SUBSTITUTION OF NATURAL MEDICINE FOR CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE AMONG PRIMARY CARE PATIENTS

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Project Overview

- **Purpose**: To better understand the substitution of natural medicine for prescription medicine by primary care patients in the Philadelphia VA.
Significance

- Approximately 25% of individuals on prescription medicine admitted to replacing their prescriptions with natural medicine.

- Benefit of taking natural medicines is conflicted
  - Example: use of herbal products and potential interactions with cardiovascular disease patients. St. John’s Wort and major depression.

- There is some anecdotal evidence that CAM is used as a substitute for conventional care
  - Example: Delays in seeking conventional medical care and CAM.
Aims

**Aim 1:** To determine if Veterans use vitamins and supplements

**Aim 2:** To determine what proportion of Veterans substitute vitamins and supplements for their prescription medicines

**Aim 3:** To determine the proportion of Veterans that are interested in Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)
Methods

- Recruit 300 primary care patients from the waiting rooms of the Philadelphia VA
  - Women Veterans Health Center
  - Phlebotomy/Lab
  - Radiology
  - Primary Care Practices
Study Design

- Patients were asked to complete a consent form and survey
  - 21 questions
  - Approximately 30-45 minutes for each Veteran to complete

- $5 gift card was given for participation
Preliminary Results

- First 50 surveys were chosen to input data into an excel spreadsheet.
  - Answers were coded into:
    - Totals for each question were calculated.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</table>
### Preliminary Results

**Aim 1:** How many Veterans use vitamins and supplements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the past 3 months have you taken a <strong>multi-vitamin</strong> or <strong>multi-mineral</strong> supplement?</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In the past 3 months have you taken a specialized or <strong>single-ingredient vitamin</strong> or <strong>mineral supplement</strong>, such as Vitamin C, Vitamin E, calcium, iron?</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 3 months have you taken any kind of <strong>herbs</strong> or <strong>botanicals</strong>? (such things as garlic pills, Echinacea, ginkgo, St. John’s wort)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Preliminary Results

### Aim 2: How many Veterans substitute vitamins and supplements for their prescription medicines?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the past 3 months, have you taken a dietary supplement to treat or prevent a health problem or condition <strong>INSTEAD</strong> of taking a prescription drug?</th>
<th>22%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| In the past 3 months, have you ever used **vitamins** or **supplements** to treat the following conditions **instead** of **prescription** medicine? | High blood pressure- **16%**  
High Cholesterol- **18%**  
Back Pain/Arthritis- **20%** |
Preliminary Results

**Aim 3**: How many Veterans are interested in Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)?

**Veterans Interested in Using CAM**

- **Acupuncture**: 40%
- **Massage**: 58%
- **Meditation**: 40%
- **Yoga**: 38%
- **Chiropractic**: 38%
- **Energy Treatment (Reiki)**: 22%
- **Tai Chi**: 32%

**Type of Complementary and Alternative Medicine**
Conclusions

- High percent of veterans take natural medicine (40-55%)

- A considerable portion of primary care patients at the Philadelphia VA use natural medicine to replace prescription medicine for:
  1) High blood pressure
  2) High cholesterol
  3) Back pain

- There is a high interest among veterans in CAM
What does it all mean?

- VA should continue to offer evidence-based CAM treatments, and consider broadening the forms of CAM available
  - There is an expansion to CAM in VA hospitals
- Physicians should ask their patients if they are using CAM or natural medicine
Role

- Recruitment
- Organizing files
- Entering data and analyzing preliminary results
- Drafting a methods sections
Lessons Learned

- Revise everything
- Every situation is different
- Don’t be afraid to ask for help
- There is a distrust in the research community
Thank you!

- Dr. Goldstein
- Ms. Roberts
- Joanne Levy
- Shanae Johnson and Safa Brown
- SUMR cohort
References


