

Many don't tell docs about using alternative therapies for pain

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Although most said they'd let their physician know if asked, survey finds.

(HealthDay)—Many Americans with chronic pain who use alternative therapies—such as acupuncture—don't discuss these treatments with their doctors, a new study finds.

"Our study confirms that most of our patients with chronic pain are seeking complementary treatments to supplement the care we provide in the primary care setting," lead author Dr. Charles Elder, an affiliate investigator at the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research, said in a Kaiser news release. Elder is also the physician lead for Kaiser Permanente's complementary and alternative medicine program.

The researchers surveyed more than 6,000 patients in Oregon and Washington. All of the study volunteers had three or more outpatient

visits for chronic pain within 18 months. Fifty-eight percent of people with [chronic pain](#) had used chiropractic care, acupuncture or both to treat their pain, the study revealed.

Many patients informed their primary care doctors about their use of these [alternative therapies](#). But 35 percent of those who had acupuncture and 42 percent of those who had chiropractic care didn't mention the treatments to their doctor. However, nearly all of those patients said they'd gladly share the information if their doctor asked.

"The problem is that too often, doctors don't ask about this treatment, and patients don't volunteer the information," Elder said.

The study was published July 20 in the *American Journal of Managed Care*.

Chronic pain affects about 100 million Americans, and it costs nearly \$600 billion a year, according to the Institute of Medicine.

"We want our patients to get better, so we need to ask them about the alternative and complementary approaches they are using. If we know what's working and what's not working, we can do a better job advising patients, and we may be able to recommend an approach they haven't tried," Elder said.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [chronic pain](#).

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