

## Medical versus Non-Medical Students' Opinions about Academic Stress Management Using Unconventional Therapies

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**Abstract :** Background: Stress management (SM) is a topic of great academic interest and equally a task to accomplish. In addition, it is recognized the beneficial role of unconventional therapies (UCT) in stress modulation. Aims: The aim was to evaluate medical (MS) versus non-medical students' (NMS) opinions about academic stress management (ASM) using UCT. Methods: MS (n=103, third year males and females) and NMS (n=112, males and females, from humanities faculties, different years of study), out of their academic program, voluntarily answered to a questionnaire concerning: a) Classification of the four most important academic stress factors; b) The extent to which their daily life influences academic stress; c) The most important SM methods they know; d) Which of these methods they are applying; e) the UCT they know or about which they have heard; f) Which of these they know to have stress modulation effects; g) Which of these UCT, participants are using or would like to use for modulating stress; and if participants use UCT for their own choose or following a specialist consultation in those therapies (SCT); h) If they heard about the following UCT and what opinion they have (using visual analogue scale) about their use (following CST) for the ASM: Phytotherapy (PT), apitherapy (AT), homeopathy (H), ayurvedic medicine (AM), traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), music therapy (MT), color therapy (CT), forest therapy (FT). Results: Among the four most important academic stress factors, for MS more than for NMS, are: busy schedule, large amount of information taught; high level of performance required, reduced time for relaxing. The most important methods for SM that MS and NMS know, hierarchically are: listen to music, meeting friends, playing sport, hiking, sleep, regularly breaks, seeing positive side, faith; of which, NMS more than MS, are partially applying to themselves. UCT about which MS and less NMS have heard, are phytotherapy, apitherapy, acupuncture, reiki. Of these UCT, participants know to have stress modulation effects: some plants, bee's products and music; they use or would like to use for ASM (the majority without SCT) certain teas, honey and music. Most of MS and only some NMS heard about PT, AT, TCM, MT and much less about H, AM, CT, TT. NMS more than MS, would use these UCT, following CST. Conclusions: 1) Academic stress is similarly reflected in MS and NMS opinions. 2) MS and NMS apply similar but very few UCT for stress modulation. 3) Information that MS and NMS have about UCT and their ASM application is reduced. 4) It is remarkable that MS and especially NMS, are open to UCT use for ASM, following an SCT.

**Keywords :** academic stress, stress management, stress modulation, medical students, non-medical students, unconventional therapies

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