



Attitudes and behaviors toward complementary and alternative medicine in older Indian Americans

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Background

- ❖ Most rapidly growing age group in America is above 65
- ❖ 2010 census reported 3.2 million Asian Indians, a doubling from the previous census
- ❖ The complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) market is increasing in the United States
- ❖ Immigrants and elderly are thought to be heavy consumers of CAM

Aim

- ❖ To understand older Indian-Americans' attitudes and behaviors regarding CAM

Methods

- ❖ We administered the survey to members of a New York City based non-profit serving Indian-American seniors who provided informed consent
- ❖ Data were analyzed using qualitative methods and univariate analyses

Results

Demographic	Respondents (n=86)
Mean Age	69 years
Female	63%
≥ College education	56%
Insured	92%

Table 1: Demographics of survey respondents

Attitudes towards CAM

- ❖ 55% of respondents **preferred** CAM over allopathic medicine
- ❖ 69% reported that they use CAM as **first line therapy** if they felt unwell
- ❖ **2%** believed CAM has side effects
- ❖ **70%** respondents felt allopathic medicine has side effects
- ❖ 44% of patients communicated CAM use to their PCPs
- ❖ 71% state their PCPs had no opinion regarding their CAM usage

CAM used by older Indian Americans

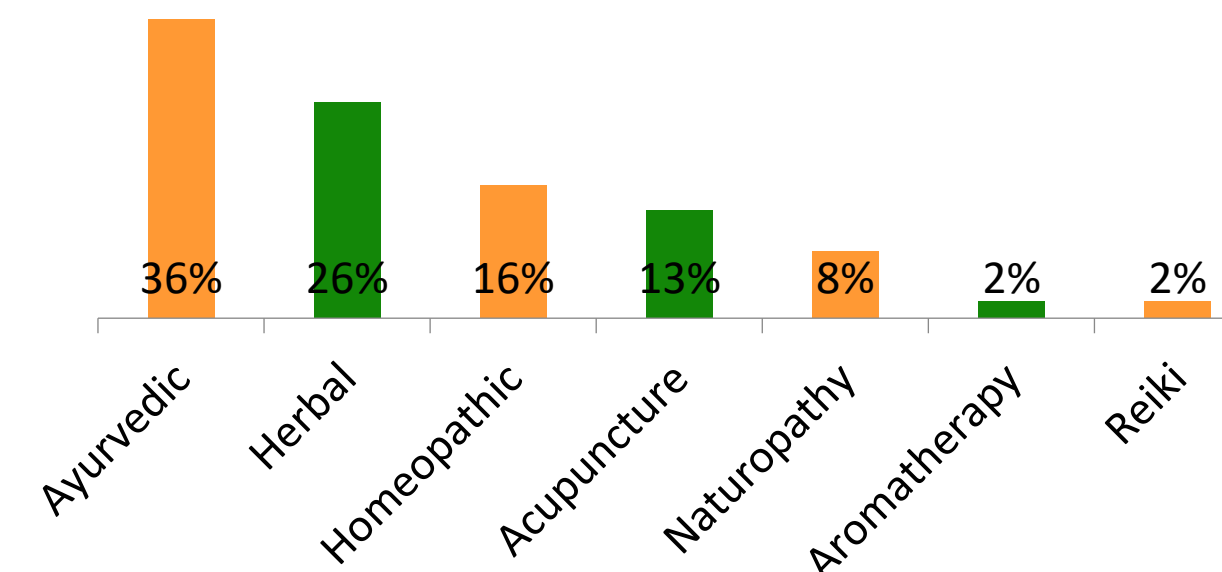


Figure 1: Complementary and alternative medicine used by older Indian Americans

Discussion

- ❖ CAM plays a pivotal role in the medical care of Indian-American elderly
- ❖ A majority of older Indian-Americans prefer CAM over allopathic medicine and exceedingly few patients understand the risks of CAM
- ❖ PCPs may not be addressing the risk/benefit profile of CAM use
- ❖ With the high usage of CAM among older Indian-American patients, PCPs must directly discuss the role of CAM as part of each patient's treatment plan

Future Research

- ❖ Need to better understand the risk and benefits of CAM including drug-drug interactions
- ❖ To comprehend the effects of CAM on compliance of evidence-based, guideline directed allopathic therapies
- ❖ To educate older Indian Americans about the risks and evidence-based benefits of CAM
- ❖ To investigate strategies to optimally engage PCPs and patients in safely integrating CAMs into therapeutic plans

References

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