This document has been written for clinicians. The content was developed by the Integrative Medicine Program, Department of Family Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health in cooperation with Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, under contract to the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation, Veterans Health Administration.

Information is organized according to the diagram above, the Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being. While conventional treatments may be covered to some degree, the focus is on other areas of Whole Health that are less likely to be covered elsewhere and may be less familiar to most readers. There is no intention to dismiss what conventional care has to offer. Rather, you are encouraged to learn more about other approaches and how they may be used to complement conventional care. The ultimate decision to use a given approach should be based on many factors, including patient preferences, clinician comfort level, efficacy data, safety, and accessibility. No one approach is right for everyone; personalizing care is of fundamental importance.
WHOLE HEALTH: CHANGE THE CONVERSATION
Savvy about Complementary Integrative Health: The “CIH Quiz”

This quiz was created to help you get a better sense of some of the big questions that are often asked about complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies:

• Who is most likely to use them?
• What therapies are most frequently used?
• For what reasons are they used?
• What therapies are offered within the VA?

See how many of the following 10 questions you can get right. The questions are repeated with their answers starting on page 4.

1. What percent of American adults use complementary medicine?
   a. 85%
   b. 66%
   c. 38%
   d. <10%

2. How much money do Americans spend on these approaches each year?
   a. $2.2 trillion
   b. $270 billion
   c. $34 billion
   d. $1 billion

3. Of 141 VA centers surveyed in 2015, how many incorporate complementary medicine in some form?
   a. 131
   b. 102
   c. 74
   d. 25

4. What are the most popular complementary approaches used by Americans?
   a. Energy medicine, osteopathy, dietary supplements
   b. Natural products, deep breathing, meditation
   c. Chiropractic/osteopathic manipulation, massage, yoga
   d. Natural products, yoga, meditation
5. According to the 2015 Healthcare Analysis and Information Group (HAIG) report,¹ what is the most popular complementary approach used in the VA system by Veterans?
   a. Tai chi
   b. Acupuncture
   c. Yoga
   d. Mindfulness/Other Meditation
   e. Chiropractic

6. What are the main health reasons for which Americans in general seek out complementary approaches?
   a. Musculoskeletal problems
   b. Anxiety and PTSD
   c. Cholesterol and high blood pressure
   d. Gastrointestinal (GI) problems

7. What are the top three health reasons complementary therapies are used in the VA system?
   a. Depression, pain, wellness
   b. Arthritis, headache, depression
   c. Pain, PTSD, depression
   d. Stress management, anxiety disorders, PTSD

8. What percent of patients have discussed complementary therapy use with their physician?
   a. 85%
   b. 66%
   c. 33%
   d. 10%

9. Who is most likely to use complementary approaches?
   a. Middle-aged, educated, white women
   b. Elderly men or women
   c. Only hippies
   d. It is fairly well distributed across the U.S. population
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10. True or False? Veterans have a higher rate of CAM use than the general adult population of the United States.
   a. True
   b. False

ANSWERS BEGIN ON THE NEXT PAGE.
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1. What percent of American adults use complementary medicine?
   a. 85%
   b. 66%
   c. 38%
   d. <10%

Answer: C. Based on the National Health Interview Survey of 2007\(^2\) (2012 data will be released soon), 38% of American adults (83 million) and 11.8% of children use CAM approaches. This is up from 34% in 1990. These numbers increase markedly if taking vitamins and/or prayer are also classed as complementary approaches.

2. How much money do Americans spend on these approaches each year?
   a. $2.2 trillion
   b. $270 billion
   c. $34 billion
   d. $1 billion

Answer: C.\(^3\) In 2007, $2.2 trillion was the total health care spending in the United States. Out-of-pocket payments for conventional medicine were $270 billion. Note that the $34 billion spent on CAM is particularly remarkable if one considers these are primarily out-of-pocket expenses.

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\(^1\) Reimbursed spending includes employer and individual private insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, State Children’s Health Insurance Program, other private and public spending, and some CAM.


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Figure 1. U.S. spending on complementary therapies.\(^3\)
Out of the $33.9 billion spent on CAM, an estimated $22.0 billion was spent on CAM products, classes, and materials (self-care costs), and $14.8 billion was spent on nonvitamin/nonmineral natural products, which is about one-third of the amount spent out-of-pocket for prescription drugs. Nearly $12 billion ($11.9 billion) was spent on visits to CAM practitioners, which is one-quarter of the amount spent on out-of-pocket visits to physicians ($49.6 billion). Over 38 million adults made 354.2 million visits to CAM practitioners.4

3. Of 141 VA centers surveyed in 2015, how many incorporate complementary medicine in some form?

   a. 131
   b. 102
   c. 74
   d. 25

Answer: A. 131, or 93%, of the VA facilities surveyed, offered CAM in some form, according to the Healthcare Analysis and Information Group (HAIG), 2015 Report.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.</th>
<th>2011 Count</th>
<th>2011 %</th>
<th>2015 Count</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but are in the process of developing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. CAM use in VA facilities.*

Of the sites that offered CAM, the top reasons given for providing CIH were:

- Promote wellness
- Patient preferences
- Adjunct to conventional chronic care
- Proven clinical effect
- Provider request
For the 10% of facilities not offering CAM, the main reasons given for not providing CAM were:

- Lack of available providers
- Lack of patient interest
- Lack of evidence of efficacy
- Lack of facility funding support

4. What are the most popular complementary approaches used by Americans?

   a. Energy medicine, osteopathy, dietary supplements
   b. Natural products, deep breathing, meditation
   c. Chiropractic/osteopathic manipulation, massage, yoga
   d. Natural products, yoga, meditation

**Answer:** B. According to the 2007 National Health Interview Survey, the CAM therapies most commonly used by U.S. adults in the past 12 months were:

- Nonvitamin, nonmineral, natural products (17.7%)
- Deep breathing exercises (12.7%)
- Meditation (9.4%)
- Chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation (8.6%)
- Massage (8.3%)

According to the survey, “the most commonly used nonvitamin, nonmineral, natural products used by adults for health reasons in the past 30 days were fish oil, omega-3, or DHA (37.4%); glucosamine (19.9%); echinacea (19.8%); flaxseed oil or pills (15.9%); and ginseng (14.1%).”

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**Table 1.b.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistent with patient-centered model of care</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes well being</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjunctive to chronic disease management</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient preference</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proven clinical effectiveness</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflects facility’s mission</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider request</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have provider(s) who volunteer their expertise</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes cost savings</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracts new patients</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3. Reasons for using CAM in VA facilities.**

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5. According to the 2015 Healthcare Analysis and Information Group (HAIG) report¹, what is the most popular complementary approach used in the VA system by Veterans?

   a. Tai chi
   b. Acupuncture
   c. Yoga
   d. Mindfulness/Other Meditation
   e. Chiropractic

**Answer:** D. The following graphic from the HAIG report³ lists the five most popular “CAM modalities” offered by the VA. Of course, the fact that they are offered or covered for Veterans influences their popularity relative to therapies that are not.
The HAIG report concluded that for complementary providers within the VHA:

- The majority of them have conventional care training.
- More providers offered care in mind-body medicine than in any of the other categories (by far).
- They use complementary medicine as an adjunct, not as a primary treatment.

The following diagram from the 2011 HAIG survey of CAM use in the VA illustrates which therapies had the highest frequency of use.
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The HAIG report also concluded that “There is significant interest in establishing Integrative clinics within VHA.”

6. What are the main health reasons for which Americans in general seek out complementary approaches?
   a. Musculoskeletal problems
   b. Anxiety and PTSD
   c. Cholesterol and high blood pressure
   d. Gastrointestinal (GI) problems

   Answer: A. Data indicate that American adults most often used CAM to treat musculoskeletal problems, including:
   - Back pain or problems (17%)
   - Neck pain or problems (6%)
   - Joint pain or stiffness, or other joint conditions (5%)
   - Arthritis (3.5%)

   In the 2007 National Health Interview Survey, 53% of respondents reported that they used CAM therapies “to supplement conventional medicine,” and 77% said they used them for prevention or to enhance general wellness.

| Table 1. Diagnoses Leading People to Use Complementary Therapies² |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Condition                                      | Percentage of people over 18 using CAM in the past 12 months |
| Back pain or problem                           | 17.1                                          |
| Neck pain or problem                           | 5.9                                           |
| Joint pain, stiffness, or other joint condition| 5.2                                           |
| Arthritis                                      | 3.5                                           |
| Anxiety                                       | 2.8                                           |
| Cholesterol                                   | 2.1                                           |
| Colds (head or chest)                          | 2.0                                           |
| Other musculoskeletal                          | 1.8                                           |
| Severe headache, migraine                      | 1.6                                           |
| Insomnia or sleeping problems                  | 1.4                                           |
| Stress                                        | 1.3                                           |
| Stomach or intestinal illness                  | 1.2                                           |
| Depression                                     | 1.2                                           |
| Regular headaches                              | 1                                             |
| Hypertension                                  | 0.9                                           |
| Fibromyalgia                                  | 0.8                                           |

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7. What are the top three health reasons complementary therapies are used in the VA system?
   a. Depression, pain, wellness
   b. Arthritis, headache, depression
   c. Pain, PTSD, depression
   d. Stress management, anxiety disorders, PTSD

Answer: D. Listed below are the top five conditions most commonly treated in the VA using CAM, and the number of facilities that used each type. SMRT is stress management/relaxation therapy, and PMR is progressive muscle relaxation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modalities Used to Treat the Most Commonly Treated Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stress Management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMRT (85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Imagery (69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMR (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biofeedback (50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7. Common conditions CAM is used for in the VA, with most commonly used therapies.*

8. What percent of patients have discussed complementary therapy use with their physician?
   a. 85%
   b. 66%
   c. 33%
   d. 10%

Answer: C. In a 2010 survey of over 1,000 people aged 50 and older, 33% of respondents reported they had discussed CAM with a health care provider, and 67% had not.
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Figure 8. Proportion of patients who discuss CAM with clinicians.

Figure 9. Who patients will speak to about CAM.
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In terms of which providers patients told about their CAM use, 28% reported discussing CAM with their physician. Roughly half as many reported discussing it with other types of clinicians.

In another study conducted in 2010, 55% of respondents reported that they raised the topic of complementary medicine with a clinician. In both 2006 and 2010, 26% of respondents reported that a health care provider raised the topic. Given that at least 20% of people using complementary therapies are also taking medications, paying attention to the potential for interactions between the two is essential, especially where dietary supplements are concerned.

What, specifically, was discussed during these visits? The following table from the AARP survey outlines various topics and the frequency with which respondents reported they arose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics Discussed by Health Care Provider</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interactions between CAM and other medications or treatments</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice on whether or not to pursue CAM</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of CAM therapy</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What to use (herbs, acupuncture, etc.)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety of CAM therapy</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to get more information</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals to CAM practitioners</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Respondents who have discussed CAM with a health care provider (n=345). Sampling error: ± 5.3 percentage points. Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Source: AARP/NCCAM Survey of U.S. Adults 50+ 2010

Figure 10. What people discussed about CAM with clinicians.

Also worth noting were the reasons respondents gave for why they didn’t bring up CAM use with their care provider:
9. Who is most likely to use complementary approaches?

   a. Middle-aged, educated, white women
   b. Elderly men or women
   c. Only hippies
   d. It is fairly well distributed across the U.S. population

**Answer:** A. According to the National Health Interview Survey, CAM use was highest in those aged 50-59 years.²,⁷
In a landmark 1998 study, Astin ascertained that patients who use CAM have:

- More education
- Poorer health status
- More anxiety, back problems, chronic pain, and urinary tract disease
- A stronger sense of being feminist and environmentalist

Eisenberg and colleagues reported that CAM use is also higher in:

- Non-black patients
- Those with higher incomes
- Women

10. True or False? Veterans have a higher rate of CAM use than the general adult population of the United States.

   a. True
   b. False

**Answer: True.** A recent survey of over 16,000 people found that the rate of CAM use in Veterans was 44.5%, compared to the 38% found in the general population.
Interpretation of Your Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>That’s why you are taking this module. There is some real learning opportunity here!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Not bad. You are on your way to having a good grasp of CAM trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Even better. You are well on your way to being “CAM-savvy”!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>Tremendous! You seem to know this stuff already. Maybe you should focus on a different Whole Health topic...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whole Health: Change the Conversation Website

Interested in learning more about Whole Health? Browse our website for information on personal and professional care.

http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/SERVICE/index.php

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References


