

Benefits of Alternative Medicine Use in Comparison with Traditional Medicine

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In the United States, the most commonly known way to treat illnesses is through medication plans, modern medicine, better known as allopathic medicine. There are other forms of medicine however, that are options for treatment which are often overlooked. These alternative forms of medicine include traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, Acupuncture therapy, homeopathic medicine and osteopathic medicine, among others. These forms of alternative medicine have been utilized for thousands of years, however in the Western world, allopathic medicine is used more commonly. In recent times, the popularity of alternative medicine is increasing, as alternative medicine focuses more on the body and mind as a whole, and uses more natural methods. The question arises as to why this trend is occurring, and whether there is validity behind the benefits of alternative medicine. It is important to consider the differences between allopathic and alternative medicine, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of each. It is also important to understand the history behind each form of medicine, and how each form of medicine has evolved into how it is used today.

Figure 1. Primary Reasons for Osteopathic Consultation

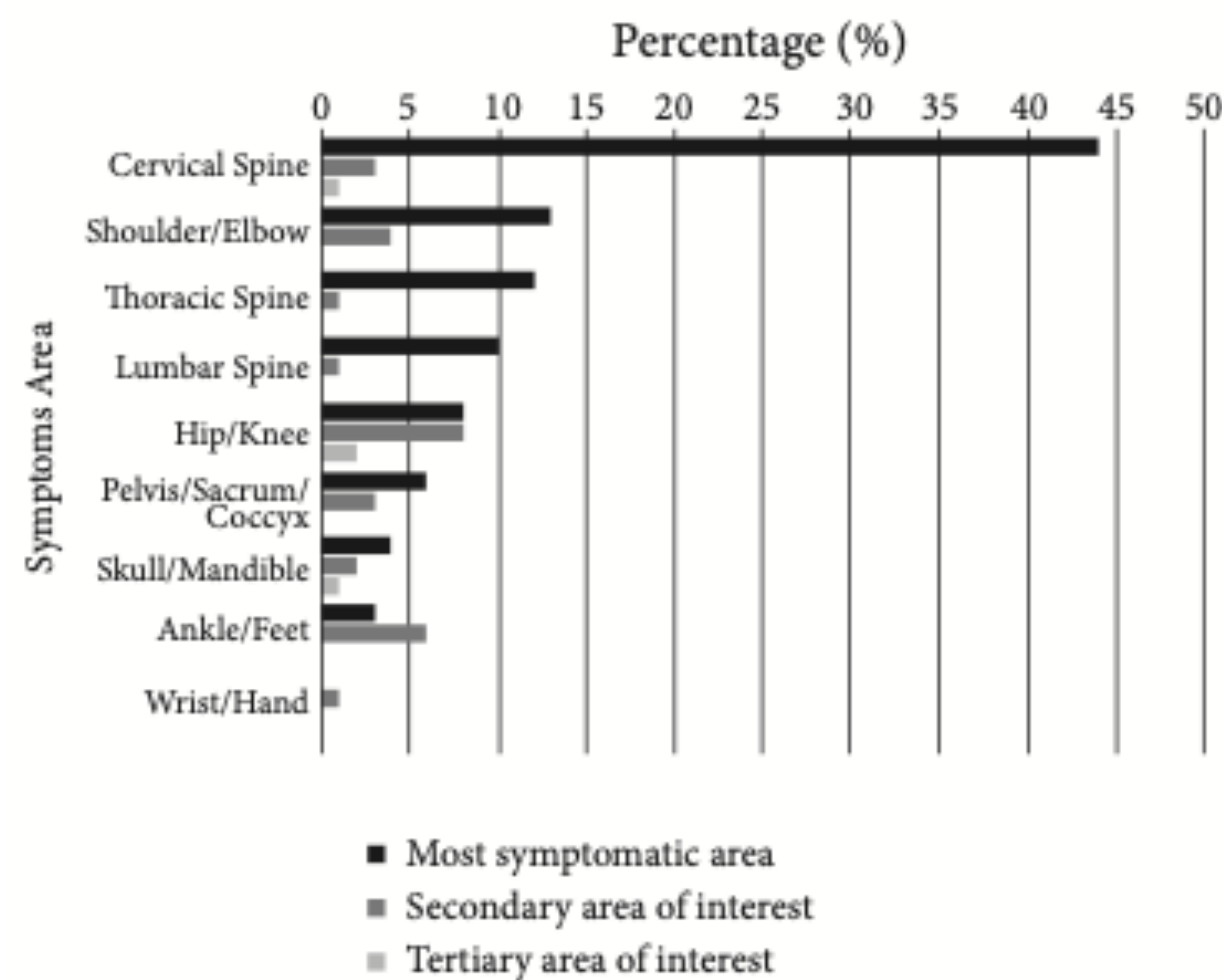


Figure 1: Patients' Symptomatic Regions Requiring Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment

From Figure 1, provided by the study, *Outpatient Satisfaction With Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment in a Hospital Center: A Survey*, it can be seen that the most common reason for patients receiving osteopathic treatment is pain to the cervical spine area. The results of the survey were that the satisfaction was high among the patients. The results of the study also showed that the females involved in the study were more satisfied with the osteopathic treatment than the men. Overall, the patients in the study were satisfied with their osteopathic treatment. The study does state that the efficacy of osteopathic treatment could be studied further with larger sample sizes.

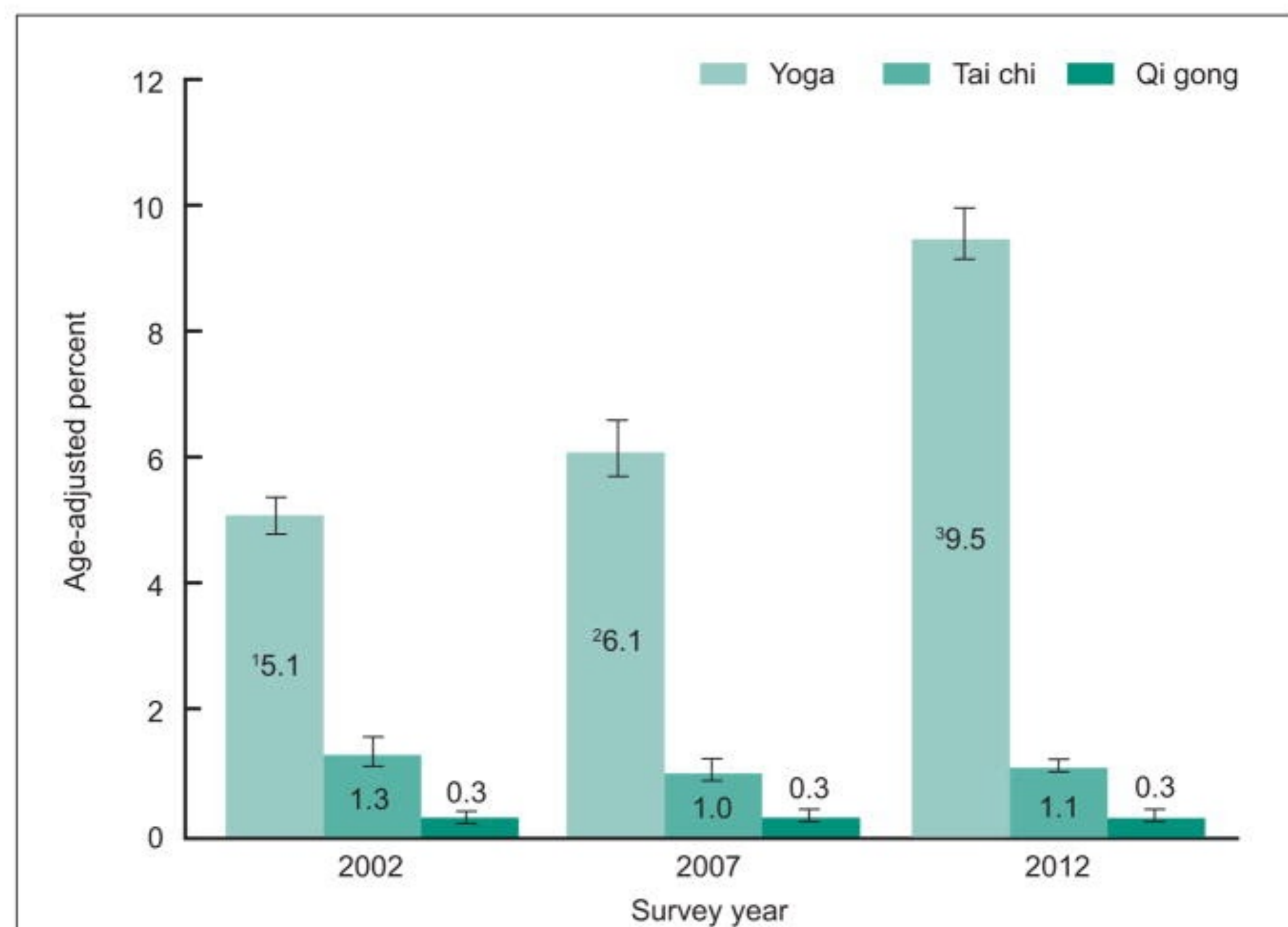
From the data in Figure 3, it can be seen that the most common form of CAM that is used among adults in the United States is the use of natural products, deep breathing, meditation, massage and yoga.

Conclusion:

What does this mean for the future of alternative medicine, or more specifically, complementary alternative medicine? After studying the gradual increase of the use of alternative medicine in recent years, it is clear that there will be a continued increase in future years as well. The question also arises as to why there is a general increase in the use of complementary alternative medicine. Perhaps there is a shift among the mindset of individuals regarding their healthcare. In the recent decade, there certainly has been an increase of individuals that are looking to improve their general quality of life and open their options to alternative forms of healthcare and wellness. There is a general increasing trend of individuals that include yoga in their lifestyle, for example, which shows that there is an increase of individuals that are interested in improving their quality of life. The most important analysis that can be drawn from studying different forms of alternative medicine is that they show great promise towards improving the quality of life of patients, whether it comes to relief of pain, or relieving various symptoms of larger medical problems. It is because of this fact that the use of complementary alternative medicine will continue to grow gradually in the West.

References:

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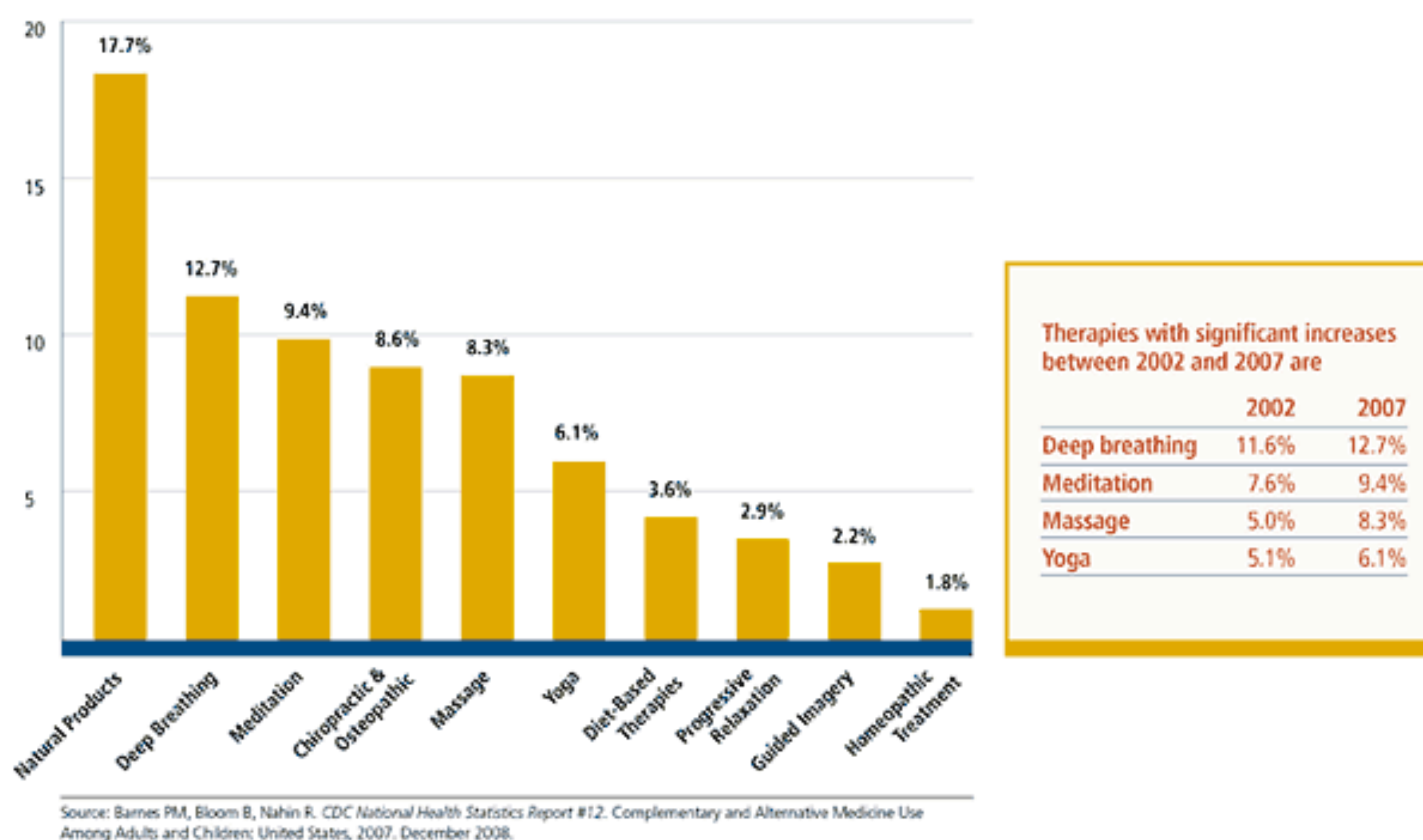
95% confidence interval.
 *Significantly different from 2007 and 2012 ($p < 0.05$).
 †Significantly different from 2012 ($p < 0.05$).
 ‡Significantly different from 2002 and 2007 ($p < 0.05$).
 NOTES: Estimates are age-adjusted using the projected 2000 U.S. population as the standard population and four age groups: 18-24, 25-44, 45-64, and 65 and over. Estimates are based on household interviews of a sample of the civilian noninstitutionalized population.
 SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2002, 2007 and 2012.

Figure 2: Trend of Age-Adjusted Percent of Alternative Medicine Methods among Sample Group

From the chart provided from this study, it is evident that from the chosen sample, the use of alternative medicine increased over the course of ten years. The form of alternative medicine that was used most commonly was yoga, a component of Ayurvedic medicine, which increased from 5.1% to 9.5%. With the upward trend of the use of yoga came a minor downward trend for the use of tai chi.

Many current studies claim that there is an increasing global interest for traditional methods of medication, such as traditional Chinese medicine and traditional Indian medicine. In *Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine: A Comparative Overview*, it is stated that “pharmaceutical companies have renewed their strategies in favor of natural product drug development and discovery (3)”.

10 Most Common CAM Therapies Among Adults - 2007



Therapies with significant increases between 2002 and 2007 are		
	2002	2007
Deep breathing	11.6%	12.7%
Meditation	7.6%	9.4%
Massage	5.0%	8.3%
Yoga	5.1%	6.1%

Figure 3: Most Common Complementary Alternative Therapy among Adults in U.S.