



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing



The Pharmacy  
Guild of Australia

## ABSTRACT

# Investigating the Integration of Complementary Medicines in Community Pharmacy

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### Abstract (250 words):

The widespread use of complementary medicines (CMs) in Australia, the potential for these to provide health benefits and risks, and the important role of pharmacists as advocates of appropriate use of medicines is widely accepted. However, research into the integration of evidence-based CMs into contemporary pharmacy practice is lacking.

This study investigated attitudes, behaviours and information needs of community pharmacy customers and the ability of pharmacists and pharmacy assistants to fulfil these. It also explored the prevalence and utilisation of naturopaths in pharmacies. The knowledge, counselling and information seeking behaviours of all three groups and inter-professional interactions were further investigated.

Data was collected from 1121 pharmacy customers and 112 pharmacy assistants from Melbourne, Gold Coast and Wagga Wagga, as well as 736 pharmacists and 479 naturopaths nationally using individual questionnaires for each group. Three pharmacist focus groups and one for pharmacy assistants were conducted. Individual group and inter-group comparison analyses were undertaken.

The use of CMs and expectation for CM counselling by pharmacy consumers is high and increasing. Consumers accept the integration of CM into pharmacy however evidence-based CMs have not been integrated in pharmacists' practice of QUM. Pharmacists and pharmacy assistants are not well equipped to provide evidence-based recommendations and counsel customers. The trend for pharmacies to employ naturopaths may increase.

Educational standards, practice guidelines and CM-specific resources are urgently needed to enhance professional knowledge and confidence and inter-professional collaboration, thus improving the delivery of quality use of evidence based CMs and ultimately patient safety and wellbeing.