

Pregnant women seek alternative care

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Nearly half of all pregnant women in Australia consult a complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) practitioner for pregnancy-related health conditions.

That's a key finding of the first nationally representative study into the consultation of CAM practitioners by pregnant women, undertaken by Amie Steel and colleagues at the UTS Australian Research Centre in Complementary and [Integrative Medicine](#) (ARCCIM).

The study, "Utilisation Of [Complementary And Alternative Medicine \(CAM\) Practitioners Within Maternity Care](#) Provision," surveyed 1835 women from across Australia.

Steel, a PhD candidate at UTS in the Australian Research Centre in Complementary and Integrative Medicine (ARCCIM,) says that the study makes a significant contribution to research in this area and identifies the need for a more considered and [collaborative approach](#) to maternal health care.

"There is not a lot of research on how women use CAM during pregnancy, especially regarding consultation patterns with conventional and CAM practitioners," Ms Steel said.

"Our study found that a substantial proportion, 49.4 per cent, of women consulted a CAM practitioner for pregnancy-related health and identified a pattern of selective use across different CAM practitioner groups for different health conditions."

Ms Steel says these results have significant implications for patient safety, access and coordination of maternity care.

"The relationship between concurrent types of care can be complex. For example, for women who see a GP for pregnancy related health care, consultation with an acupuncturist is associated with less frequent visits with their GP.

"We also found that women are making discretionary decisions about whom to consult depending on their immediate concerns, choosing chiropractors for back pain, [massage therapists](#) for neck pain and so on.

"This could be for a number of reasons, but it highlights the need for greater collaboration and inter-professional care in order to meet the

needs of some women."

The study was conducted as part of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health and was published in *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*.

More information: www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2393/12/146

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