

COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE USE AND CANCER SCREENING BEHAVIOR AMONG US ADULTS - A NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY

BACKGROUND:

Cancer screenings can considerably reduce cancer mortality. There is limited information on the association of complementary medicine use with adherence to recommended cancer screenings. This study analyzed potential associations between cancer screening behavior and consultations with complementary medicine use in a large representative sample of the US population.

METHODS:

This cross-sectional analysis used data of the 2017 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), a nationally representative survey of the non-institutionalized US population (n=26,742; response rate: 80.7%). Age- and sex-related risk groups for breast cancer (women 40 years and older), cervical cancer (women 21 years and older) and colorectal cancer (45 to 85 years) were analyzed. Prevalence of complementary medicine use in the past 12 months was calculated for: consultations with chiropractors, naturopaths, practitioners of chelation therapy, practitioners of traditional medicine, and/or homeopaths and/or use of mindbody medicine; as well as prevalence of cancer screening behavior in the past 12 months: pap smear test, mammography, and/or colorectal cancer screening (including blood stool tests, colonoscopy and sigmoidoscopy). Using multiple logistic regression analyses, associations of complementary medicine use and cancer screening behavior were identified.

RESULTS:

At least one complementary medicine approach was used by 32.4% of participants. Controlling for sociodemographic and clinical variables, individuals who consulted a chiropractor or naturopath or used mind-body medicine were more likely to take up pap smear test (odds ratio=1.20-1.35), mammography (odds ratio=1.27-1.52), and/or colorectal cancer screening (odds ratio=1.18- 1.37). Those consulting a homeopath were more likely to take up pap smear test (odds ratio=1.33). No association was found between consultations of practitioners of chelation therapy or traditional medicine and cancer screening behavior.

DISCUSSION:

Complementary medicine use is associated with a better adherence to cancer screening. Individuals who consulted a chiropractor or naturopath or used mindbody medicine are more likely to take up the recommended screening. Recommendations for cancer screening by complementary medicine providers are important and might improve adherence.