

## A Call for an Educational Intervention Tool to Guide Selection of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) in Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) Patients

Sir,

The number of chronic kidney disease (CKD) cases diagnosed each year is progressing gradually. The overall prevalence of CKD in the United States is expected to rise from 13% between 1999 and 2004 to 16.7% in 2030.<sup>[1]</sup> In Malaysia, more than 30,000 cases of dialysis were reported in 2014 with a steady rise of 5000–6000 cases per year.<sup>[2]</sup> CKD is an irreversible condition and thus, the goal of treatment of CKD is to prevent the progression of the disease to preserve the kidney function. Because the current treatment offers no cure for CKD, many patients turn their hopes to the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). A few studies have described the high prevalence of CAM used in CKD patients.<sup>[3,4]</sup> The use of CAM has been associated with various safety issues. A recent review by Isnard Bagnis et al. indicated that the use of herbal therapy causes various toxic insults that may lead to kidney injury.<sup>[5]</sup>

CKD patients are considered high-risk population because the negative effects of the herbs may be greater in them, in view of their failing kidney condition. Many patients are still unaware of the potential nephrotoxic effects of CAM. The main cause of this problem is probably due to the absence of evidence-based reference to guide their selection of CAM. To make the situation worse, when they turn to the healthcare professionals to seek advice on CAM, the response that they receive is negative because the healthcare professionals are generally not well-trained with regards to knowledge on the safety aspect of CAM. This may lead to a breakdown of communication between patients and doctors when discussing CAM issue. It was also found that many doctors do not prompt patients on the type of CAM that they use. The communication gap between the patient and doctor is evident with numerous studies that reported low disclosure rates regarding CAM use to their doctors.

The development of an educational intervention tool that is drawn on evidence-based data on the safety and benefits of CAM used in CKD patients is necessary in the context that it provides benefits to both patients and the healthcare providers. In addition to creating awareness of the potential risks of some CAMs for causing adverse effects on kidneys, the development of this tool is expected to fill the

communication gap between doctors and patients. The tool may be used by doctors to initiate a discussion with patients regarding the safe use of CAM. The educational intervention tool can also be used to design a patient education brochure that can be disseminated to patients who are diagnosed with CKD. The tool should be tailored to the local context as the pattern of CAM used may differ, according to the cultural beliefs. We, therefore, recommend further studies to be conducted to investigate the need to develop this educational intervention tool from the healthcare professionals' and patient's points of view.

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### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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