

Alternative Healthcare

In the November 11th, 1998 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, (JAMA), David Eisenberg, M.D. published his long awaited follow up study on the use of "Alternative Medicine" in the United States. Several years earlier, Dr. Eisenberg published his initial study that rocked the medical community with his findings of how many people were actually going to what he termed "Alternative Providers".

From inside the medical profession, any other health care profession was known as an alternative. However, the numbers from the Eisenberg study quickly showed that chiropractic and other non-medical forms of health care are not "alternative" in the public's eye.

This study, conducted in 1997, illustrated some astounding facts and figures.

- Americans spent \$27 billion out-of-pocket for alternative therapies in 1997.

- Four out of 10 people used alternative healthcare in 1997.

- Visits to alternative health care providers (mostly chiropractors) increased by almost 50% from 1990.

- The number of visits to alternative health care providers (629 million) exceeded visits to medical providers (only 386 million) visits in 1997 alone.

- Less than 40% of patients tell their medical doctors that they seek alternative therapies.

Researchers also found that 42% of the alternative care was for existing illness while 58% was used for prevention and wellness. These numbers look good for the chiropractic profession, which has built its health care delivery future on wellness. "Many people initially enter the chiropractor's office for a health problem. But many then stay there for the wellness benefits chiropractic has to offer", says Robert Braille, D.C. President of the International Chiropractor Association.

Study shows more people using "alternative" health care.

According to an article in the May 20 issue of The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), more people are turning toward what JAMA terms "Alternative Medicine". Traditionally, chiropractors do not use the term "Alternative Medicine" when referring to the profession of chiropractic, since chiropractic is a drugless natural approach to health. But it is interesting to note how the medical profession views chiropractic and other health approaches they term "alternative".

The article says, "Research both in the United States and abroad suggests that significant numbers of people are involved with various forms of alternative medicine. However, the reasons for such use are, at present, poorly understood. Along with being more educated and reporting poorer health status, the majority of alternative medicine users appear to be doing so not so much as a result of being dissatisfied with conventional medicine but largely because they find these health care alternatives to be more congruent with their own values, beliefs, and philosophical orientations toward health and life." According to John A. Astin, Ph.D., a researcher at Stanford University's School of Medicine in Palo Alto, California who surveyed 1,035 randomly selected people, "Alternative medicine users tend to hold a philosophical orientation toward health that can be described as holistic and are more likely to have had some type of transformational experience that changed their world view in a significant way."