Abstract

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a functional gastrointestinal disorder characterized by abdominal pain and discomfort, and can be experienced conjointly with altered bowel function and abdominal distention. There are four subtypes of IBS including IBS with diarrhea (IBS-D), IBS with constipation (IBS-C), mixed IBS (IBS-M), and unsubtyped IBS (IBS-U). Each subtype implicates unique symptoms, and each individual patient with IBS experiences symptoms differently, making effective treatment for IBS a complex task. Whereas pharmacologic methods are traditional ways of current treatment, alternative therapies are increasingly used among many patients, as prescription drugs aren’t highly effective. This literature review presents evidence for different types of conventional and alternative therapies and analyzes the effectiveness of various trials conducted testing assorted treatments for patient with IBS. The literary evidence suggests that there is not one therapy or treatment that is most effective in treating IBS, but rather that all therapies need to be implemented in adjunction with others to be most effective and improve the wide range of symptoms experienced by patients. It is critical that providers understand this concept in order to provide the most effective treatments for patients that will not only relieve symptoms, but improve quality of life.