

Complementary therapies in France:

Science must be at the center of all initiatives

Press release from Commission XII

(Complementary Therapies-Hydrotherapy-Mineral Waters)

Complementary therapies (also called alternative or non-conventional therapies) meet the patients' expectations that are not met by the conventional health care offer, what should be acknowledged. It must be noted that most of these therapies are poorly supervised, whether in terms of training conditions of practitioners or heterogeneity and quality of the practices delivered. The resulting risks are significant: loss of opportunity for patients, in particular due to diagnostic delays or failure to get an essential medical care. The French National Academy of Medicine publishes regularly works on this subject [1-3]. Regularly academic or associative actors strive to develop this field in a legitimate approach without being able to constitute themselves into a recognized institution, insofar as the practice reserves this title to an independent public body. Encouraging the development of beneficial practices outside conventional medicine requires protecting citizens from all abuses.

The French National Academy of Medicine recalls:

- that a complementary therapy is not a complementary medicine. It is only a non-medicine whose practices are diversified to meet the needs of the population as widely as possible. Medicine is taught in the Faculties of Medicine, the medical corpus being based on scientific data (pathophysiology of diseases, mechanism of action of treatments, efficacy supported by statistical studies).
- that we must recognize the wish of our fellow citizens to benefit from care that goes beyond what the conventional health care system offers them. This care must comply with the rules of medical ethics;
- that it is up to the public authorities to fully assume their responsibilities in supervising care practices in our country. This requirement must be accompanied by a substantial effort of scientific works to evaluate these practices in accordance with the state of the art, as well as by a standardization and a credibility of the training offer in this field.

- that complementary therapies should be taught in the Faculties of Medicine and the health professionals training institutes (as referenced in the public health code) so that the professionals are aware of their potential interests and their limitations in order to advise patients in a transparent and objective manner.

1] BONTOUX D, COUTURIER D, MENKÈS C-J. Complementary therapies-acupuncture, hypnosis, osteopathy, tai chi-their place among care resources. Bull. Acad. Natl Med, 2013, 197, 3, 717-757.

2] Homeopathy in France: position of the National Academy of Medicine and the National Academy of Pharmacy. PRESS RELEASE OF 28/03/2019

3] FALISSARD B., ROQUES-LATRILLE C-F., on behalf of a working group of the Complementary Therapies-Thermalism-Mineral Waters Commission. Report 20-08. Clinical studies carried out in a thermal environment within the framework of legal requirements: "2016 criteria - 2020 revision" Bull. Acad. Natl Med. 2021, 205, 4, 327-3301.