Awareness, perception, and practice toward T&CM regulation and factors influencing use of registered T&CM practitioners among breast cancer patients at UMMC

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The enforcement of the Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) Act 2016 [Act 775] and registration of practitioners aim to protect the public from unqualified T&CM providers and ensure professional standards. Awareness campaigns have been launched to promote consumer rights and safe T&CM use. In Malaysia, T&CM use is common among breast cancer patients. This study assesses their awareness, perception, and practice towards current T&CM regulations and factors associated with consulting registered practitioners in recognised practice areas (RPA). **Materials and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted from May to August 2024 among breast cancer patients attending outpatient clinics at University Malaya Medical Centre. Self-administered, validated questionnaires in Malay, English, and Chinese were used to collect data on sociodemographics, clinical background, and awareness, perception, and practice regarding T&CM regulations. **Results:** A total of 232 respondents completed the survey. While 59.5% had positive perceptions, awareness was low (46.6%). Despite this, 85.3% reported seeing registered T&CM practitioners. Notably, 31.9% were unsure and 17.2% disagreed that the regulation protects against bogus practitioners. Half of the respondents lacked confidence or were unsure about considering T&CM as a healthcare option. Most agreed on the importance of competency monitoring (88.7%), with 57.3% suggesting annual assessments. High awareness (aOR = 22.43; 95% CI: 2.86–175.61; p = 0.003) and being non-users of T&CM (aOR = 3.63; 95% CI: 1.54–8.59; p = 0.003) were significantly associated with consulting registered practitioners. **Conclusion:** Findings reveal gaps in awareness and trust in T&CM regulations, particularly regarding complaint mechanisms, advertising restrictions, and practitioner verification. Many patients remain sceptical about regulatory effectiveness but support regular competency checks. Policymakers should strengthen consumer education, practitioner registration, and monitoring systems and encourage public participation in regulatory development to build trust.

Keywords: Traditional and complementary medicine, act, regulation, registered practitioners, awareness, perceptions, practice