

Why Do Doctors, Nurses Often Use Holistic Medicine for Themselves?

Posted By [Dr. Mercola](#) | September 09 2011 | 6,386 views | [Disponible en Español](#)

Alternative medicine is no longer so "alternative" for health care workers, the majority of whom use a variety of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) for themselves.

In fact, 76 percent of health care workers use CAM, compared to 63 percent of the general population, according to research in the journal [Health Services Research](#). Even more revealing, health care *providers*, including doctors and nurses, were more than twice as likely to have used practitioner-based CAM, and nearly three times as likely to use self-treatment with CAM, during the prior year than support workers.

It seems health care workers are poignantly aware of many of the [pitfalls of modern medicine](#) and as such are embracing more holistic modalities. As psychiatrist Joya Lynn-Schoen, M.D., who practices alternative medicine, told [Health Behavior News Service](#), part of the Center for Advancing Health:

"As insiders, health care workers understand what's missing in our medical system. They're more educated than others about orthodox and alternative medicine ... Mainstream medicine will say, 'Here's a pill' or 'Have an operation' or 'There's nothing wrong with you. You're just tired.'"

With holistic therapies, attention is directed to finding the *root* cause of disease so you can heal on a deep, instead of surface, level. In simpler terms, holistic medicine focuses on *health*, whereas conventional medicine focuses on *disease*.



Story at-a-glance

- » Health care workers are more likely to use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) than the general population
- » Among health care workers, health care providers such as doctors and nurses are more likely to use CAM than other occupations
- » Increasing numbers of people, including those in the medical field, are recognizing and embracing the benefits holistic medicine can have on disease prevention and treatment

Holistic Medicine Increasing in Popularity

The trend of CAM use among health care workers is mirrored by that of the general population. Increasing numbers of people are looking for treatments that fall outside of the realm of conventional medical care, often because conventional medicine has failed them or even made their conditions worse.

In 2007, more than [38 percent of U.S. adults used complementary and alternative medicine](#), along with 12 percent of children – a rate that's been increasing since 2002. This amounts to 4 in 10 adults, and 1 in 9 children, embracing CAM. According to the [National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine](#), while CAM is used by people of all backgrounds, use is greatest among women and those with higher levels of education and income.

CAM practices are very diverse and include, but are not limited to:

Nutritional medicine	Energy medicine
Naturopathy	Chiropractic medicine
Herbalism, homeopathy, and nutritional-based therapies	Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and acupuncture
Ayurveda	Meditation and hypnosis

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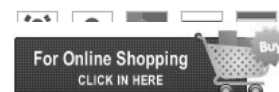
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Doctors Referring More Patients to Alternative Treatments

Although the U.S. medical system is touted as being the best in the world, the truth is it has dismal success rates when it comes to treating and preventing chronic disease. A study published in Health Affairs revealed that the United States ranks 49th for life expectancy worldwide, a ranking that has fallen sharply from fifth place in 1950. At the same time that life expectancy has been declining at faster rates than many other industrialized nations, per capita health spending has been on the rise.

The average American between the ages of 19 and 64 now takes close to 12 prescription drugs every year!

But with all of these drugs, Americans are not walking around with stellar health. Rates of chronic diseases are through the roof, and we're facing epidemics of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, depression and too many others to list. As a whole, Americans are not healthy — they're tired, depressed, stressed out and often in pain.

As patients, many people have taken their health into their own hands by abandoning this fatally flawed medical model and embracing holistic modalities that can help heal on a body-wide level. And now doctors, too, are following suit!

Nearly 6.5 million Americans, or one in 30, were referred for mind-body therapy such as yoga, meditation or guided imagery by their doctor or other health care practitioner, according to a study in the Archives of Internal Medicine. What's more, *you* can have an impact on your doctor's tendency to recommend these alternatives, as when you inquire about them, some health care providers do in fact listen.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar, an internist and integrative medicine fellow at Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, who co-authored the study actually did so *because* of her patients requests. As reported by CommonHealth:

"Nerurkar, 35, says she was "inspired by her patients," to pursue the research because so many of them kept telling her how much better they felt — that their insomnia or anxiety had ceased — after taking a meditation or yoga class."

So many people are now asking their health care providers about alternative options that medical schools have had no choice but to listen — many are now offering courses in alternative medicine, such as the use of herbs, acupuncture and mind-body medicine!

Are You Fed Up with Prescription Drugs and Surgery?

Taking medications and having surgery is clearly not the route to optimal health that the modern medical system would have you believe it is. Dr. Null and colleagues published an oft-cited report in 2003 about the death toll caused by drugs and conventional medical treatments, which included the following statistics.

- Adverse drug reactions — 106,000 deaths/year
- Medical errors — 98,000 deaths/year
- Unnecessary procedures — 37,136 deaths/year
- Surgery — 32,000 deaths/year

Additionally, a June 2010 report in the Journal of General Internal Medicine, which analyzed 62 million death certificates from 1979 to 2006 (the most recent year available), found that almost a quarter-million of those deaths were coded as having *occurred in a hospital setting due to medication errors*. In an AMA article discussing the study, one co-author was quoted as stating that "medication errors are the second-leading cause of accidental death, and the only kind of accidental death that is increasing over time."

An estimated 450,000 preventable medication-related adverse events occur in the U.S. every year, and adverse drug reactions cause injuries or death in 1 of 5 hospital patients. The costs of adverse drug reactions to society are more than \$136 billion annually — greater than the total cost of cardiovascular or diabetic care.

Further, an analysis in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2010 found that 18 percent of patients were harmed by medical care (some repeatedly) and over 63 percent of the injuries could have been prevented. In nearly 2.5 percent of these cases, the problems caused or contributed to a person's death. In another 3 percent, patients suffered from permanent injury, while over 8 percent experienced life-threatening issues, such as severe bleeding during surgery.

In all there were over 25 injuries per 100 admissions! In other words you have a one in four chance of getting injured if you are admitted to the hospital, not very good odds by any stretch. So it is easy to understand why some people are abandoning conventional medicine like rats leaving a sinking ship! Alternative medicine typically offers a more positive treatment experience and typically produces better results, and Americans are also increasingly distrustful of prescription medicines, and rightfully so!

Holistic Medicine Helps You Take Control of Your Health

The more you take responsibility for your own health — in the form of nurturing your body to prevent disease — the less you need to rely on the "disease care" that passes for health care in the United States.

If you carefully follow some basic health principles – simple things like exercising, eating whole foods, sleeping enough, getting sun exposure, reducing stress in your life, and nurturing personal relationships – you will drastically reduce your need for conventional medical care, which in and of itself will reduce your chances of suffering ill side effects.

But in the event you do need medical care, seek a health care practitioner who will help you move toward complete wellness by helping you discover and understand the hidden causes of your health challenges ... and create a customized and comprehensive – i.e. *holistic* – treatment plan for you. You and your family CAN take control of your health, and you can typically do so using lifestyle choices and other natural, holistic strategies.

Source: Health Behavior News Service August 19, 2011

Source: Newswise.com August 19, 2011

Source: Health Services Research August 22, 2011

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