

Chiropractic Continues to Influence U.S. Health Care

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As we reported in our last issue,¹ a recent survey by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and the National Center for Health Statistics² reveals a number of interesting factors that play a role in the ever-increasing utilization of *complementary and alternative medicine* (I still don't agree with this phrase), otherwise known as CAM.

These findings easily apply to chiropractic because, with the exception of "nonvitamin, nonmineral, natural products" (fish oil, glucosamine, echinacea, etc.), "deep-breathing techniques" and meditation, chiropractic care was used by more adults (18 years and older) and children than any other form of CAM, and effectively addresses those conditions most sought after by adult CAM users. Here are the most popular conditions addressed by chiropractic and their ranking relative to use by adult CAM users, according to the survey:

Condition	Ranking
Back pain or problem	#1
Neck pain or problem	#2
Joint pain, stiffness or other joint condition	#3
Arthritis	#4
Other musculoskeletal	#9
Severe headache or migraine	#10
Regular headaches	#15
Sprain or strain	#19

The report found that in 2007, 38.3 percent of U.S. adults and 11.8 percent of U.S. children used some form of CAM during the previous 12 months, and use was "more prevalent among women, adults aged 30-69, adults with higher levels of education, adults who were not poor, adults living in the West, former smokers, and adults who were hospitalized in the last year." Likewise, CAM use among children was more likely among those who were 12-17 years old, white and whose parents had a higher level of education.

In addition, this report revealed an interesting factor that had a significant impact on the use of CAM: the ability of an adult or child's family to afford "conventional medical care." According to the report:

- Adults who were so worried about the cost of conventional medical care that they chose to delay such care were more likely to use CAM.
- Likewise, the children of families so worried about the cost of conventional medical care that

they chose to delay such care were more likely to provide CAM for their children.

- Adults who couldn't afford conventional medical care were also more likely to use CAM.
- Children of families that couldn't afford conventional medical care were more likely to provide CAM for their children.

These findings shed light on the role that CAM (including chiropractic) plays in the minds of Americans who are concerned about the high cost of medical care. Clearly, those patients who feel they must delay or forgo medical care due to high costs are still utilizing CAM, even though payment for most CAM therapies comes out of their own pocket.

This is an extremely interesting finding that should be noted by the architects of the coming health care reform. Let people vote with their feet (and wallets) and they will vote for chiropractic and other forms of CAM. Almost 40 percent of American adults know what health care they really value and they are willing to pay for it with their own dollars.

Another factor comes into play when considering how to increase the use of CAM and chiropractic care for children. Children whose parents were already CAM users "were almost five times as likely (23.9 percent) to use CAM as children whose parents did not use CAM (5.1 percent)." This observation gives us direction as we look ahead to our future. Many DCs who have been in practice for decades in their community can testify to the fact that children who use chiropractic continue to do so as adults, and teach their children about the importance of chiropractic.

Simple multiplication suggests that the most important thing a doctor of chiropractic can do is to communicate the importance of chiropractic care for children to their adult patients. Teaching parents and children about chiropractic is vital to the health and welfare of our country.

And there you have it: Another survey emphasizing that chiropractic (and CAM) play a vital role in U.S. health care, regardless of whether people can afford medical care. To review the survey findings, visit the Web links referenced below.

References

1. "CAM Use Keeps on Climbing." *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Jan. 15, 2009. www.dynamicchiropractic.com/mpacms/dc/article.php?id=53593
2. Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults and Children: United States, 2007. <http://nccam.nih.gov/news/2008/nhsr12.pdf>.

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