

A population-based study of prevalence of complementary methods use by cancer survivors: a report from the American Cancer Society's studies of cancer survivors

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BACKGROUND: The use of complementary methods (CMs) is widespread and increasing in the United States. Most literature on CM use among cancer survivors focuses on the treatment period, whereas only a few studies address use further along the cancer continuum.

METHODS: This study analyzed the prevalence and the medical and demographic associations of CM use among cancer survivors surveyed 10 to 24 months after diagnosis. The study's sample-4139 survivors of 1 of 10 adult cancers-was selected from stratified random samples provided by statewide cancer registries and surveyed by mail and telephone. Three logistic regression models examined associations between medical and demographic factors and CM use among survivors of sex-specific and non-sex-specific cancers.

RESULTS: Of the 19 CMs included in the survey, the CMs most frequently reported were prayer/spiritual practice (61.4%), relaxation (44.3%), faith/spiritual healing (42.4%), nutritional supplements/vitamins (40.1%), meditation (15%), religious counseling (11.3%), massage (11.2%), and support groups (9.7%). Among these 19 CMs, the least prevalent were hypnosis (0.4%), biofeedback therapy (1.0%), and acupuncture/acupressure (1.2%). Survivors more likely to use CMs were female, younger, white, higher income, and more educated.

CONCLUSIONS: This study provides information regarding prevalence and medical-demographic determinants of CM use reported by a large, population-based sample of survivors of 10 cancers surveyed 10 to 24 months after diagnosis. These findings may be used by clinicians and researchers to inform their decisions regarding which CMs to address in practice and research.

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