

## **Patient Perspectives on the Use of Complementary and Alternative Therapies Alongside Gastrointestinal Medications.**

### **Abstract**

**Background:** Patients with gastrointestinal (GI) disorders are increasingly seeking complementary and alternative therapies (CATs) to enhance their physical and psychological well-being. This study aimed to investigate the prevalence and patterns of CAT use among patients across the eastern region of Libya. **Methods:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 300 patients attending the Gastroenterology Department at Benghazi Medical Hospital. Data were collected using a 22-item questionnaire covering sociodemographic characteristics, GI diagnoses, and CAT usage. The primary outcome of interest was the reported use of any CATs following a GI diagnosis. **Results:** The overall prevalence of CAT use among gastrointestinal patients was 100%, irrespective of the type of GI condition. Inflammatory bowel disease (40%) and gastroesophageal reflux disease (23.7%) were the most common diagnoses among participants. Herbal supplements emerged as the most frequently used CAT modality (96.7%). A higher proportion of CAT users were female (52%), aged between 30 and 49 years, and held a bachelor's degree (53.7%). Urban residents reported higher CAT usage (61.3%). Pain relief and improvement in sleep quality were the most frequently cited reasons for CAT use (99.3%). **Conclusions:** This study highlights the widespread use of CATs among GI patients in the eastern region of Libya. These findings underscore the importance of adopting a patient-centered approach to CAT use and promoting better clinician–patient communication regarding integrative treatment strategies.

#### **Keywords:**

Conventional treatment, Adult Libyan patients, Cross-sectional survey, Quality of life, Holistic care.