

The most recent meeting of the European Parliament Interest Group for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, (CAM) showed that for the proposed targets of the Healthy Ageing Innovation Partnership to be achieved, a paradigm shift in the provision of healthcare towards health focused health care will be necessary. Complementary and Alternative Medicine is particularly well placed to contribute to this.

Context.

- By 2025 about one-third of Europe's population will be aged 60 years and over and there will be a particularly rapid increase in the number of people 80 years and older.
- European societies need healthy people living longer and productive lives. Without a sea change in strategic awareness and action in relation to achieving Healthy Ageing, the burden on care services may become intolerable

“The key issue is how to persuade people to change habits, especially, those who for cultural, social and/or economic reasons are least inclined to do so.”*

Studies show that CAM modalities are particularly helpful in motivating and supporting healthy lifestyle change helping people to maintain health and prevent illness.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine is an appropriate first option in chronic disease prevention and management because it works by restoring and supporting patients' own natural systems for fighting disease and maintaining health. CAM can help reduce the need of high cost, high-impact medical interventions and conventional prescription drugs and the long-term dependency on them. CAM is a safe treatment with hardly any adverse effects.

A cohort of **CAM health professionals** is available to healthcare systems to bring this changed health agenda about and also help deal with the future health workforce challenge.

The Healthy Ageing Innovation Partnership should include specific projects that incorporate CAM health professionals' contribution to bringing about the necessary shift towards future health-focussed prevention-centered healthcare systems.

*Healthy Ageing: A Challenge for Europe, Swedish Institute for Public Health Report 2007

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