Parents’ knowledge and attitudes toward children with epilepsy

To the Editor

Interestingly, up to 29% of the studied parents in Zainy et al’s study\(^1\) admitted to using non-medical treatments for epilepsy, usually traditional herbs and religious practices. This remarkable prevalence additionally supports the recently reported alarmingly high prevalence (37.3%) of Saudi families using complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies for their children.\(^2\) Non-adherence to epilepsy treatments is closely linked to the wide use of CAM.\(^3\) I do agree with Zainy et al\(^1\) that a comprehensive epilepsy education program represents an initial priority to enhance the epilepsy treatment. Because increased religiosity and spirituality is associated with a higher CAM use in the general Saudi population, Muslim religious leaders can play a role in educating the public and ameliorating epilepsy misconceptions and misbeliefs on one hand, and promoting the adherence of patients to antiepileptic drugs on the other.

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Reply from the Author

In addition to these points, we previously reported that up to 42% of Saudi families with various acute and chronic pediatric disorders used complementary and alternative therapies (CAT), mostly (57%) before seeking medical help.\(^4\) Religious and spiritual healing was used in 82%, oral or topical preparations or herbs in 30%, and physical interventions in 21%. Factors associated with using CAT included child’s age <1 year (\(p=0.008\)), less than high school education of the fathers (\(p=0.01\)), chronic medical conditions (\(p<0.001\)), or neurological disorders (\(p=0.002\)), and a positive family history of using CAT (\(p<0.001\)). We concluded that many parents refer to CAT typically before seeking medical help.\(^3\) Pediatricians should counsel and caution parents regarding the lack of studies demonstrating efficacy and safety of CAT in young children.

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References


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