

# The Use of **Complementary and Alternative Medicine** in the United States: **Cost Data**

In the 2007 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), approximately 38 percent of adults reported using complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in the previous 12 months. The CAM component of the NHIS, developed by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), also collected data about CAM costs, including cost of CAM use, frequency of visits made to CAM practitioners, and frequency of purchases of self-care CAM therapies.

- **83 million adults spent \$33.9 billion out-of-pocket on CAM**
- **CAM costs are 11.2 percent of total out-of-pocket expenditures on health care**

## About CAM

CAM is a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered part of conventional medicine.

While scientific evidence exists regarding some CAM therapies, for many there are key questions that are yet to be answered through well-designed scientific studies, such as whether these therapies are safe and work for the purposes for which they are used. NCCAM's mission is to explore CAM practices using rigorous scientific methods and build an evidence base for the safety and effectiveness of these practices.

## About NHIS

The NHIS is an annual survey in which tens of thousands of Americans are interviewed about their health- and illness-related experiences. The 2007 survey included questions on 36 types of CAM therapies commonly used in the United States—10 practitioner-based therapies, such as acupuncture, and 26 other self-care therapies that do not require a provider, such as natural products.

## CAM Costs Overall

According to the 2007 NHIS survey, 83 million U.S. adults spent \$33.9 billion out-of-pocket on visits to CAM practitioners and on purchases of CAM products, classes, and materials. In total, there were approximately 354 million visits to CAM practitioners and approximately 835 million purchases.

The complementary and alternative medicine statistics in this report were obtained from the 2007 National Health Interview Survey. The conventional health care statistics, as noted, were obtained from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Figure 1 **Total Health Care Spending**  
\$2.2 Trillion

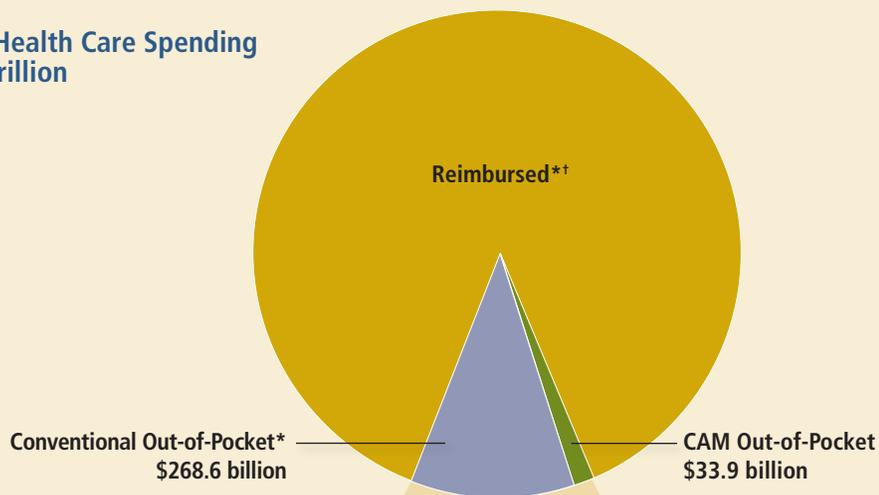
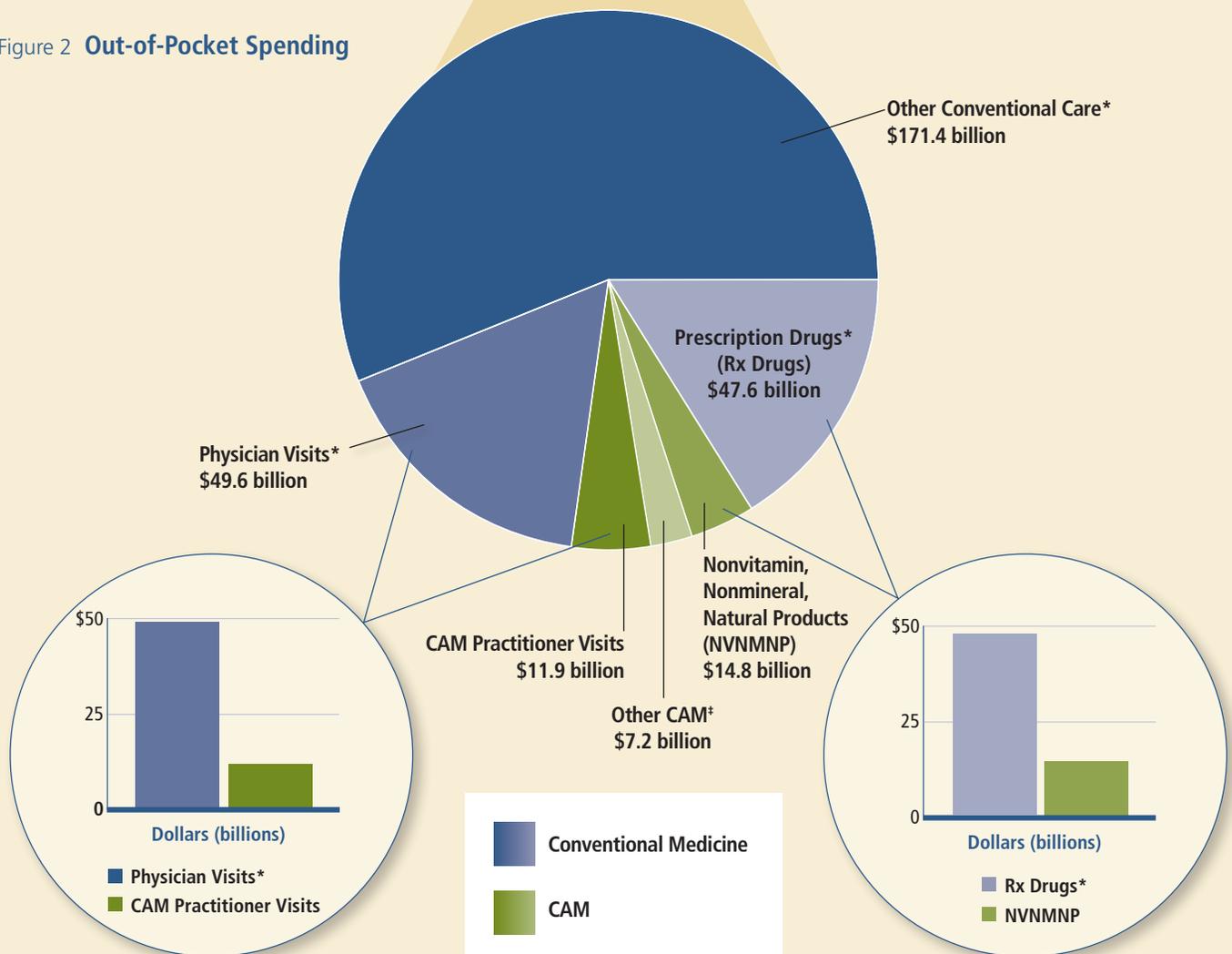


Figure 2 **Out-of-Pocket Spending**



\* National Health Expenditure Data for 2007. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Web site. Accessed at: [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalHealthExpendData/02\\_NationalHealthAccountsHistorical.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalHealthExpendData/02_NationalHealthAccountsHistorical.asp#TopOfPage) on June 25, 2009.

† Reimbursed spending includes employer and individual private insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program, other private and public spending, and some CAM.

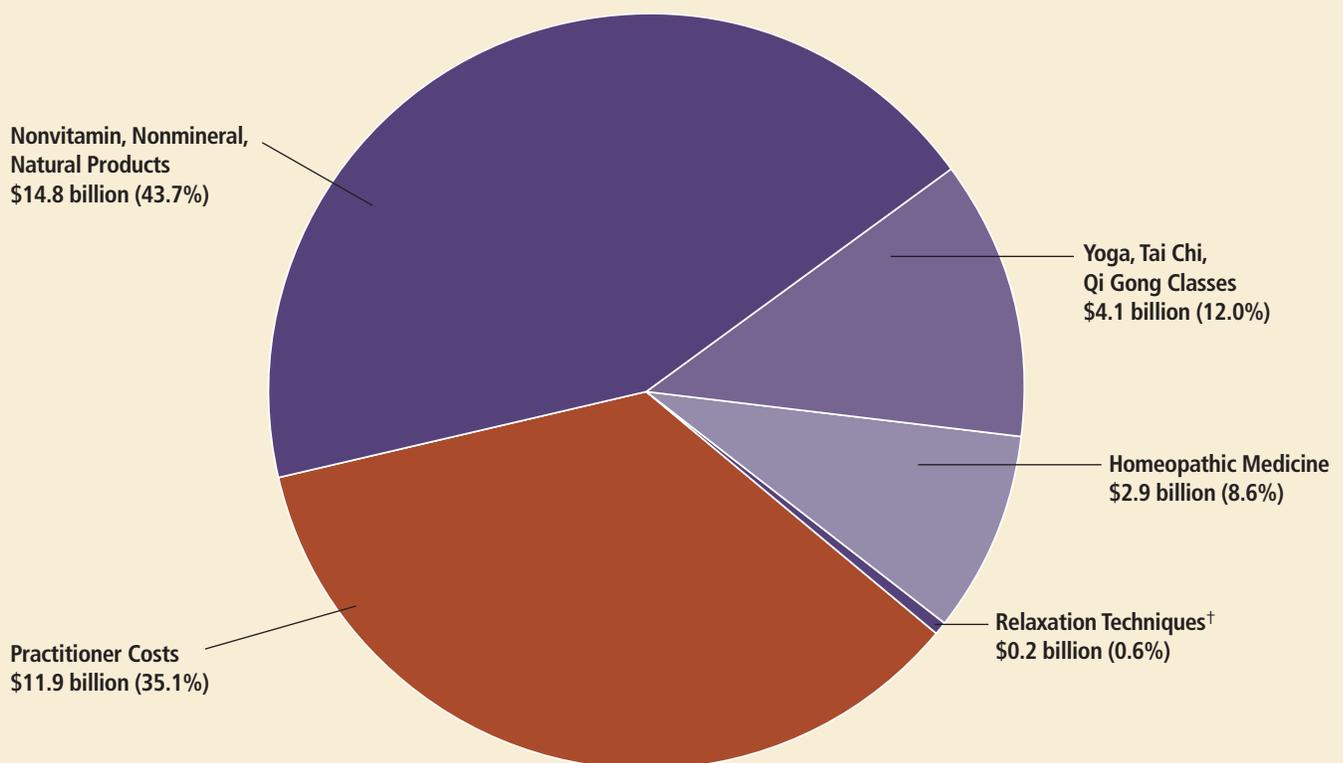
‡ Other CAM includes yoga, tai chi, qi gong classes; homeopathic medicine; and relaxation techniques.

## CAM's Part of Total Health Care Costs

At \$33.9 billion, CAM accounts for approximately 1.5 percent of total health care expenditures and 11.2 percent of total out-of-pocket expenditures on health care in the United States. See Figure 1.

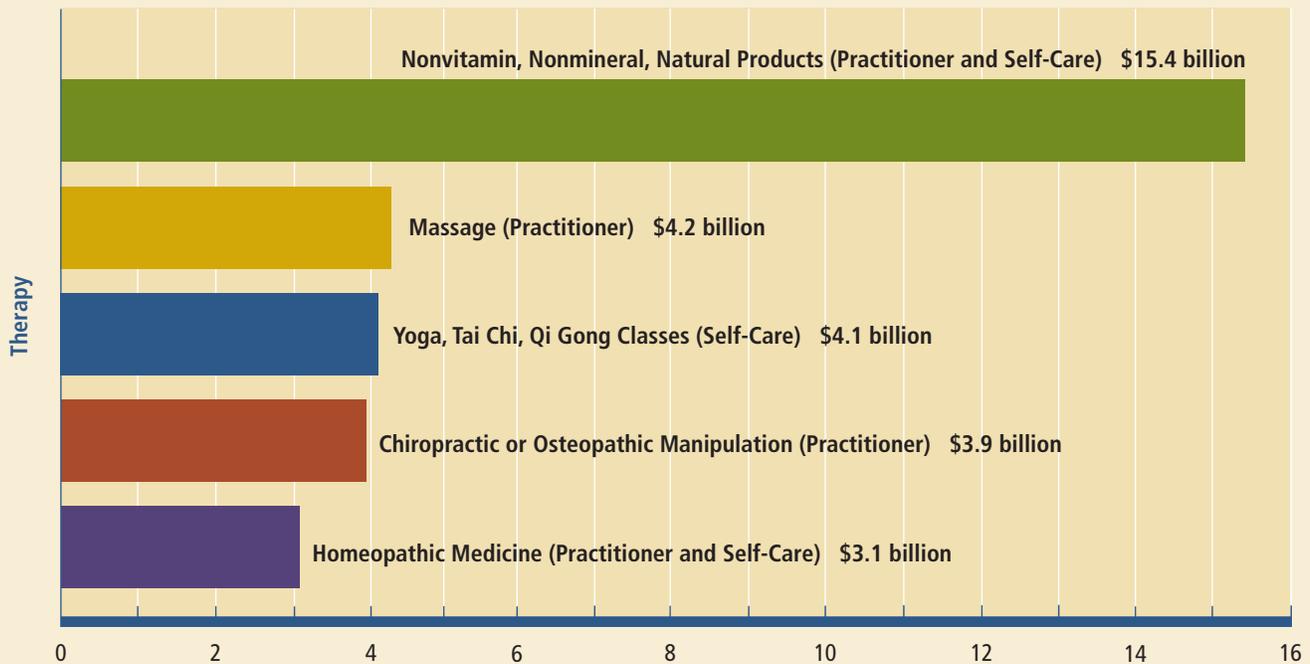
The \$14.8 billion spent on nonvitamin, nonmineral, natural products is equivalent to approximately one-third of total out-of-pocket spending on prescription drugs (\$47.6 billion), and the \$11.9 billion spent on CAM practitioner visits is equivalent to approximately one-quarter of total out-of-pocket spending on physician visits (\$49.6 billion). See Figure 2.

Figure 3 CAM Out-of-Pocket Spending: Self-Care\* vs. Practitioner Costs



\* Self-Care costs include CAM products, classes, and materials.

† Relaxation techniques include meditation, guided imagery, progressive relaxation, and deep breathing exercises.

Figure 4 **Out-of-Pocket Costs for Select CAM Therapies\***

\* Totals for nonvitamin, nonmineral, natural products and homeopathy include both CAM practitioner costs and costs of purchasing CAM products. Totals for massage and chiropractic and osteopathic manipulation are only CAM practitioner costs. Totals for yoga, tai chi, and qi gong classes are only the cost of purchasing CAM products.

#### About NCCAM

NCCAM's mission is to explore complementary and alternative healing practices in the context of rigorous science, train CAM researchers, and disseminate authoritative information to the public and professionals.

#### To Obtain the Report

The report's citation is Nahin RL, Barnes PM, Stussman BJ, and Bloom B. Costs of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) and Frequency of Visits to CAM Practitioners: United States, 2007. National health statistics reports; no 18. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2009. It is available, along with a press release and graphics, at [nccam.nih.gov/news/camstats.htm](http://nccam.nih.gov/news/camstats.htm). People who do not have access to the Internet can contact the NCCAM Clearinghouse (see below) for a copy.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

##### NCCAM Clearinghouse

The NCCAM Clearinghouse provides information on CAM and NCCAM, including publications and searches of Federal databases of scientific and medical literature. The Clearinghouse does not provide medical advice, treatment recommendations, or referrals to practitioners.

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226

TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615

Web site: [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov) E-mail: [info@nccam.nih.gov](mailto:info@nccam.nih.gov)

#### ADDITIONAL REPORTS

NCCAM plans to collaborate with NCHS on further analyses of the survey findings. Among the areas of interest to the researchers are dietary supplements and reasons for CAM use. Future reports will be published by NCHS and posted on the NCCAM Web site.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES

National Institutes of Health

National Center for Complementary  
and Alternative Medicine

