

AOM Soaring Dramatically

Use jumps by 50 percent.

By Editorial Staff

An estimated 3.1 million Americans used acupuncture and Oriental medicine in 2007, a 50 percent increase since 2002, according to a study released by the federal government.

The dramatic rise was reported in a report from the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), which is part of the National Institutes of Health. The report, "Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults and Children: United States, 2007," was the first federal study to include CAM use among children.

According to Beth Sommers, MPH, LAc, part of what is driving this increase is frustration with the standard health care system in the United States: "The current system isn't working for anyone - patients, providers, or insurers. Americans are yearning for health care that includes wellness. Because of this, consumers have an unprecedented interest in approaches that empower them, restoring health and balance in affordable, acceptable, and accessible ways."

AOM Use up sharply

In 2002, an estimated 2.1 million adults used "acupuncture care," according to the report. By 2007, the number jumped to an estimated 3.1 million. Furthermore, the number of people who practiced yoga jumped from 10,386,000 in 2002 to 13,172,000 in 2007, and use of *qigong* went from 527,000 in 2002 to 625,000 in 2007.

The good news for acupuncture and Oriental medicine continues when looking at conditions for which CAM was used. In 2007, 17 percent of adults used CAM most often to treat a variety of musculoskeletal problems, including back pain or problems, neck pain or problems (6 percent), joint pain, stiffness or other

joint condition (5 percent), arthritis (4 percent) and other musculoskeletal conditions (2 percent). It would seem obvious from these numbers that more people are using AOM therapies to help manage their musculoskeletal problems.

Conditions for which children most often used CAM in 2007 were: back or neck pain (7 percent), head or chest colds (7 percent), anxiety or stress (5 percent), other musculoskeletal problems (4 percent) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders (3 percent). Looking specifically at musculoskeletal conditions, this translates to an estimated 705,000 children using CAM for back or neck pain and an additional 378,000 using it for other musculoskeletal issues.

AOM Research Considered High Quality

The study also gave AOM high marks for its research quality. Out of 40 systematic reviews identified by the National Library of Medicine involving acupuncture, massage therapy, naturopathy or yoga published between 2002 and 2007, the only studies that found sufficient evidence to conclude that the given therapy was effective for a given condition all used acupuncture as a form of treatment. In addition, a systematic review concluded that both acupuncture and massage therapy should be considered therapies for treating back pain.

General CAM User Profile

The survey found that in 2007, approximately four in 10 adults (38 percent) and one in nine children (12 percent) used CAM within the previous 12 months. For adults, this represented a rise from 36 percent of CAM users in 2002.

According to the survey, "In 2007 CAM 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." Additionally, those with private insurance were more likely to use CAM than those either under Medicare or with no insurance. This was consistent with the 2002 survey findings.

One of the more encouraging findings was for general CAM use among children. Hopefully, more data on children in this regard will help open a dialogue with pediatricians regarding CAM use among their patients. Children who used CAM had the following characteristics:

- Parents used CAM
- Adolescents aged 12-17, compared to younger children
- Caucasian children, compared to Hispanic children and African-American children
- Parents had higher education levels
- Six or more health conditions
- Families delayed conventional care because of cost

In a statement to the press, Josephine P. Briggs, MD, the director of NCCAM, explained, "The 2007 NHIS provides the most current, comprehensive, and reliable source of information on Americans' use of CAM. These statistics confirm that CAM practices are a frequently used component of Americans' health care regimens, and reinforce the need for rigorous research to study the safety and effectiveness of these therapies. The data also point out the need for patients and health care providers to openly discuss CAM use to ensure safe and coordinated care."

The study was based on a survey of 23,393 adults ages 18 or older and 9,417 children. To view the study in its entirety, as well as various charts capturing the data, please visit <http://nccam.nih.gov/news/camstats.htm>.



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