

---

# Parental Perspectives on Use, Benefits, and Physician Knowledge of Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Children with Autistic Disorder and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

Huang A, Seshadri K, Matthews TA, Ostfeld BM.

Department of Pediatrics, Division of Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine at Amarillo, Amarillo, Texas.

J Altern Complement Med. 2013 Apr 26. [Epub ahead of print]

**Background:** Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use appears to be increasing in children with developmental disorders. However, it is not clear whether parents perceive their healthcare providers as resources who are knowledgeable about CAM therapies and are interested in further developing their knowledge.

**Objectives:** (1) To establish and compare use of, and perceived satisfaction with, traditional medicine and CAM in children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and (2) to assess parental perceptions of physician knowledge of CAM and physician interest in continuing education about CAM for the two groups of parents.

**Methods:** Families of children with a diagnosis of ADHD or ASD were surveyed regarding the frequency of use of traditional treatment and CAM, parental perceptions of the helpfulness of each therapy, parental perceptions regarding physicians' knowledge level about CAM, and physician interest in continuing education.

**Results:** Thirty-six percent (n=135) of 378 surveys were returned: 41 contained a diagnosis of ADHD and 22 of ASD. Traditional therapies were used by 98% of children with ADHD and 100% of those with ASD. Perceived helpfulness of medication was 92% for children with ADHD and 60% for children with ASD ( $p<0.05$ ). CAM was used for 19.5% of children with ADHD and 82% of children with ASD. Perceived satisfaction for any form of CAM in the children with ADHD was at an individual patient level. Satisfaction for two of the most commonly used CAM treatments in children with ASD ranged from 50% to 78%. In children with ASD (the diagnostic

group with the highest use of and satisfaction with CAM), physician's perceived knowledge of CAM was lower (14% versus 38%;  $p < 0.05$ ), as was perceptions of the physician's interest in learning more ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Conclusion: CAM use is significant, especially in children with ASD. Physicians are not perceived as a knowledgeable resource.