

# Are You Ready to Talk About Chiropractors?

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In an article appearing in *Family Practice Management*,<sup>1</sup> author Janine A. Blackman, MD, PhD, tells family physicians about complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). Dr. Blackman currently runs a "private integrative health care practice" and previously served as medical director at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Center for Integrative Medicine.

The article is titled "Are You Ready to Discuss Complementary and Alternative Medicine?" It is designed to encourage family physicians to learn more about alternative and complementary health care through their patients, local CAM practitioners and the Web.

I have some issues on how she views complementary and alternative medicine. Needless to say, it is a typical medical perspective. But her article does give you the point of view shared by a lot of MDs.

Most interesting are her recommendations for learning about alternative health care. She suggests two paths to discovery: learning from your patients and learning from CAM practitioners. Family physicians are encouraged to talk to their patients about CAM. Dr. Blackman specifically tells her readers to "stay positive, listen carefully and ask questions." In addition, she provides the following recommendations:

- "Refrain from offering direct criticism unless you are knowledgeable about the therapy in question."
- "If patients ask for your opinion on a supplement or therapy you are unfamiliar with, be honest without being dismissive."
- "When patients tell you about their experiences with a CAM practitioner, ask what they liked or disliked."
- "[K]eep a list of local CAM practitioners your patients would recommend and a list of those they would not."

When it comes to learning from CAM practitioners, Dr. Blackman begins by encouraging her readers to "(s)tart with those practitioners recommended by your own patients." She is quick to point out that CAM doctors/practitioners may be apprehensive when first contacted. Her recommendations regarding how to gain information from practitioners (like you) prove interesting:

- "[A]sk about their education, licensing, scope of practice and how long they have practiced."
- "Once you have identified some credible CAM practitioners in your area, consider becoming a patient under their care."
- "These experiences (care by CAM providers) provided insight into my own health that I would not have achieved through reading or observation alone."

The take-home message here is that medical doctors are interested in many of the various "alternative and complementary" forms of health care. And while chiropractic was not specifically mentioned in the article, it is certainly one of the most well known.

This article provides a barometer for the attitudes of family practitioners and perhaps other medical specialties. If they are being encouraged to learn about your practice, you have some excellent opportunities for open, honest communication.

In fact, you could even use this article as a way to network with family practitioners in your area. You could contact them, see if they have read the article, and offer to meet with them if they would like to learn more about chiropractic.

After all, why wait for them to come to you?

### *Reference*

1. Blackman JA. Are You Ready to Discuss Complementary and Alternative Medicine? *Fam Practice Management* 2007;14(7):26-30.

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