

Student 5: Low Achieved
NZQA Intended for teacher use only

The difference between Western Scientific Medicine (WSM) and Complementary and Alternative (CAM) and Traditional Medicine (TM) is [...]

My chosen health condition is depression. Three different health practices used to manage or treat depression in NZ are SSRIs (WSM), acupuncture (CAM/TM) and St. John's Wort (CAM/TM).

SSRI stands for Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor and is an example of a WSM used to manage/treat depression [...]

Acupuncture is an example of a CAM/TM. It is often used alongside other treatments for health conditions but also has a long history as a Traditional Chinese Medicine. The philosophy of acupuncture is that illness is a result of imbalances of energy flow (Qi) in the body (3). Qi travels through meridians in the body. Certain illnesses relate to specific meridians – so acupuncture is the use of fine needles in the relevant places to 'unblock' the problem and restore flow/balance (3). For depression, acupuncture is believed to work by stimulating the part of the brain that is to do with emotions (3). The procedures are that a patient will book sessions with an acupuncturist. Firstly, the problem will be diagnosed using traditional methods, and then the needles will be inserted and stimulated (4). A session will be between 30-60 minutes and it is recommended that weekly sessions are carried out, for at least 12 weeks (4).

1

St John's Wort is another example of a CAM/TM that is used to manage depression in New Zealand [...]

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages of SSRIs [...]

Advantages of acupuncture when used to manage/treat depression is that some studies have found this to be as effective as medical interventions (12). It is also holistic and has few side effects, and may be more acceptable than using antidepressants. There are more and more providers of acupuncture in NZ and so it is easy to find a treatment centre, even in smaller towns in NZ. It is generally pain free and symptoms can be improved even after 1-2 sessions (12). In the short-term, patients will therefore feel better and be able to cope with stress better. Long term, there are a range of benefits to well-being, including for social life and relationships, and feeling confident. There are also some disadvantages of acupuncture. For example, cost: It is not funded in NZ, and costs \$60+ per session. This adds up quickly if a session is needed each week. There is a risk of infection if needles are not sterilised properly, and it might not work.

2

Advantages of St John's Wort include:

Overall, based on the advantages and disadvantages I have explained above, I believe that acupuncture is the best treatment to try first. This is because it is holistic, has few side effects and has been proven effective. It is, however, expensive as it is not funded.

3

Note that a chart was provided by the student to show bibliographic details for the references used in the evaluation.