

In a survey conducted between April and May of this year by the market research company **Intersurvey**, **66% of those American adults surveyed reported using alternative / holistic therapies**. These therapies included herbals, massage, chiropractic care, acupuncture services, and homeopathy.

Clearly, given the personal financial cost of health care in the US, the masses are waking up to the fact that in reality they cannot afford to get sick.

However, general consumers are not the only ones who have increased their use of alternatives therapies versus traditional medical care. In a survey published in a 1994 issue of the **Journal of Family Practice**, **60%** of doctors from a wide range of specialties recommended alternative therapies to their patients at least once.

Amazingly, **47%** of the doctors surveyed reported using alternative therapies themselves.

In support of these findings, is an article published by **JAMA (The Journal of the American Medical Association)** in November of 1998.

The article, entitled: **Trends in alternative medicine use in the United States, 1990-1997**; is the result of a random national survey that was conducted by telephone in 1990 and again in 1997. The study indicates that an approximate **33%** of US adults had used alternative therapies in 1990 and by 1997; this figure had **increased to 42.1%**.

The therapies increasing the most included natural foods and supplements, herbal medicine, massage, megavitamins, self-help groups, folk remedies, energy healing, and homeopathy. The probability of users visiting an alternative medicine practitioner **increased from 36.3% to 46.3%**.

Extrapolations to the US population suggest a **47.3% increase** in total visits to alternative medicine practitioners, from 427 million in 1990 to 629 million in 1997, **thereby exceeding total visits to all US primary care physicians!** Further, all costs pertaining to these visits were incurred out-of-pocket, meaning that there was no health care or plan coverage!

Little wonder that today, 75 out of 117 U.S. medical schools offer elective courses in alternative medicine, or include alternative medicine topics in required courses.

For example, the **Harvard School of Medicine** started an annual month-long undergraduate course on alternative medicine in 1996, followed in 1998 by **Columbia University** with a series of continuing education courses for physicians on integrating botanical medicine into modern clinical practice.

The **U.S. Pharmacopoeia** has now begun a process to revive botanical standards and information monographs, much after the fashion of the decades-old German Government Commission E, more or less the equivalent of the FDA in the United States.

Savvy drug store chains and supermarkets are jumping on the band wagon too, dedicating more and more of their retail floor space to herbals, vitamins, supplements and semi-private consultation areas, where contracted health professionals make themselves available to the consumer at no charge.

Clearly we are at the forefront of a massive swing back to **“Mother Nature Knows Best”**.