

## An Overview of the Effects of Anthroposophic Medicine in Patients with Chronic Disease

**Belgüzar Kara\***

Gulhane Military Medical Academy, School of Nursing, Ankara, Turkey

**\*Corresponding author:** Belgüzar Kara, School of Nursing, Department of Internal Medicine Nursing, Gulhane Military Medical Academy, 06013 Ankara, Turkey, Tel: + 90 312 3041565; E-mail: [sb.kara@mynet.com](mailto:sb.kara@mynet.com)

**Citation:** Kara, B. An Overview of the Effects of Anthroposophic Medicine in Patients with Chronic Disease. (2016) Lett Health Biol Sci 1(2): 26- 27

**Received Date: July 25, 2016; Accepted Date: July 29, 2016, Published Date: August 2, 2016**

### Introduction

According to the World Health Organization, chronic diseases are the leading cause of death and disability worldwide. Effective management of chronic diseases includes health promotion, health maintenance, prevention of disease, early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation<sup>[1]</sup>. Several studies have reported that many people with chronic disease use anthroposophic therapies to improve their emotional and physical health. Therefore, it is important that efficacy of these therapies is determined<sup>[2]</sup>.

Anthroposophic medicine (AM), founded by Rudolf Steiner and Ita Wegman in the 1920s, is practiced in more than 80 countries around the world<sup>[2,3]</sup>. AM is a physician-provided complementary therapy, including counseling, special medications, art therapy (painting, drawing, music, singing, sculpture, clay modeling, and speech exercises), rhythmic massages, eurythmy movement exercises, and anthroposophic nursing. It is used either alone or in combination with other available conventional treatments<sup>[4]</sup>. According to Hamre et al., "AM therapy for chronic disease aims to counteract constitutional vulnerability, stimulate salutogenetic self-healing capacities, and strengthen patient autonomy"<sup>[5, p.2]</sup>.

A few researchers have examined the effects of AM on health outcomes among patients with chronic disease. Previous studies have indicated the effectiveness of AM in a variety of chronic diseases or conditions, such as neurological, musculoskeletal, mental, genitourinary and respiratory diseases. For example, in a prospective, observational cohort study of 913 adult outpatients from Germany, Hamre et al<sup>[5]</sup> determined the long-term clinical outcomes of AM. They found that disease symptoms reduced and quality of life improved after 6 and 12 months following AM therapies. This follow-up study also demonstrated that symptom improvement was associated with a higher education level, higher baseline symptom severity, better physical function and general health, and a higher therapy goal at baseline<sup>[5]</sup>. In another prospective, observational cohort study of 1510 patients aged 1 - 75 years in outpatient settings in Germany, Hamre et al<sup>[4]</sup> investigated the long-term outcomes of AM that included physician counseling, eurythmy therapy, rhythmical massage therapy, art therapy, and AM medications. Interestingly, a markedly improvement of both symptoms and quality of life was observed in patients with chronic disease, and it was maintained at 4-year follow-up. Their findings have also demonstrated that adverse reactions to AM were relatively rare, and events were primarily mild to moderate intensity<sup>[4]</sup>. Consequently, AM therapies have important advantages for patients with chronic disease. Randomized controlled studies in this field are needed to confirm the findings of previous studies.



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## References

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