/- 2 Years
P6	Mr. I	Male	47 Year s Old	Middle School	Farmer	COPD	+/-1 Year	Massage, herbal	+/- 6 Months
P7	Mr. E	Male	36 Year s Old	D3	Entreprene ur	Coronary Heart Disease	+/-1 Year	Cupping, herbs, breathing exercise	+/- 3 Months
P8	Mr. H	Male	33 Year s Old	Vocational School	HP Promoter	COPD	+/- 2 Years	Cupping	+/- 1.5 Months

In this study there were 5 themes found related to the experience of patients with chronic diseases in the behavior of seeking complementary medicine and integrative healthcare which includes economic factors and doubts to the conventional medicine, as well as the values of traditional medicine that were being the reasons in the process of seeking complementary medicine and integrative healthcare. Seeking the Complementary medicine and integrative healthcare is strongly influenced by support of family, community, and social media. That suggest more positive than the negative impacts after undergoing the complementary medicine and integrative healthcare. Participants perception that traditional medicine is better than the conventional one. Closed minded participants to seek to doctors after undergoing the traditional medicine.

**The economic factors and doubts to the conventional medicine, as well as the values of traditional medicine that were being the reasons in the process of seeking complementary medicine and integrative healthcare.** This study found that participants sought complementary medicine and integrated healthcare due to the enthusiasm for recovery due to poor hospital services and low progress of the conventional medicine. According to the participants, the conventional medicine service was considered having slow and even no progress at all, as well as ineffectiveness of the medicine given to the participants that disappointed them.

*".....there was no progress after taking the medical treatment for five times with different doctors. Finally, I decided to take the herbal medicine, Sir...."* (P2, Female, 31 years old, Uterine Cancer)

*".....the service was bad...instead of answering my question, they kept in silent, everytime I took the treatment*

*there..."* (P5, Female, 39 years old, Diabetes Mellitus)

Economic factors become the main reason of participants in seeking complementary medicine and integrated healthcare. The increasing cost of daily needs and expensive cost of conventional medicine without providing significant results related to the disease suffered by the participants make them seeking other alternative treatments. For participants, traditional medicine is something that needs to be considered because in addition to the proximity to their living places, the cost of traditional medicine is also more affordable.

*"....I have to go to the doctor once a month, so it costed a lot of money. I also have a little child who is still in school age and daily needs in addition to the needs for my treatment once a month. I have to minimize such expenses by reducing the frequency of treatment, from once a month to quarterly"* (P8, Male, 33 years old, COPD)

The flow of the traditional treatment process gives participants confidence. For participants, the practitioners of traditional medicine has the same position with doctors. This is because they can also find out the diseases suffered without having to do a medical examination as in conventional medicine. This increases their confidence in practitioners related to traditional treatments taken. The followings are the statements provided by participants quoted from the results of the interview.

*".....he already knew, that was you. Here..here..I was shocked (eyes suddenly glared while holding her chest). I thought he was the real practitioner as he already knew my disease.. "(P1, Female, 35 years old, Breast Cancer.." (P1, Female, 35 years old, Breast Cancer)*

**The search for complementary medicine and integrative healthcare is greatly influenced by family, society, and social media.** The family is the closest to the participant, so there are process of interaction and exchange of information that occur between the participants and the family as an effort to cure participants. Families who play a role in accompanying participants to conventional medicine to advise participants to do complementary medicine and integrative healthcare.

*“.....I went with my husband earlier in the morning at 6 a.m. by motorcycle.....”* (P1, Female, 35 years old, Breast Cancer)

*“.....there was my relative visited me and told me the story that he had ever had a disease and got recovered from it by taking the alternative treatment, so I thought that it was alright to try the treatment...”* (P3, Female, 28 years old, Diabetes Mellitus)

Participants also share information with friends and neighbors around both the diseases, the ineffectiveness of conventional treatments to other treatments that allow participants to recover. This makes the participants' friends and neighbors give a response or feedback and suggestion to take traditional medicine.

*“.....I received suggestions from my friends and it was good for me.....”* (P5, Female, 39 years old, Diabetes Mellitus)

The rapid development of technology makes everyone able to access information throughout the world, as well as with participants, by only using the internet, participants can find out related information about the disease to the possibilities of treatment that can be done for recovery.

*“I browsed on the internet and found that it was true that the cupping treatment had side effects that were quite good for the body and finally I*

*searched for the closest cupping treatment location in my village...”* (P8, male, 33 years old, COPD)

**Suggestion on more positive than negative impacts after undergoing complementary medicine and integrative healthcare.** Complementary medicine and integrative healthcare are considered to have positive impact on participants related to their diseases. Reduced pain and vaginal discharge, disappeared lumps, better breath, stretched muscles, fitter body are the positive effects perceived after undergoing traditional treatment, according to the participants. It gave them a new enthusiasm, as well as high hopes, for recovery from their diseases.

*“.....I returned to take the X-ray after the treatment and found that there was no lumps and vaginal discharge anymore”* (P2, Female, 31 years old, Uterine Cancer)

*“I feel fitter right now, getting better and stronger, and I can sleep well at night....”* (P3, Female, 28 years old, Diabetes Mellitus)

Complementary medicine and integrative healthcare are still debated in health science whether having positive or negative impact to the body. This is because the type of treatment that is difficult to prove scientifically. In addition to the positive effects felt by the participants, some participants also felt negative effects or unexpected results after traditional treatments. These results include nausea, allergies, fatter body, black marks and itching.

*“.....what I don't like from herbal medicine is that I'm getting fatter”* (P2, Female, 31 years old, Uterine Cancer)

*“.....I only felt the nausea, that's all..”* (P3, Female, 28 years old, Diabetes Mellitus)

*“.....I found some marks on my skin like an allergy and it was itchy”* (P8, Male, 33 years old, COPD)

**Participants' perception that traditional treatment services are better than conventional medicine.** It is undeniable that the comfort of treatment is what the participants want. Curiosity of participants related to the diseases, the risks that will arise, and the possibility of recovery are often not obtained during conventional treatment compared to the traditional treatment, with friendly service and all the information needed is explained in detail by practitioners to the process stage treatment to be undertaken and the safety of the types of medicine to be taken.

*“.....the treatment was started from the lowest stage, slowly, until the highest stage to cover all treatment, that's all I know”* (P2, Female, 31 years old, Uterine Cancer)

The sophistication of conventional medicine compared to traditional medicine does not guarantee a positive response from the community. Participants who had their own experience after undergoing both treatments stated that conventional treatment was worse than traditional one. This is because the participants highlighted the different services they experienced between the conventional and traditional medicine. According to the participants, the conventional medicine services seemed to have longer time and queue, as well as the attitude of the health workers who were indifferent made the participants reluctant to take the conventional treatment process.

*“....with such service, we might suffer more, more painful, more severe, worse, untreated, even more sick...”* (P5, Female, 39 years old, Diabetes Mellitus)

**The absence of participant openness to doctors regarding traditional treatments taken.** Participants

disappointment at the poor treatment of conventional medicine made they closed their mind to see the doctor. According to the participants, the doctors attitude of being indifferent and giving no response to the questions made the treatments more awkward for them to tell about other treatments.

*“(speaking loud while her hands said no) I don't know...doctors do need to know as we don't just rely on them...”* (P5, Female, 39 Years old, Diabetes Mellitus)

The closed minded participants to see the doctors is based on many reasons. They assume that telling the doctor about traditional treatments taken is not important. In addition, the fear of being scolded and forbidden is also a reason of why they do not tell the doctor about the traditional treatment they taken

*“I don't know, I do not tell them (smiling), as I'm afraid of getting scolded”* (P6, Male, 47 Years old, COPD)

## DISCUSSION

This study found that distrust and discomfort on traditional medicine made participants take complementary medicine and integrative healthcare. Health seeking behavior is the effort or action of a person when suffering from a disease and/or having accident, from self-treatment to seek expert help (Safitri *et al*, 2016).

Participants assumed that poor hospital services and ineffective treatment resulted in disappointment with conventional treatment. They said that their visit to the hospital was to be well served and to get recovered, but that turned out to be the unexpected. The desire to recover is great to make participants to try to do other treatments than conventional medicine.



Dinata, Muhaimin, & Lestari (2016) in their research, stated that patients who take traditional medicine had fears and dissatisfaction with modern medicine, as well as the belief that modern medicine could not or had failed in treating diseases, and chemical medicine could have negative effects on health.

The economic factor becomes a fundamental reason why participants take complementary medicine and integrative healthcare. The fear of high medical expenses and increasing daily needs make the participants have to think to prioritize either healing or responsibility. Participants stated that at a high cost, medicines from the hospital only had a temporary effect on the disease and if the medication ran out the symptoms would appear again.

This is also in line with research conducted by Handika *et al* (2016) states that the reasons people take traditional medicine are that it has lower costs in all rituals of treatment, as a place to socialize between people with one another (social ties), and trust that with traditional medicine can cure various diseases.

Patients with chronic diseases in Indonesia really need the role of the family in various aspects, from handling complaints to their diseases to provide psychological, social and spiritual supports (Effendy *et al.*, 2015). The importance of supports from the closest people, neighbors/community, other sufferers of chronic diseases and health workers is considered to have some effect on how participants make cues to action. Cues to action are events, individuals, or other things that encourage people to change their behavior (Hayden, 2014). Some things included in the cues of action in this study included support and advice from others such as family, friends and people around the participant's environment.

In this study, there was also found how complementary medicine and

integrative health provide many positive effects for participants. This is in line with research conducted by Heafner & Buchanan (2015) which states that all participants perceive positive good benefits from alternative complementary medicine taken. Participants in the study said that alternative complementary medicine provided important benefits in overcoming the complaints they perceived.

However, in addition to positive effects, traditional medicine also has a negative impact on participants. Some participants revealed that after undergoing traditional medicine they felt nauseated, fatter body, allergic, having black marks and itching. Kaur, Kaur, & Mahajan (2013) tested the efficacy and risk of 11 types of herbal plants to be used as medicinal materials, the results concluded that herbal medicines in addition to providing benefits also result in side effects depending on how they are processed.

In this study, it was also found that traditional treatment services were better than conventional medicine. Participants revealed that traditional treatment services are more comfortable than conventional treatments and the treatment methods used are also better than conventional treatments. This opinion was based on a comparison of the approaches used in traditional medicine and the approaches used in conventional medicine perceived by the participants.

This is different from research conducted by Maung, Deborah.G, & Tun (2019) which states that most mothers and their families prefer modern or conventional to traditional medicine. They are also aware of the advantages and disadvantages between the conventional and traditional medicine. According to them, the importance of conventional medicine and traditional medicine must go hand in hand in improving health, well-being and also to prevent diseases.

In this study, it was shown that there was no openness of the patients to see the doctor related to traditional treatments taken. Participants stated that sharing traditional treatments with doctors was not considered important because of their disappointment and emotions due to having no progress after undergoing conventional treatment. In addition, some participants also stated that they were afraid of being scolded by doctors or blamed by the Hospital for taking treatment outside of conventional medicine.

There were similar studies have been conducted in Thailand, Malaysia, and Australia showing the reasons of the patients unwilling to tell doctors about the use of TCAM, such as the perception that the doctors did not need to know, the doctor never asked, or being afraid of getting forbidden by the doctor. The lack of openness of patients in discussing the use of Aydin Avci, I., Koç, Z., & Sağlam, Z. (2012). Use of complementary and alternative medicine by patients with cancer in northern Turkey: Analysis of cost and satisfaction. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 21(5–6), 677–688. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2011.03732.x>

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Handika, S. R., Yoza, D., & Budiani, E. S. (2016). *Sistem pengobatan dan persepsi masyarakat terhadap*

TCAM to doctors was quite alarming, given the potential cross-reaction between the use of TCAM and conventional therapeutic modalities such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy (Aydin Avci et al., 2012; Er et al., 2008).

## CONCLUSIONS

Besides as a medical treatment, the use of traditional medicine for patients with chronic diseases also manifests the beliefs of patients that need to be facilitated by providing assistance hoping that possible dangerous risks can be avoided.

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