

Summary of Discussion for  
**Information-seeking behavior in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM): an online survey of faculty at a health sciences campus\***

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There were several lines of discussion during and after the presentation.

One of the discussions stemmed from the results shown in the paper. Many people were not surprised to see that Herbal medicine had the most interest, but wondered why some of the other familiar topics were not closer to the top of the list. As for the results of the usage and source statistics, people were not surprised. Then the discussion turned to the results of the knowledge and use of bibliographic databases statistics. There was some surprise that PubMed was not the second most known source, but no one was surprised that MEDLINE was the most known and used resource.

A second point of discussion was the attitudes towards CAM in countries other than the United States. One student mentioned that it seemed like CAM was more prevalent in Europe, at least from what he had read. He wondered if the U.S. was not the same because of the influence and profitability of drug companies. One of the campus staff mentioned that she had recently read a book that had information about licensing of products in Germany. In Germany companies are able to license natural products, so they can make a profit off of these natural substances. Unlike Germany, it was mentioned that companies in the U.S. cannot license natural products. The discussion then turned to CAM therapies in India. One student mentioned that India has an agency to regulate CAM therapies. He said a few years back there had been a major concern by the population of India about a company that was trying to patent a household remedy. The remedy was at least two thousand years old and used by most families, who did not want to have to pay the company for something they did not invent.

Another line of discussion was about the appropriateness of having CAM information held in the same repository as conventional western medical information. One person felt that the information should be separate. The group then went on to discuss how the data was held in PubMed and a couple of people checked on the categorization of the papers. It was mentioned that having all the data together would make it easier to cross reference possible side effects of CAM therapies and conventional medicine. The issue of whether

the CAM information was valid scientific information was brought up. It was then mentioned that all papers that were available on PubMed were reviewed by document readers to ensure quality.

Another topic of discussion was the ease of access and usability of information sources. One of the staff mentioned a couple of articles that showed people most frequently used the information sources that were the easiest to access. For instance, a person would ask a question of a colleague in the next cubical before they would go across the building to ask someone else the same question. It was discussed that the same was true on college campuses where researchers, professors, etc. would use the resources that they were the most familiar with and/or closest to them.

There were a couple of other pertinent comments made about the paper. One comment was, as with all questionnaires, more data would have been nice so the statistical analysis would have been significant. The other comment was that sending the questionnaire out to a more diverse group of people would have made the results less biased. By sending the questionnaire out to only people that considered themselves interested in CAM therapies biased the results.

The last thing we did during the discussion was to each give one question that would we would have liked to add to the questionnaire. Some questions were:

- ? Age of the person filling out the questionnaire
- ? Was the person multilingual? If so, what languages did they speak?
- ? Why was the person looking for CAM information?
- ? What common problems did they have with searches?
- ? How exposed were they to CAM therapies. Did they use it, prescribe it, etc?
- ? What needs did they have with information seeking?

After the questions were put out it was mentioned that the questionnaire did not deal with information seeking problems as much as it should have.