

# THE RISE OF NON-CONVENTIONAL THERAPIES IN VETERINARY PRACTICE - A FAILURE IN THE EDUCATION OF VETERINARY STUDENTS?

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, non-conventional therapies (NCTs) – such as Acupuncture, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Homeopathy and Osteopathy – have become increasing popular in veterinary practice despite their lack of scientific grounding, and the progress achieved from evidence-based medicine (EBM).

## AIM

To map how both NCTs and evidence-based medicine are taught in veterinary schools, to find possible causes for this phenomenon, namely:

- a) Failure to teach the merits of evidence-based veterinary medicine (and/or)
- b) NCTs being taught as legitimate therapeutic options to veterinary students.

## METHODS

Database search



RCAAP - Repositórios  
Científicos de Acesso  
Aberto de Portugal

Website and curricula  
of the 7 Portuguese  
veterinary schools

- **Key-Words:** acupun(c)tura; Homeopatia; Osteopatia; Fitoterapia; Naturopatia; Quiropráxia; medicina tradicional chinesa; medicina baseada na evidencia; veterinária.
- Search hits were assessed for relevance and quality (content analysis).
- Time frame: 2008-2018.
- Portuguese veterinary schools: FMV-UL, ICBAS-UP, UE, UTAD, EUVG, FMV-ULHT.

## RESULTS

School	MSc theses on NCTs (2008-2018)		MSc theses with some NCT component		Teaching of evidence-based veterinary medicine	Elective Teaching of NCTs	Post-Graduate Teaching of NCTs
FMV-UL	3	2 acupuncture 1 several NCTs	3	2 acupuncture 1 several NCTs	"Abordagem à dermatologia baseada na evidência"	"Quadro das medicinas alternativas"	-
UTAD	3	3 acupuncture	4	2 acupuncture 2 homeopathy	-	-	-
ICBAS-UP	-	-	-	-	-	-	"Mini Curso de Medicina Tradicional Chinesa"
UE	1	1 acupuncture	-	-	-	-	-
EUVG	1	1 Acupuncture	1	1 acupuncture	"Metodologias de investigação e desenvolvimento"	"Medicinas alternativas e complementares"	"Pós-graduação em Osteopatia"
FMV-ULHT	4	1 several NCTs 2 acupuncture 1 homeopathy	-	-	-	-	"Pós-Graduação em Acupuntura Veterinária"

## CONCLUSIONS

- NCTs can be found in all Portuguese veterinary schools as:
  - ✓ Elective curricular subjects (2).
  - ✓ Post-graduate/professional courses (3).
  - ✓ Subject matter of Master theses (20, in total).
- Acupuncture is the most represented therapy, followed by homeopathy.
- There is little information on explicit teaching of EBM:
  - ✓ One elective on evidence-based dermatology (FMV-UL).
  - ✓ No research on evidence-based medicine.
- The overall quality of scientific evidence was poor.
  - ✓ False positive conclusions (misuse of p values).
  - ✓ Lack of controls.
  - ✓ Subjective assessments.
- Theses on NCT often resorted to ungrounded, pseudoscientific claims:



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