

## **SAND abstract No. 36 from the BEACH program 2001–02**

### **Subject: Patient use of complementary therapies**

**Organisation supporting this study:** General Practice Statistics & Classification Unit.

**Issues:** The prevalence of complementary therapy use among general practice patients; the conditions for which complementary therapies are used; the patient perceived benefits of complementary therapy use; the attitude to complementary therapy use as a treatment in the future.

**Sample:** 5,567 respondents from 193 GPs; data collection period: 16/1/2001–19/2/2001 and 27/3/2001–30/4/2001.

**Method:** Detailed in the paper entitled 'SAND Method' on this website (<http://www.fmrc.org.au/beach.htm>).

### **Summary of results**

The age-sex distribution of patients was similar to the distribution of the total BEACH sample with the majority (58.3%) being female. Patients aged 45–64 years accounted for 29.4% of the sample.

The proportion of patients indicating use of complementary/alternative therapies during the previous 12 months was 21.9% (95%CI: 19.7–24.0). Almost half (46.7%, 95%CI: 43.2–50.1) indicated they would consider using complementary/alternative therapies in the future, while 51.7% (95%CI: 48.3–55.2) had not used complementary therapies in the previous 12 months and would not consider using them in the future.

Of the 1,216 patients who indicated having used a complementary therapy, 40.3% (95%CI: 35.6–44.9) had used chiropractic therapy, 31.6% (95%CI: 26–37.2) had used naturopathy (which includes herbal medicine), 22.7% and 20.8% had used remedial massage and acupuncture respectively.

In 89.5% of problems managed with chiropractic therapy, the problem was musculoskeletal. Problems managed with naturopathy were more general in nature (33.5% of problems), including preventive/health maintenance and general weakness/tiredness. Remedial massage and acupuncture were mainly used for musculoskeletal problems, both at a rate of 68.5% of problems managed by that therapy.

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