Petal Life, A Wellness Resource Website

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Abstract

Petal Life is a website covering topics on complementary alternative medicine (CAM), health, and wellness. It is a resource for practitioners and people interested in CAM. Petal Life provides credible wellness information gathered from peer-reviewed journals and scholarly sources. The website is divided into seven tabs, and included 17 articles. The “Home” tab included information about Petal Life. The “Healing” tab included three articles on CAM, and one each on Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), aromatherapy, homeopathy, and herbal medicine. The “Herbs” tab had three articles, each on a different herb, namely Curcuma longa, Zingiber officinale, and Ocimum sanctum. The “Nutrients” tab had an article on antioxidants, another on water, and a third on apples. The “Wellness” tab had an article on exercise. The “Remedies” had an article on Bach flower remedies (BFR) and another on Dynamic Phytotherapy (DP) remedies. The tab “Of Interest” will be launched at a later time. These articles provide a foundation for the website, but more articles will be written in the future and distributed via a newsletter.

Keywords: Complementary alternative medicine, healing, herbs, nutrients, wellness, remedies, website, resource
Petal Life, A Wellness Resource Website

Petal Life is a website that provides information on complementary alternative medicine (CAM). It is a resource for health and wellness practitioners and enthusiasts on different topics related to CAM. Information available online on CAM and related subjects is varied.

Agencies and government institutions define CAM as a concept tied to conventional medicine. For example, the American Psychological Association (APA) states that CAM is “a group of diverse medical and health-care systems, practice, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine” (Dittman, 2004, p. 44). The National Institutes of Health (NIH) defines CAM as “the term for medical products and practices that are not part of standard care” (MedlinePlus, 2015, para. 1). However, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2015) has a definition of CAM that stands on its own right:

Traditional medicine (TM) refers to the knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, used in the maintenance of health and in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness. Traditional medicine covers a wide variety of therapies and practices which vary from country to country and region to region. In some countries, it is referred to as "alternative" or "complementary" medicine (CAM). (para. 1)

Non-institutional websites include information on CAM that is not cited or peer-reviewed, thus not ensuring the accuracy of the content. Wikipedia, for instance, cites references, but the sources can include peer-reviewed publications along with opinion pieces, blogs, and news articles (Wikipedia, 2015). Wikipedia’s (2015) definition of CAM is:

Alternative medicine is any practice that is put forward as having the healing effects of medicine, but is not founded on evidence gathered using the scientific method. It consists
of a wide range of health care practices, products and therapies. Examples include new and traditional medicine practices such as homeopathy, naturopathy, chiropractic, energy medicine, various forms of acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, and Christian faith healing. The treatments are those that are not part of the conventional, science-based healthcare system, and are not backed by scientific evidence.

(para. 1)

The definition is not accurate. Alternative medicine does not claim to have the same healing effects as medicine, and modalities within CAM approach health differently than conventional medicine. CAM is supported by scientific evidence, and although many studies do not conform to the scientific method, many do.

Another website called “Everyday Health,” defines CAM as “a category of medicine that includes a variety of treatment approaches that fall outside the realm of conventional medicine” (Calabro, 2015, para. 1). The definition is similar to that of the APA and NIH, and could be considered accurate. But the author reviewed the content with only one medical physician (Calabro, 2015), and most peer-reviewed publications include more than one reviewer.

The need for Petal Life arises from the lack of comprehensive, properly cited, well-referenced information on CAM. It is important for wellness practitioners and people interested in wellness to get accurate information on CAM. Credible wellness information is important to consumer safety and education. Petal Life provides credible wellness information gathered from peer-reviewed journals and scholarly sources.

**Method**

Sources for the website included textbooks, books, and scholarly material from the American College of Healthcare Sciences (ACHS). Some textbooks covered CAM topics, and

PubMed, Google, Google Scholar, and LIRN (Library and Information Resources Network) were searched using the keywords: “complementary and alternative medicine;” “Ayurveda;” “Traditional Chinese Medicine;” “aromatherapy;” “homeopathy;” “herbal medicine;” “Curcuma longa;” “Zingiber officinale;” “Ocimum sanctum;” “antioxidants;” “drinking water benefits;” “apples AND phytochemicals;” “exercise benefits;” “flower remedies;” and “homeobotanicals.” Some searches resulted in hundreds of articles, and others, such as with Homeobotanicals, were limited. Studies were included if they defined the concepts and presented evidence of the benefits of the respective topic. Articles were excluded if they did not define the topic, and dealt with a narrow aspect of the concepts in the articles.
Results

Petal Life provided information on CAM modalities, herbs, food, nutrients, remedies, and wellness. The logo for Petal Life had seven petals. The website was divided into seven tabs, each representing a petal and a subject matter. The number seven was significant due to its importance in some healing modalities. For instance, there were seven possible body types within Ayurveda (Pizzorno & Murray, 2013), seven chakras, and seven crystal systems (Gerber, 2001). Seven is also a spiritual number in Hinduism.

The “Home” page, represented by the yellow petal, included information about Petal Life and the purpose for the website, which was to provide credible wellness information and knowledge to empower readers to make intelligent decisions about their lives. This was important to consumer safety and education. It also contained a disclaimer.

The purple petal was for the tab on “Healing,” which covered healing modalities within CAM. The first three articles were on CAM. The first provided definitions of CAM, the second discussed myths surrounding CAM, and the third covered origins and modern applications of CAM. It included five other articles, each covering a different healing modality, namely Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), aromatherapy, homeopathy, and herbal medicine. Each article included a description of the modality, its origin, and its current approach. For TCM and aromatherapy the clinical evidence was also provided.

The topic of “Herbs” was contained in the tab for the green petal. It had an article on turmeric Curcuma longa, an article on ginger Zingiber officinale, and an article on tulsi Ocimum sanctum. Each article covered the scientific name, common names, active constituents, historical uses, current uses, and clinical evidence of the effectiveness of the herb.
“Nutrients,” the orange petal, included a general description of a food item or nutrient. For the launch of the website there were three articles, which dealt with antioxidants, water, and apples. Each article provided a description of the nutrient, its benefits, clinical evidence of its effects on the body, and recommended consumption.

The blue petal was labeled “Wellness,” and dealt with health and wellness topics. It launched with an article on the importance of exercise and clinical evidence of its benefits.

The tab representing the red petal or “Remedies” included two articles, one with information on Bach flower remedies (BFR) and the other on Dynamic Phytotherapy (DP) remedies. The articles discussed what the remedies were, their origins, their benefits, and their availability and administration.

The last tab, the “Of Interest” tab with the pink petal, was intended to include general information about trends within the industry or other related topics. However, this tab will be launched at a later time.

Articles ranged from 1,000 to 1,500 words, and had links to other reputable websites that provided further information on the subject. Articles were purposefully written to allow a website user read the article in four to eight minutes. Also, for ease of reading, the articles were not prepared in strict APA style. Instead of double-spaced, the spacing was set at 1.5. Instead of Times New Roman, the font was Garamond. Images and photographs were added to the articles. These were either original images or they were downloaded from a free image website and credited accordingly.

**Discussion**

Seventeen articles launched Petal Life, covering topics on CAM, Ayurveda, TCM, aromatherapy, homeopathy, herbal medicine, turmeric, ginger, tulsi, antioxidants, water, apples,
exercise, BFRs, and DP remedies. The purpose of the website was to provide well-cited information that shed light on the effectiveness and validity of CAM practices, and delivered information that would help dispel myths and confusion regarding CAM. The purpose was to provide information and knowledge for people to make intelligent decisions about their lives.

The target audience was anyone interested in CAM and wellness topics, including health and wellness practitioners, students of CAM, avid users of CAM, or anyone interested in learning more about CAM. The information was written comprehensively, yet not overly technical so that a person not familiar with CAM terminology could understand the content. It may be necessary to consider creating a glossary, so as to keep the information relevant to a CAM practitioner, yet approachable to the general public.

Articles were not exhaustive and did not include extensive information on each topic. Articles averaged around 1,500 words in order to keep the articles at a manageable length, so that the articles could be read in a short period of time, and to encourage readers to the website. Summaries were provided to allow readers to get a sense of what was covered in each article. Those who found the topic of interest could download a PDF file of the article for easy downloading, printing, or archiving.

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

Seventeen articles is not enough information on CAM and related topics, but provides a solid foundation for the website. The intention for Petal Life is to continue to publish articles on a regular basis. Newsletters with links to updated content will be sent out on a monthly basis, and each newsletter will include at least four articles. Readers will be able to subscribe to the website to receive the newsletters, at no charge. The mail subscription feature will be added to the website after the launch. To promote subscriptions and followers, social media will be
incorporated into the website, including sites such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. A twitter account for Petal Life has already been created, and after the launch, tweets with links for each article will be sent out. Petal Life could also seek the support of ACHS faculty and students to help promote the website.

After the website launch, the first set of articles will seek to cover general and basic concepts within CAM to continue building the foundation of the website. Topics could cover how and where to find CAM practitioners, statistics on CAM usage, regulations and licenses, acupuncture, massage therapy, yoga, phytochemicals, specific herbs, stress management, sleep, meditation, mind and body practices, fitness, organic farming, biodynamic farming, and others. The objective is to allow readers to look up definitions on CAM and related topics. It will likely take one to two years to complete the foundation of the website.

Once the basic concepts are covered and the foundation of the website is complete, more specialized topics can be included. These could include health conditions and how CAM modalities could be used to address them. This would allow for more in-depth coverage of anatomy and physiology, as well as more extensive inclusion of clinical evidence. Articles will have to be updated as new research becomes available. Topics will be adjusted based on updated developments in CAM.
References


