

# "Relationships in Transition: The Consumer and the White Coat"

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A paper was recently sent to the chiropractic executive of New South Wales called, "Relationships in Transition: The Consumer and the White Coat." The paper's objective was obtaining a definitive measure of the key attitudes and behavioural practices of 18-65 year-olds as they relate to health and health care. This study was to provide a benchmark against which to monitor future shifts in attitude and community health care focus.

The quantitative part of the study consisted of a door to door survey across Sydney and Melbourne, utilising a sample size of 406 females and males (18-65 years), who were responsible for their own health care. Table I shows how the numbers were broken down. The sample was drawn to ensure adequate representation in the suburbs of white and blue collar workers.

Table I

18-24	38	38	76	25-34	55	57	112	35-44	47	49	96	45-54	31	33	64	55-64	25	27	52
196	204	400																	

This study has described the 90s as the "age of reconciliation"; the "caring '90s." The paper states that health no longer is solely confined to the treatment of physical ailments and conditions, but increasingly assuming holistic proportions. A preventative approach to health is starting to take hold as the aging population starts to look at diet and nutrition. They are beginning to realise the value of foods they eat and how these can contribute to inner health and better quality of life. Also they are starting to look at alternative medicine more closely and what they want in a health care practitioner.

The paper states that what is happening in the '90s is of great significance compared to what happened in the previous four decades, which were marked by a different health care focus. During these four decades there has been a shift from "illness to wellness," from a "cure it/fix it" mentality to a "care for it/maintain it" health approach and the notion of wellness. While this shift has been a gradual one, there are many implications.

The main health problems in the survey varied according to age and lifestyle (Table II):

Table II Main Health Problems -- Self

.....|.....|.....|.....|.....|.....|..... AGE

18-24 25-44 45-65 Total Years Years Years MALE FEMALE Base: Those whose (62)

(9) (26) (27) (32) (30) health is fair to poor. % % % % % %

Average No. 1.71 1.89 1.38 1.96 1.66 1.77

Table III COMPLAINTS .....|.....|.....|.....

Base Total Sample TOTAL REGULAR OCCASIONAL (406) (406) (406) % % % Back pain 34 14 20
Headaches 33 6 26 Tiredness 33 11 22 Stress 26 6 20 Period pain 25 9 16 Allergies 23 8 15 Weight
problems 20 11 9 Sinus 19 6 14 Arthritis 15 6 9 High blood pressure 11 5 6 PMT 11 6 5 Recurring pain
10 5 4 Migraine 9 2 7 Depression 9 1 7 Bronchitis 9 1 8 Asthma 8 2 6 Anxiety 8 3 8 Menopause 7 4 3
Haemorrhoids 7 1 6 High cholesterol 6 3 3 Bladder problems 5 2 3

NONE 14 51 25 AVERAGE NO: 3.28 1.06 2.10

Attitudes towards alternative medicine in the population are increasing and in this study, as seen in
Table IV, 40 percent look to alternative medicine rather than relying on drugs and medication.

Table IV ATTITUDES TOWARDS HEALTH Total Strongly Tend to No Tend to Strongly
Total Agree Agree Agree Opinion Disagree Disagree Disagree % % % % % % %
.|.....|.....|.....|.....|.....|.....|..... 58 18 40
19 16 7 23 49 12 37 23 19 8 27 40 18 22 24 24 11 35 28 8 20 26 31 15 46 56 16
40 26 11 6 17 63 26 37 27 8 3 11 55 12 43 30 11 4 15 49 17 32 39 9 3 12 44 12
32 39 12 5 17 39 14 25 28 22 11 33 37 10 27 58 4 1 5 35 11 24 41 18 7 25 32 9
23 38 22 9 31 30 8 22 38 23 9 32 26 9 17 35 26 13 39 25 9 16 28 32 16 48 19 7
12 34 31 16 47

ROLE OF ALTERN. MED.

More comfortable with
conventional med. than
alternative/natural.

View conventional med.
as complement to
alternative med.

Look more towards
natural alternatives
than relying on
conventional med.

Have become increasingly
disillusioned with
conventional med.

Think there is something
to alternative med.

*Worries me that there are no regulations governing who can practice alternative medicine.*

*More people turning to alternative med. because conventional med. failed them.*

*Quality and skills of alternative practitioners is highly variable.*

*Value of alternative practitioners is that they look at the whole person and what affects them, rather than just symptoms.*

*I'm increasingly interested in philosophies and practices of alternative med.*

*Alternative practitioners take the time to talk to the person.*

*Too much quackery to alternative med.*

*Alternative med. and practices can do more harm than good.*

*Alternative practitioners are better equipped than MDs to deal with lifestyle and stress related problems.*

*Alternative med. is a bit of a fad.*

*Don't believe in alternative medicine.*

*Place more value on philosophies and practices of alternative med. than conventional med.*

The survey asked the participants to rate whom they considered alternative medicine practitioners (Table V). The majority of those surveyed considered chiropractic as no longer alternative, but

mainstream.

## Table V PERCEPTIONS AS TO WHAT CONSTITUTES ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

AGE

18-24 25-44 45-65 Base: TOTAL Years Years Years MALE FEMALE Total respondents  
(406) (77) (210) (119) (200) (205) % % % % % % Homeopath 81 82 79 85 81 82  
Herbalist 81 81 80 81 81 80 Iridologist 79 77 78 82 76 82 Naturopath 72 71 67  
82 75 69 Acupuncturist 68 68 67 71 70 66 Osteopath 58 64 52 66 57 60  
Chiropractor 32 24 25 50 35 30 NONE 4 4 5 3 5 3

The incidence of usage of the various health care practitioners can be seen in Table VI.

## Table VI INCIDENCE OF EVER USAGE OF ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CARE

AGE

18-24 25-44 45-65 Base: TOTAL Years Years Years MALE FEMALE Total respondents  
(406) (77) (210) (119) (200) (205) % % % % % % Physiotherapist 41 27 43 45 46  
37 Chiropractor 36 25 38 40 37 35 Naturopath 20 18 22 17 16 24 Acupuncturist  
17 5 20 22 16 20 Homeopath 10 1 13 10 10 11 Osteopath 8 4 9 8 8 8 Herbalist 7  
1 9 8 5 9 Have been to at 52 52 64 64 62 61 least one. Have not been 38 48 36  
36 38 39 to any. Average no. 1.40 .82 1.54 1.51 1.36 1.43 ever visited  
(pop'n). Average no. 2.26 1.34 2.40 2.37 2.18 2.35 ever visited (users).

Many of those survey were motivated to visit a chiropractor because nothing their doctor was doing was helping.

## Table VII MOTIVATIONS FOR VISITING A CHIROPRACTOR

AGE

18-24 25-44 45-65 Base: TOTAL Years Years Years MALE FEMALE Those who ever  
used. (147) (19) (80) (48) (74) (72) % % % % % % Nothing Dr. recommended 39 32  
36 46 36 40 helped/nothing to lose Felt had to be a 32 37 33 29 24 40 better  
way than drugs/ surgery Not satisfied with 16 16 14 19 18 14 treatment Dr.  
recommended Agree with philosophies 13 5 18 8 12 14 of altern. med.  
Recommended by Dr. 11 21 10 8 12 10 Table VIII OVERALL RATING OF THE IMAGE AND  
REPUTATION OF CHIROPRACTORS

AGE

18-24 25-44 45-65 Base: TOTAL Years Years Years MALE FEMALE Total respondents  
(406) (77) (210) (119) (200) (205) % % % % % % Very good 12 12 12 11 11 13  
Good 33 38 30 33 32 33 TOTAL POSITIVE 45 50 42 44 43 46 Fair 15 21 14 13 18 13  
Poor 3 3 4 2 3 4 Very poor 4 1 4 5 4 4 TOTAL NEGATIVE 7 4 8 7 7 8 DON'T KNOW

34 26 35 36 34 34 Table IX RATING OF CHIROPRACTORS BY CHIROPRACTIC PATIENTS

AGE

18-24	25-44	45-65	Base:	User	TOTAL	Years	Years	Years	MALE	FEMALE	(146)	(19)											
(80)	(48)	(74)	(72)	%	%	%	%	%	Very good	18	16	16	21	16	19	Good	48	63	46	46			
42	54	TOTAL	POSITIVE	66	79	62	67	58	73	Fair	16	21	15	17	22	11	Poor	2	-	3	2	3	1
Very poor	7	-	8	8	8	6	TOTAL	NEGATIVE	9	-	11	10	11	7	DON'T KNOW	9	-	13	6	9	8		

Chiropractic is perceived less as an alternative medicine but more mainstream in this study. This perception in Australia will only continue to get better and with the recent advertising campaign in Western Australia, Victoria, and now New South Wales, the message of chiropractic is getting to a wider audience.

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