

Health Professions Students' Knowledge of and Attitude toward Complementary and Alternative Medicine

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Abstract : Health professionals play important roles in helping patients use Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) practices safely and accurately. Consequently, it is important for future health professionals to learn about CAM practices during their time in undergraduate and graduate programs. To satisfy this need for education, teaching CAM in nursing and medical schools and other health professions programs is becoming more prevalent. Our study was the first to look specifically at the knowledge of, and attitude toward CAM of undergraduate health professions students at a university in the U.S. Students were invited to participate in one of two anonymous online surveys depending on whether they were pre-health professions students or graduating health professions seniors. Of the 763 responses analyzed, 71.7% were from pre-health professions students, and 28.3% came from graduating seniors. The overall attitude of participants toward and interest in learning about CAM practices was generally fairly positive with graduating seniors being more positive than pre-health professions students. Yoga, meditation, massage therapy, aromatherapy, and chiropractic care were the practices most respondents had personal experience with. Massage therapy, yoga, chiropractic care, meditation, music therapy, and diet-based therapy received the highest ratings from respondents. Three-quarters of respondents planned on including aspects of holistic medicine in their future career as a health professional. The top five practices named were yoga, meditation, massage therapy, diet-based therapy, and music therapy. The study confirms the need to educate health professions students about CAM practices to give them the background information they need to select or recommend the best practices for their patients' needs.

Keywords : CAM education, health professions, health professions students, pre-health professions students

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