



International Society for
Complementary Medicine Research

Workshop: Qualitative Research in Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Monday 19th September 2005 1–5pm.

*In conjunction with the 12th Annual Symposium for Complementary Health Care
at Streatham Court, University of Exeter.*

The qualitative research special interest group of ISCMR is proposing to present a half-day workshop on qualitative research in Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM). We would like to attract to this workshop people of varying levels of experience in qualitative research who want to explore the strengths, limitations and applications of qualitative research in CAM. Please note that this is not intended as an introductory “how to” workshop.

The aims of the workshop are to:

- Introduce qualitative research methods in the context of CAM and Whole Systems Research– what they are and where they may be useful in CAM research
- Explore the role of qualitative research in CAM – strengths, applications and limitations
- Provide an opportunity to discuss issues about qualitative research in CAM.

Background

*“The new discipline of whole systems research (WSR) targets the study of complex CAM therapies as system-level phenomena, as opposed to single-agent or uni-dimensional effects. This article describes the pre-defined goals, issues that were developed, and opportunities that were revealed in a workshop held in Vancouver BC, in which scientists, practitioners, and policy makers met to lay the foundations of WSR. Important issues were identified, such as treatment individualization, problems of diagnosis, patient-practitioner interaction, varying therapeutic contexts, and patient-determined outcome values. Research design issues that were addressed included a variety of challenges to the study of intact systems, in relation to both synergy and emergent behaviors, and the opportunities to innovate the conventional RCT. As the network of CAM scientists and practitioners engaged in WSR expands, a common nomenclature and body of techniques will help us to a better understanding of the ways in which whole systems affect healing.” (abstract: Ritenbaugh C, Verhoef M, Fleishman S, Boon H (2003) *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine* 9(4):32-36)*

*At a second International workshop on Research Methods for the Investigation of CAM Whole Systems, one of the themes that was underscored in one of the plenary discussions was the “Need for concurrent quantitative and qualitative research methods. It was suggested by several participants that the combination of quantitative methods, such as randomized controlled trials (RCTs), and qualitative methods is a useful start to assessing how the quality of the patient-practitioner relationship may impact on symptom improvement and patient well-being (i.e., what is its added value). It was also recognized that the challenges to studying the therapeutic relationship are not unique to CAM, and the research literature in other areas of medicine (e.g., family medicine and the social sciences) that also acknowledge the potential impact of this relationship on health indicators should be reviewed.” (Verhoef MJ, Lewith G, Ritenbaugh C, Thomas K, Boon H, Fønnebø V. *Whole Systems Research: moving forward. FACT.* 2004; 9(2): 87-90).*

In the workshop we plan to introduce participants to, or re-acquaint them with, the Whole Systems Research (WSR) approach. We will describe where qualitative research is relevant in the WSR approach and how it can offer a means to ask questions that are outside the scope of randomised controlled trials. A brief overview of qualitative research in CAM will be presented, highlighting the sorts of questions that have been asked, how they’ve been addressed and the findings they have produced. We will review the strengths, limitations and applications of qualitative research in CAM and identify lessons learned about the application of qualitative research in CAM.

*Registration is FREE to all ISCMR members and to the 12th Annual symposium delegates, however,
all delegates need to register for the workshop.*

The registration fee for non-members/or those not attending 12th Annual symposium is \$75 US payable by credit card.

Registration forms available at: www.iscmr.org or email: compmed@soton.ac.uk

Places are limited, so please register early to secure a place.

For information or questions, please contact Dr George Lewith – Email: compmed@soton.ac.uk