

### Parents' knowledge and attitudes toward children with epilepsy

*To the Editor*

Interestingly, up to 29% of the studied parents in Zainy et al's study<sup>1</sup> admitted to using non-medical treatments for epilepsy, usually traditional herbs and religious practices. This remarkable prevalence additionally supports the recently reported alarmingly high prevalence (37.3%) of Saudi families using complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies for their children.<sup>2</sup> Non-adherence to epilepsy treatments is closely linked to the wide use of CAM.<sup>3</sup> I do agree with Zainy et al<sup>1</sup> that a comprehensive epilepsy education program represents an initial priority to enhance the epilepsy treatment. Because increased religiosity and spirituality is associated with a higher CAM use in the general Saudi population, Muslim religious leaders can play a role in educating the public and ameliorating epilepsy misconceptions and misbeliefs on one hand, and promoting the adherence of patients to antiepileptic drugs on the other.

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*Reply from the Author*

In addition to these points, we previously reported that up to 42% of Saudi families with various acute and chronic pediatric disorders used complementary

and alternative therapies (CAT), mostly (57%) before seeking medical help.<sup>4</sup> Religious and spiritual healing was used in 82%, oral or topical preparations or herbs in 30%, and physical interventions in 21%. Factors associated with using CAT included child's age <1 year ( $p=0.008$ ), less than high school education of the fathers ( $p=0.01$ ), chronic medical conditions ( $p<0.0001$ ), or neurological disorders ( $p=0.002$ ), and a positive family history of using CAT ( $p<0.0001$ ). We concluded that many parents refer to CAT typically before seeking medical help.<sup>4</sup> Pediatricians should counsel and caution parents regarding the lack of studies demonstrating efficacy and safety of CAT in young children.

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### References

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