

NIH study reports more than half of US office-based physicians recommend CHA

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A new study has shown that more than half (53.1%) of office-based physicians in the U.S., across specialty areas, recommended at least one complementary health approach (CHA) to their patients during the previous 12 months, with female physicians (63.2%) more likely to recommend a CHA than male physicians (49.3%). This unique study, which found physician's sex, race, specialty, and U.S. region to be significant predictors of CHA recommendation, is published in *JACM, The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*.

The article entitled "U.S. Physician Recommendations to Their Patients About the Use of Complementary Health Approaches" was coauthored by Barbara Stussman and Richard Nahin, Ph.D., MPH, National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD, and Patricia Barnes and Brian Ward, Ph.D., National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD. The data are based on the 2012 Physician Induction Interview of the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS PII).

The researchers analyzed recommendations by physicians to their patients for any CHA and for individual approaches, including [massage therapy](#), herbs/nonvitamin supplements, chiropractic/osteopathic manipulation, yoga, acupuncture, and mind-body therapies. Overall, massage therapy was the most commonly recommended CHA, followed by chiropractic/osteopathic manipulation, herbs/nonvitamin supplements, yoga, and acupuncture. The analysis also looked at [physician](#) specialty area, including general/family practice physicians, psychiatrists, OB/GYNs, and pediatricians, and their likelihood of recommending any or a specific CHA. The authors anticipate that their findings will "enable consumers, physicians, and medical schools to better understand potential differences in use of CHAs with patients."

JACM Editor-in-Chief John Weeks, johnweeks-integrator.com, Seattle, WA, states: "It is remarkable that these 2012 data pre-date the systematic inclusion of complementary and integrative approaches in pain and opioid-related guidelines and reports from the Joint Commission, National Academy of Medicine, American College of Physicians, Food and Drug Administration, and others in the 7 years since. The data likely significantly understate present level of recommendations of complementary [health](#) practices by physicians."

More information: Barbara J. Stussman et al,
U.S. Physician Recommendations to Their Patients
About the Use of Complementary Health
Approaches, *The Journal of Alternative and
Complementary Medicine* (2019). [DOI:
10.1089/ACM.2019.0303](https://doi.org/10.1089/ACM.2019.0303)

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