



Complementary and alternative medicine

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The use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is becoming more common among the general population. In Europe, the usage rate ranges from 25% in the United Kingdom to 70% in Germany.¹ In North America, a 2002 survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics showed that 18.9% of the general population had used natural herbs or supplements in the previous 12 months.² In Canada, data extracted from the 2003 National Canadian Community Health Survey revealed that 12.4% of the population had used CAM within the past year; and among the Canadian Chinese population the usage rate was even higher at 14.9%.³

Thoughts on CAM

According to the 2007 National Physician Survey results,⁴ 7.5% of FPs and other specialists in Canada collaborated with CAM specialists on a regular basis. At the provincial level, the rates were similar, with the exception of Prince Edward Island, where 13.7% of FPs collaborated with CAM specialists (Figure 1).

The rate for second-year residents having collaborated with CAM practitioners during their residency was 8.9%. Among all medical students, 70.1% agreed that CAM includes ideas and methods from which conventional medicine could benefit. This belief was reduced to 58.9% among all second-year residents, dropping further to 45.2% among FPs and 37.9% among other specialists. We might conclude that CAM

is better accepted by new entrants into our medical profession.

These findings support a mismatch between patient and physician views of CAM, and suggest that CAM should be included in the curriculum of medical school and residency training in order to better understand its demand and use among the general population.

The NPS is a collaborative project of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Additional results are available at www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca. If you would like the opportunity to develop and write a future Fast Fact using the NPS results, please contact **Sarah Scott**, National Physician Survey and Janus Project Coordinator at 800 387-6197, extension 289, or sks@cfpc.ca.

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Figure 1. Percentage of FPs and other specialists collaborating regularly with providers of complementary and alternative medicine, by province

