Objective: This study examined whether use of complementary and alternative medicine during the menopause transition varied by ethnicity.

Design: The Study of Women’s Health Across the Nation is a prospective cohort study following a group of 3,302 women from five racial/ethnic groups at seven clinical sites nationwide. Using longitudinal data encompassing 6 years of follow-up, we examined trends in use of five categories of CAM (nutritional, physical, psychological, herbal, and folk) by menopause status and ethnicity. To account for potential secular trends in CAM use or availability, we also evaluated the trends in CAM use over calendar time.

Results: Approximately 80% of all participants had used some form of CAM at some time during the 6-year study period. White and Japanese women had the highest rates of use (60%), followed by Chinese (46%), African American (40%), and Hispanic (20%) women. Overall use of CAM therapy remained relatively stable over the study period. In general, CAM use did not seem to be strongly associated with change in menopause transition status. Use of CAM among white women did not change with transition status. Among Chinese and African American participants, we observed an increase in CAM use as women transitioned to perimenopause and a decrease in use of CAM with transition to postmenopause. Among Hispanic and Japanese women, we observed a decrease in use of CAM in early perimenopause, followed by an increase as women entered late perimenopause and a decrease as they progressed to postmenopause. Patterns of use for the five individual types of CAM varied. White women had relatively stable use of all CAM therapies through the transition. Japanese women decreased use of nutritional and psychological remedies and increased use of physical remedies as they transitioned into late perimenopause. Among African American women, use of psychological remedies increased as they progressed through menopause.

Conclusions: Although CAM use did vary in some ethnic groups in relation to advancing menopause status, there was no evidence of a change in calendar time on CAM use. Patterns of CAM use during menopause are likely to be driven by personal experience, menopausal health, and access to therapies. Women’s personal preferences should be taken into consideration by health-care providers for medical decision making during menopause and throughout the aging process.


Objective: To examine the relationships of race/ethnicity, menopausal status, health characteristics, and symptoms with use of 21 types of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in midlife women.
Conclusions: The use of most types of CAM is not related to menopausal status or symptom reporting but to sociodemographic factors, comorbidities, and health behaviors. Given the large proportion of midlife women who use CAM and the potential for interactions with prescribed medications, healthcare practitioners should inquire about CAM use and be aware of which factors influence the use of different types of CAM.


Pediatric mood disorders (unipolar depression and bipolar disorder) are serious, common, persistent, and recurrent medical conditions. Depression is the second leading cause of illness and disability among young people worldwide. A healthy lifestyle and healthy environment are the cornerstones for promoting positive moods. In addition, several complementary therapies, including nutritional supplements, herbs, mind-body therapies, massage, and acupuncture can be used to treat depression. The focus of this article is the fundamental lifestyle approaches and complementary therapies that enhance mental health in young people. Various resources are available to clinicians to help patients and families promote mental health.


Objectives: To investigate which patients receive acupuncture in the framework of statutory health insurance in Germany, how treatment was carried out, and what results were achieved.

Design: Basic documentation (carried out by physician) within a prospective observational study.

Setting: 454,920 patients with at least one of the three chronic pain conditions including headache, low back pain and osteoarthritis treated by 8,727 medical acupuncturists (panel doctors) within the scope of a reimbursement program.

Results: 53% of the patients were treated by general practitioners, 19% by orthopaedists and 9% by internists. 80% of patients were female, mean age was 53.6 (S.D. = 15.7) years. Primary indication for acupuncture was low back pain (45%), headache (36%), and osteoarthritis (12%). Median time since the initial diagnosis was 3 years 8.4 (S.D. = 3.0) acupuncture sessions (body acupuncture) were administered on average. In 28% a concomitant treatment was reported. Effectiveness of acupuncture was rated by physicians in 22% of the patients as marked, in 54% as moderate, in 16% as minimal and in 4% as poor (unchanged). In 8% of the patients mild adverse reactions were reported, severe side effects occurred in 13 patients (0.003%). Orthopaedists rated the effectiveness of acupuncture lower, showing shortest time for face-to-face contact with the patient. More acupuncture training did not correspond to better effectiveness of acupuncture reported by physicians.

Conclusions: Acupuncture proved a highly demanded treatment option for chronic pain conditions within the German research program. Results indicate that acupuncture provided by qualified therapists is safe, and patients benefited from the treatment.


Objective: A dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system is discussed as a pathogenic factor in migraine. As acupuncture has been shown to exhibit considerable autonomic effects, we tested whether the clinical effects of acupuncture in migraine prophylaxis are mediated by changes of the autonomic regulation.

Methods: We simultaneously monitored changes of heart-rate variability (HRV) as an index of cardiac autonomic control and clinical improvement during an acupuncture treatment in 30 migraineurs. HRV was derived from spectral analysis of the electrocardiogram, which was performed before, during, and after the first and the last session of a series of 12 acupuncture sessions. Migraineurs were randomly allocated to 2 groups receiving either verum acupuncture (VA) or sham acupuncture (SA) treatment.

Results: Across the combined VA and SA groups, the clinical responders (with at least 50% reduction of migraine attacks) exhibited a decrease of the low-frequency (LF) power of HRV in the course of the treatment, which was not observed in patients without clinical benefit. VA compared with SA induced a stronger decrease of high-frequency power. The mode of acupuncture, however, did not have an impact on the LF component of HRV or the clinical outcome.

Discussion: The data indicate, that VA and SA acupuncture might have a beneficial influence on the autonomic nervous system in migraineurs with a reduction of the LF power of HRV related to the clinical effect. This might be due to a reduction of sympathetic nerve activity. VA and SA induce different effects on the high-frequency component of HRV, which seem, however, not to be relevant for the clinical outcome in migraine.


Background: Because many people with chronic medical conditions use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), understanding their psychosocial characteristics may be useful for identifying effective interventions. The health locus of control (HLOC) measures the perception of controlling one’s own health outcomes by various attributes. People with a high internal HLOC believe that the outcome of their own health seeking is related to their behavior or personal investment. Earlier evidence has shown that a higher internal HLOC is a predictive factor of positive treatment outcomes.

Objective: This study measured the correlation between the degree of CAM use and the level of HLOC.

Design: An online cross-sectional survey was conducted via public bulletin boards and invitation e-mails. Data from 123 usable responses were analyzed for bivariate correlation between CAM use and HLOC. Subjective reports of various medical modalities were classified into six CAM domains and one conventional biomedicine domain. Subscales of HLOC included internal, chance, and powerful others. Chronic conditions, health status, and demographics were self-reported.

Results: Internal HLOC significantly correlated with CAM use (Spearman’s rho, p < 0.004) but not with conventional medicine use (Spearman’s rho, p > 0.130). Further analysis of this correlation for those people with chronic conditions who did not identify a particular domain used more by people with a high internal HLOC (p > 0.187), but the lesser use of conventional medicine was significant (p < 0.031).

Conclusion: Complementary and alternative medicine is either empowering or has empowered patients to use CAM. People who use CAM may have a better prognosis and better management of chronic conditions.