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Complementary and alternative medicine use in children for acute respiratory tract infection is not about avoiding general medical practitioner but avoiding pharmaceutical treatment.

Introduction

The use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use is increasing globally. One area where CAM is routinely used in children is acute respiratory tract infections (ARTI), where CAM is used in 1 in 2 children. Despite this, there is limited information why parents use CAM in their children, and the factors that influence a parent's decision to use CAM for the management of ARTI in children. This research aimed to address this knowledge gap.

Method

Using qualitative descriptive approach, this research, conducted in Greater Melbourne, Australia, recruited parents of children who had used CAM for treating ARTI in their children. Parents' perspectives were captured using individual semi-structured interviews, which were then transcribed verbatim. Several strategies to improve trustworthiness were implemented.

Results

There were twenty-four parents (all female; age 26-54) interviewed. The finding from this research showed a breadth of different remedies utilised as well as the complex processes underpinning parents' decision to use CAM. Parents commonly tried to utilise both CAM practitioners and mainstream medicine. While use of mainstream medicine were used to rule out any sinister pathology, CAM was then used as a frontline option, with food as medicine (e.g. soups), due to concerns regarding the negative aspects of pharmaceutical use. Parents utilised a diverse range of sources during their decision-making process including friends, families and internet but not with traditional sources of research evidence.

Conclusion

Parents' decision to use CAM for treating ARTI amongst children is influenced by a complex range of factors.

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