

BIOLOGICAL-BASED COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE USE IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS PATIENTS

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Introduction and aim: People with multiple sclerosis (MS) often seek complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) to manage their disease. The aim of the study was to determine the frequency and modality of the biological-based CAM use among MS patients.

Patients and methods: The study included 70 MS patients that underwent inpatient rehabilitation at the Lipik Hospital. A semi-structured questionnaire on the current usage of biological-based CAM was applied.

Results: Fifty-two (74.3%) respondents reported that they were currently using biological-based CAM. Respondents most commonly used D vitamin (n=37; 52.9%), followed by vitamin B complex (n=26; 37.1%), magnesium (n=16; 22.9%), calcium (n=13; 18.6%), multivitamins/minerals (n=7; 10%), omega-3 fatty acids (n=7; 10%), hemp products (n=5; 7.1%), vitamin C (n=4; 5.7%), and Swank's diet (n=4, 5.7%). Other types of biological-based CAM were taken by less than 5% of respondents. In the group of users there were a statistically significant higher proportion of patients with lower level of disability ($p=0.047$), relapsing-remitting disease course ($p=0.011$) and shorter duration of disease ($p=0.004$) compared with the group of non-users. There were no statistically significant between-group differences according to sex ($p=0.142$) and age ($p=0.110$).

Conclusion: Study results demonstrated frequent use of biological-based CAM among MS patients, despite the lack of evidence about the effectiveness of most of these therapies. There is a need for additional researches on the efficacy and safety of CAM therapies.