Introducing APRN Students in the Armed Forces to the Power of Transdisciplinary Integrative Methodologies

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**BACKGROUND**

- Complimentary alternative medicine (CAM) is rapidly gaining popularity in the United States as evidence emerges to support synergistic benefit of combining complementary, integrative, and alternative treatment modalities with conventional Western medical therapies to enhance wellness and treat disease & illness.

- In 2017, 1/3 of Americans reported use of CAM approaches to wellness-healing (Herman, Sorbero, & Sims-Columbia, 2017)

- 83% of Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) offered at least one type of CAM modality (Herman, Sorbero, & Sims-Columbia, 2017)

- Aligning with wellness-healing collaborative paradigms & trends toward transdisciplinary healthcare team models, a graduate nursing school faculty designed an innovative one-credit course to explore CAM methodologies culminating in Advanced Practiced Registered Nurse (APRN) student certification in battlefield auricular acupuncture (BFA).

**METHODS**

- Asynchronous online modules
- Recorded lectures
- Scholarly writings
- Comprehensive one-day intensive course

**RESULTS**

- 190 APRN student participants have achieved BFA certification in 3 years of course offering
- 100% "Good to Excellent" course satisfaction on a Likert scale of 1-5
- 66% (125) "Excellent" course satisfaction

**CONCLUSIONS**

- Foundational concepts of CAM are best interwoven using didactic and clinical techniques including acupuncture, nutrition, guided imagery, yoga, massage, & progressive relaxation.

- Scholarly assignments reinforced application of evidenced-based principles to enhance understanding of complementary, integrative, and alternative treatment approaches to healthcare and how to effectively integrate modalities into Western medicine clinical practice.

- Robust complementary, integrative, and alternative treatment content delivered by a dynamic transdisciplinary team to APRN students is a cornerstone to a forward thinking and relevant nursing curriculum; intrigues and excites burgeoning practitioners’ interest in critical appraisal, appreciation, & invitation of CAM into patient prescriptions.

- Suggestions for subsequent iterations of CAM in an APRN program include:
  a. Expand for interprofessional student audience to amplify deeper concepts of maintenance, restoration, and resiliency of the mind, body, and soul.
  b. Highlight attention and invite consideration by participants to include learned wellness-healing techniques into personal lives.