



**MAS**

Maryland Acupuncture Society, Inc.

**Maryland Acupuncture Society  
Patient Satisfaction Survey**

**Final Report**

**January 2000**

For information contact:  
David M. Blaiwas  
President, Maryland Acupuncture Society  
301-270-2117

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In October 1999, the Maryland Acupuncture Society (MAS) mailed out survey packets to all of the 183 practicing MAS members. The instructions asked acupuncturists to have up to 20 of their patients complete patient satisfaction surveys during the first two weeks of November. The anonymity of both patients and acupuncturists was guaranteed.

Over 1000 completed surveys were received from patients of 95 different acupuncturists, for a very respectable 54% practitioner participation rate. A total of 968 surveys were used in the descriptive analyses reported here (3 were incomplete, 33 surveys arrived too late to be included). This report also includes selected comments from the 52% of the sample who responded to the invitation to “write their own stories” or thoughts at the end of the survey.

The large majority of respondents were women. Most were also in their 40’s and 50’s, very well educated, employed outside the home, and living in households with incomes well over the median for this area.

Just over half of all respondents had been seeing their acupuncturists for more than a year. In addition to acupuncture with needles, large numbers of patients reported receiving moxa/moxibustion treatments (56%) and herbs (41%). Most also said that their acupuncturists offered advice concerning self-care, especially dietary changes.

Only one fourth of the respondents had any kind of insurance coverage at all – the rest paid the entire fee themselves. The typical fee charged by acupuncturists was in the \$60 to \$70 range. Although respondents stated that they would like to see better insurance coverage, the majority did not find restrictive plans acceptable. Even with most paying full price, 54% said that the cost of their treatment was excellent, considering the benefits they received. Only 25% were as positive about the cost/benefit ratio of their non-acupuncture care.

The reasons for seeking acupuncture care were varied, including “seeking care of my whole being” (59%) and “needed help dealing with stress” (38%), as well as the more conventional “seeking help for a specific illness or health concern” (70% - multiple answers were allowed). The specific conditions for which patients most often sought care included stress and tension (35%), back pain (18%) and other kinds of pain (21%), depression and moods swings (16%) and headaches (15%).

Ratings of the effectiveness of acupuncture in treating these conditions were very high. In the case of stress, for example, 68% said that acupuncture was a “very effective”

treatment for this condition, and another 29% said it was moderately effective. With respect to pain, 55% and 62% respectively, said that acupuncture was very effective for back and other kinds of pain, and only 12% said it was not all, or only mildly effective. Effectiveness ratings for other conditions were similarly positive.

A large section of the survey asked respondents to rate acupuncturists and other health care providers along a variety of dimensions related to their practices. Ratings for acupuncturists were overwhelmingly positive – 99% indicated that their acupuncturists spent enough time with them and really listened and tried to understand their concerns (the two most important factors for most patients). In contrast, only 71% were satisfied with the time they spent with non-acupuncture providers, although 81% said their conventional practitioners listened and tried to understand their concerns. In two other areas, the extent to which health care providers “motivate me to take care of myself” and “make me feel better about myself as a person,” 98% of the respondents gave positive ratings to their acupuncturists while only 61% to 69% said these statements were true of their non-acupuncture practitioners. Another area where acupuncturists markedly outperformed conventional practitioners was in the time patients spent waiting to be seen; 99% of the respondents were satisfied with the waiting time at their acupuncturists’ offices in contrast to only 62% for other practitioners.

Another set of question focused on patients’ personal experiences with acupuncture. Again, responses were extremely favorable. As a result of their treatments, 90% to 99% of the patients surveyed felt that they functioned better in the world, had more energy and focus, and were less susceptible to illness. Acupuncture patients find their treatments relaxing and enjoyable, and value the immediate feedback and sense of partnership with their acupuncturists. Acupuncturists also tend to be viewed as both holistic and spiritual practitioners.

The benefits of acupuncture also have health care cost implications. A large majority feel that because of acupuncture, they have been able to reduce their visits to medical doctors and limit their use of prescription drugs. A sizable number (14% of the entire sample) also indicated that acupuncture had helped them avoid surgery. It is noteworthy that in a field still dominated by allopathic medicine, over one third of the respondents (39%) considered their acupuncturist, *not* their MD, to be their primary health care provider. Among the 11% who could not choose one over the other, most indicated that both were important, they simply served different functions.

In summary, the specific questions about treatment effectiveness and personal experiences with acupuncture, as well as the more general questions about overall satisfaction with acupuncture cost, outcomes, quality of care, and interactions with practitioners, confirm that acupuncture is a highly valued, highly satisfying experience. The benefits include, but are clearly not limited to, the resolution of physical problems. In their acupuncturists, patients find a combination of skill, caring, and understanding that nurtures them on many levels, and is essential to maintaining the health of their bodies, minds, and spirits.

## MAS Patient Satisfaction Survey: Final Report

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Background .....	1
Sample and Survey Administration .....	1
Response Rate .....	2
Data Analysis .....	2

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History with the Acupuncturist .....	3
Techniques and Self-care Advice .....	4
Costs and Insurance Coverage .....	5
Why Acupuncture? .....	7
Health Concerns and Treatment Effectiveness .....	8

#### PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR ACUPUNCTURIST & OTHER PRACTITIONER

Non-acupuncture Practitioners .....	10
Perceptions of Acupuncturist and Other Practitioner .....	11
Satisfaction with Acupuncturist and Other Practitioner .....	13
Importance Ratings of Practice Factors .....	14

#### YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH ACUPUNCTURE .....

#### OTHER HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS .....

#### YOUR OWN STORY .....

#### PERSONAL INFORMATION .....

#### REPORT SUMMARY .....

#### APPENDIX I:

LIST OF ALL INSURANCE AGENCIES REPORTED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS TO COVER ACUPUNCTURE .....	25
---	----

#### APPENDIX II:

CODING OF CONDITIONS AND HEALTH CONCERNS .....	26
--	----

I feel extremely fortunate to receive acupuncture. It has improved the quality of my physical and mental life, more than I ever thought possible. I know I will continue the treatment to ensure my older years will be golden years! Whenever I get the opportunity, I "teach" and "preach" about the wonders of acupuncture. It is truly the best medicine in the world, and if I had to choose only one medicine, as a nurse, I would still choose acupuncture!

Acupuncture has been the best health care experience of my life -- the treatments have been extremely effective both in helping me stay healthy after many upper respiratory problems and in giving me a new sense of balance and connection. My acupuncturist has created a caring, protected space that I look forward to before every visit. It's terrific.

There are many good things I would like to say about [name].... What I will say is that she is REAL in ways few medical practitioners are. She is PRESENT during treatments. She makes treatment decisions based on what is best for me with no thought about if it's convenient for her (and of time for example). She always REALLY HEARS ME. She has excellent boundaries. She is forthright. She has a good sense of humor. I look forward to seeing her at every visit. She is spiritual and self-actualized as a woman and practitioner and often, (perhaps without her knowing it), teaches and leads me toward health by sheer example of her being who she is. I am very fortunate to be [name's] client.<sup>1</sup>

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***Background***

In November of 1998, the Maryland Acupuncture Society (MAS) contracted with Dr. Claire Cassidy and Dr. Martha Lappin to develop and analyze an acupuncture patient satisfaction survey under the direction of Board member Francine S. Gordon, Vice President for Public Affairs. MAS stipulated that the survey was to be comprehensive, and include questions about cost and insurance coverage for acupuncture, techniques used, satisfaction, effectiveness, self-care, perceptions, and experiences with both acupuncturists and other important health care providers. Initial versions of the survey were reviewed and revised by MAS Board Members (February 1999), and a draft was prepared for a pilot test. The pilot test was conducted by the Board in late March 1999 and a report was prepared and delivered to MAS in April 1999. The survey was revised to reflect feedback from both patients and Board members, and was finalized in September 1999.

### ***Sample and Survey Administration***

In late October 1999, MAS produced and sent survey materials to every non-student member with a request that each practitioner have up to 20 patients complete the satisfaction questionnaire during a 14 day survey period in early November. Survey materials included a) directions for practitioners, b) a small poster (suitable for posting in waiting room) to announce the survey c) 23 questionnaires, and d) preaddressed return envelope. The survey

---

<sup>1</sup> Survey respondent written comments.

was designed to be anonymous both for patients and practitioners and participation was entirely voluntary. Practitioners were instructed to return completed surveys as soon as possible to Dr. Lappin in the Priority Mail envelope provided by MAS. Once received, surveys were logged in, cover sheets were removed, and identification numbers were added to the questionnaires. A professional typist then entered the data into Ascii text files.

### ***Response Rate***

MAS sent packets to 183 practitioners. Six packets were returned unopened – four had outdated addresses and two were returned by acupuncturists no longer practicing in the state of Maryland. Out of the 177 MAS practitioners who received packets, 91 returned at least one completed survey (51% response rate) in time for inclusion in the database. The number of surveys returned per practitioner ranged from one to 21, with most returning eight to fourteen. The average number returned was eleven. In all, we received 971 surveys by the cut-off date (December 10). We dropped 3 surveys from the analyses (2 were largely incomplete, one was about a pet), leaving a final analysis sample of 968 acupuncture patients.

In the last two weeks of December, we received four additional packets, containing 33 completed surveys. Counting these surveys, we had an overall practitioner participation rate of 54% (95/177) yielding a total of 1004 patient surveys.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data were analyzed in SPSS/PC (version 7.0) after extensive cleaning and checking. Data cleaning was accomplished by checking for out-of-range values and discrepancies in the length and format of the six records that comprised each case. All discrepancies and possible data entry errors were resolved by referring back to the original surveys. The analyses reported here are descriptive statistics, primarily frequency counts and percentages for the different response alternatives for each item. In some cases, for example, the conditions for which respondents were seeking treatment, extensive recoding was required to generate lists from which we could compile frequencies.

### ***Plan of Report***

Survey results are reported sequentially following the order of the items in the questionnaire itself. Exceptions occur when items from different sections of the questionnaire are reported together to facilitate comparisons across related items. For example, ratings of the most frequently seen non-acupuncturist health care provider are reported with the identical items referring to the acupuncturist. Responses to the open-ended questions were recorded in a separate document, however, selected quotations from the “tell your own story” section are interspersed as appropriate to highlight key points and enrich the tabular data.

# MAS Patient Satisfaction Survey: Final Report

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

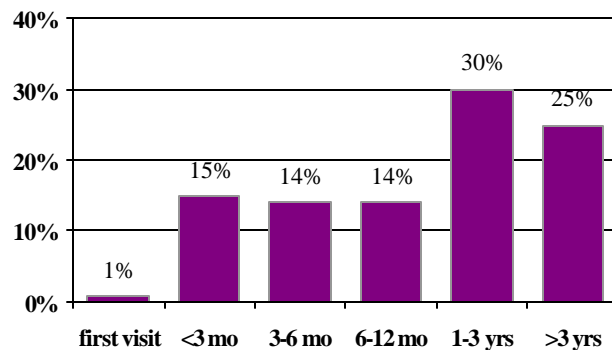
### History with the Acupuncturist

The first section of the questionnaire asks patients: *How long have you been seeing your acupuncturist?* and *In the past three months, how often have you seen this acupuncturist?*

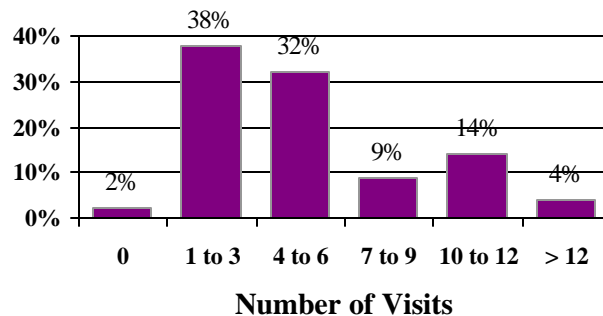
Responses to these two questions are shown in the figures below. Most respondents (55%) had been seeing their acupuncturist for more than a year. Only 16% were new patients (i.e., had been seeing their acupuncturist for less than three months).

Typically respondents had seen their practitioners either 1 to 3 times (38%) or 4 to 6 times (32%) in the past three months. The large majority (81%) of acupuncturists were women.

**How long have you been seeing your acupuncturist?**



**How often have you seen your acupuncturist in the past 3 months?**



## **Techniques and Self-care Advice**

Questions 4 and 5 asked about treatment techniques and self-care advice the acupuncturist offered. For both questions respondents were presented with a list and instructed to circle all that apply. Table 1 reports the treatment techniques used by the acupuncturists in descending order of use. Predictably, the major traditional modalities of needles, moxa and Chinese herbs were the most frequently used.

**Table 1. What treatment techniques has your acupuncturist used with you?**

TECHNIQUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Acupuncture needles	959	99
Moxa/moxibustion	536	56
Herbs	399	41
Acupressure/Shiatsu/Tuina	117	12
Zero Balancing/Cranio-Sacral	117	12
Allergy Elimination Technique	58	6
Magnets	56	6
Cupping	47	5
Polarity Balancing, Reiki, etc.	43	4
Electro & laser acupuncture	37	4
Gua sha (counter irritation)	26	3

Table 2 reports the results of the self-care question. The five options are shown in descending order of frequency. Over half (57%) of all patients indicated that their acupuncturists recommended dietary changes. Movement therapies or practices (e.g. tai chi, yoga, other types of exercise) were also commonly recommended by acupuncturists in the sample.

**Table 2. What advice for self-care has your acupuncturist offered?**

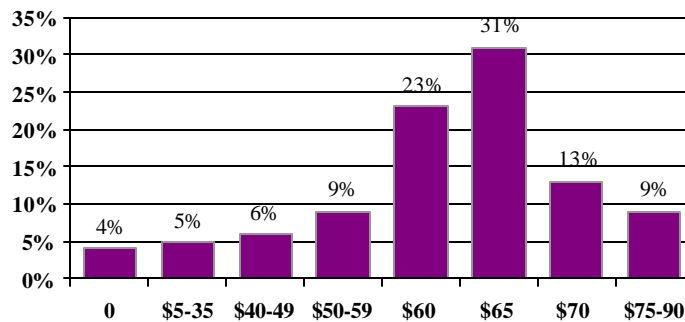
SELF-CARE ADVICE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Dietary Changes	542	57
Specific Types of Exercise	243	25
Tai chi, qi gong, yoga, etc.	239	25
Sitting Meditation	196	20
Other*	245	26

\*Other: Included a wide range of recommendations reported as, e.g., take classes, factor rest / quiet time into daily life, do breathwork, avoid addictive substances, “trust my heart,” quit smoking, see an astrologer.

## **Costs and Insurance Coverage**

The question about acupuncture fees was phrased, “How much does your acupuncturist charge you per visit?” The typical fee reported was between \$60 and \$70 per visit (paid by 66% of the respondents), however, as the chart below indicates, 15% paid substantially less - only \$40 to \$55 a visit. Some of those who said that their acupuncturist charged between \$5 and \$35 appeared to be reporting what they paid in the form of a co-payment. Others noted that their practitioners allowed them to pay reduced fees because of financial constraints. Most of those who said they paid nothing were individuals whose insurance covered the whole cost, although a small number indicated that they did not pay because they had a bartering arrangement with their acupuncturist.

**How much does your acupuncturist charge you per visit?**



Just over one fourth (26%) of the respondents reported that they had some sort of insurance coverage for their acupuncture care. The majority (52%) of those with coverage used Blue Cross/Blue Shield. The next largest group (9%) reported that they were in a Preferred Provider Organization (PPO), but didn’t specify which. Only 3.5% reported having other forms of reimbursement (e.g., Workman’s Comp, automobile liability). The list of all insurance companies respondents reported is included in Appendix I.

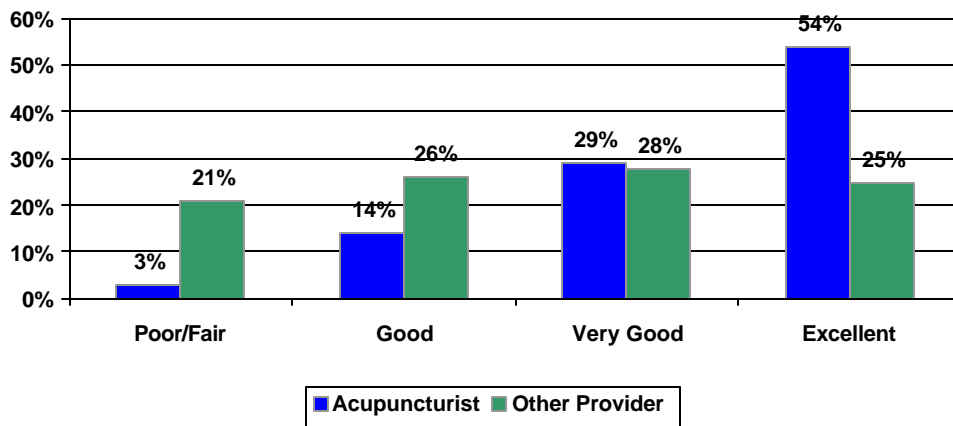
Among those who had some form of coverage, 27% had a co-payment. The most common co-payment amounts were \$10 (40%) and \$15-\$20 (32%). Among the 144 respondents who had insurance coverage but did *not* have co-payments, the largest group (n=55, 38%) reported 80% reimbursement, the next largest group (n=38, 26%) reported 50-75% reimbursement, and the remainder received either less than 50% (n=29, 20%) or full, 100% reimbursement (n=22, 15%).

In response to the question asking which payment option respondents preferred, almost half (45%) said that they preferred “No plan – I make my own choices and I pay the treatment costs each time I go.” Over a third (37%) selected a “Plan that covers 80% of my costs and limits the number of treatments,” and only 18% preferred a “Plan that covers all my costs

except for a co-pay, and limits my choice of acupuncturists”. In other words, most patients are willing to pay for the opportunity to choose their own practitioners, and would rather have “no plan” than a plan that limits their treatment options.

Although most patients pay out of their own pockets, they clearly believe they are getting a good value for their money (see Figure below). When we asked respondents to rate the cost of their acupuncture treatment relative to the benefit they received (Q 19), the majority (54%) rated it excellent. This is in sharp contrast to ratings for their primary non-acupuncture health care provider (Q 30), where only 25% indicated that they received an excellent value for their money.

**How would you rate the cost of your treatment relative to the benefit you receive?**



Respondents offered various comments about cost and insurance issues in their response to the “tell your own story” question. For example:

How or what is MAS doing to educate insurance companies and the public about complimentary healthcare? Maybe MAS should survey insurance companies and Maryland employers. I'm already there!

I have had lower back problems most of my life. I had a discectomy and laminectomy in 1994. I was disabled for seven months and have permanent nerve damage as a result of that surgery. The resultant scar tissue is the diagnosed cause of my current condition, sciatica and disk herniation. The same course of treatment was attempted a second time with no effect. Acupuncture has prevented me from going on disability for my current problem. The orthopedic surgeon stated there was nothing outside of medication and PT that he could do for me. Even another surgery would not help the scar tissue problem. My insurance company, BCBS, informed us they would cover 10 visits per year with co-pay. They then rejected the claims for the reason that the acupuncturist is not an MD. This is an incredibly ludicrous situation. I pay for all treatments out of pocket

because they allow me to continue working and supporting my family. I think this situation is horrible.

I believe in acupuncture and had faith before I began. I think it can help everyone and wish it were better advertised. I believe in the future, the insurance companies will realize how effective it is and how they can actually save money by paying for it.

## Why Acupuncture?

In Question 9, we asked, *Of all forms of health care, why did you choose acupuncture?* We listed ten possible reasons based on prior research in this area, and asked respondents to circle all that applied. The results are shown in Table 3 in descending order of popularity.

Table 3. *Of all forms of health care, why did you choose acupuncture?*

WHY CHOOSE ACUPUNCTURE?	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
1. I had a specific illness/health concern that I heard acupuncture could help	668	70
2. I was seeking care of my whole being.	561	59
3. I was dissatisfied with conventional care.	425	44
4. I needed help dealing with stress.	366	38
5. I was urged to go by a friend or relative.	344	36
6. MDs couldn't help my problem.	335	35
7. I wanted to reduce my use of prescription drugs.	269	28
8. I was basically healthy, and was seeking care to help myself stay well.	204	21
9. I felt something was missing from my life.	136	14
10. I had tried other alternative therapies without success.	114	12

The first reason--chosen by two-thirds of the respondents--is the one we might expect, starting from a biomedical or physical stand-point; patients had specific health concerns they thought acupuncture could help. The second most popular reason suggests something unique about acupuncture: over half of all respondents (59%) said they chose acupuncture because they were seeking care for their "whole being." The implication that acupuncture users are seeking something other than conventional, symptom oriented interventions is confirmed in the third and fourth most important responses – 44% said they were dissatisfied with conventional care, and 38% said they needed help dealing with stress. More than a third are apparently also seeking relief from unsuccessful conventional care, either through a new effort to address a resistant condition, or by a reduction in use of biomedically-prescribed medications.

The eighth choice--seeking acupuncture in order to stay well--represents a novelty when viewed through biomedical lenses (which emphasizes sickness care) at the same time it represents an appropriate use, perhaps even the intended traditional use, of Chinese medicine. Even in a social environment as imbued as ours with the habit of seeking medical care only

when “sick,” one-fifth of the respondents to this survey still felt they could use medical care (specifically acupuncture care) to stay well.

In November of 1998 I was diagnosed by MRI as having a pinched nerve in my back which was causing extreme pain in my leg and making it very difficult to walk. I was sent to an orthopaedic clinic where the only solution they gave me was to have fusion on my back. A friend advised me to try acupuncture first. Thank God I did. I have been pain free for many months and am again walking two miles almost every day.

It's funny how much it can help to get advice from someone who's NOT determined to tell you have a problem. My therapist wanted to put me on antidepressants. My cardiologist told me that my heart palpitations were nothing serious (and couldn't really be helped anyway). YOU try studying for midterms and waking up on time with a resting heart rate of 180 ... My gynecologist was concerned, but couldn't stop my yeast infections. My acupuncturist gave me some hints about diet and sleeping, some helpful advice about life, and some needles -- NOW where are all of my problems? Almost gone!

I think everyone should get acupunctured for stress -- it would make the country a better place. I have a markedly different outlook than most people I know, and they comment on it much. I attribute my positive outlook to my acupuncture. If my business takes off, I will offer it as a benefit to employees -- a good business decision.

### ***Health Concerns and Treatment Effectiveness***

Question 11 asked respondents to list up to four conditions for which they were seeking or had sought treatment from their acupuncturist. Next, they were asked to rate both the severity of the condition when they initially sought treatment (1=mild, 2=moderate, 3=severe), and the effectiveness of the treatment provided by their acupuncturist (0=no effect, 1=mildly effective, 2=moderate, 3=very effective).

In all, 904 respondents (93%) listed and rated at least one condition, 753 (78%) rated at least two conditions, 503 (52%) rated at least three conditions, and 295 (30%) rated four conditions. Those who failed to list or rate symptoms typically reported that they had not been under treatment long enough to make an assessment of effectiveness.

Table 4 lists conditions that respondents chose to mention when answering Question 11. We have grouped their many phrasings into a small list; the coding system is reported as Appendix II. Note that “stress and tension” (35%) was the most frequently mentioned reason for seeking acupuncture care. While nearly all illness has a stress/tension causative component, in physically-based medicines, respondents often do not feel free to mention this component. Part of the expression of seeking “whole body” or “holistic” care with acupuncture emerges with this freedom to express a need for care of the non-physical being. Depression or mood swings (16%), and fatigue (12%) are listed next in the table as they can be viewed as more specific manifestations of stress. The next group includes “pain” complaints. Back pain was the single most common problem (18%); the category “other musculoskeletal pain” includes hip, ankle, and other joint pain, and accounts for 21% of responses. Arthritis was mentioned as a distinctly separate category by 6%. Fifteen percent

of respondents mentioned some kind of headache, sometimes specifying “migraines.” Other problems included female concerns, like menstruation, menopause, and PMS (10%), gastrointestinal problems (9%), allergies (8%) and asthma (4%). It is striking that eighty respondents (9%) indicated that they visited their acupuncturists to maintain their general health and well-being, or to find a sense of physical or spiritual wholeness.

The second column of Table 4 reports how severe the condition was when patients first sought treatment. Most ratings were in the 2.4 to 2.5 range, indicating they were between “moderate” and “severe”. Note that ratings are similar for all complaints whether primarily physical or not. The last three columns show how acupuncture patients rated the effectiveness of the treatments they received for these conditions. In almost every area, the majority of patients rated their treatment as being very effective.

*Table 4. Severity and effectiveness ratings of conditions for which respondents most often sought treatment*

Condition*	Number, % Rating Symptom (base n=904)	Mean Severity Rating	Treatment Effectiveness Ratings		
			Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Mildly or Not Effective
Stress/Tension	315 (35%)	2.5	68%	29%	3%
Depression/Mood	145 (16%)	2.4	66%	28%	6%
Fatigue/Energy	112 (12%)	2.5	60%	32%	8%
Back Pain	160 (18%)	2.5	55%	32%	13%
Other Musc/Skel Pain	194 (21%)	2.5	62%	27%	11%
Arthritis	51 ( 6%)	2.3	49%	49%	2%
Migraine	52 ( 6%)	2.6	51%	35%	14%
Other Headaches	77 ( 9%)	2.5	47%	36%	17%
Female Concerns	94 (10%)	2.4	57%	30%	14%
Gastrointestinal	77 ( 9%)	2.4	56%	30%	14%
Allergies	75 ( 8%)	2.4	54%	36%	10%
Asthma	37 ( 4%)	2.2	49%	35%	16%
Health/Wholeness	80 ( 9%)	Not App.	75%	25%	0%

\*The coding scheme used to group similar types of conditions is shown in Appendix II.

Many respondents provided comments concerning the great success they have had treating some very difficult health problems with acupuncture.

For two years I have been trying to lower and balance eye pressure and relieve optic nerve pain -- in one visit pressure was equal and optic nerve pain eliminated.

We were desperate for help with our son's behavior/emotional problems. It wasn't a parenting problem and we took him to a good psychologist with no results. He also had moderate virally triggered asthma and some allergies. We researched alternative treatments and tried a chiropractor/naturalist who does allergy desensitization, with minimal results and a rather high cost. The acupuncture treatment has had dramatic results for a much more reasonable cost, and we are very relieved, even though we have to come from Virginia to Rockville for the treatments.

I can't begin to say enough about how acupuncture has "changed my life." Approximately 18 months ago I came to my acupuncturist because I had suffered for 5+ years with migraines, which were increasing in severity and frequency. Moreover, I was tired of taking meds that made me feel like a zombie. With acupuncture, I now have significantly fewer headaches and when they come, they are much less painful and linger for less time. I truly look forward to coming to the office and am energized upon leaving.

I was infertile and had two surgeries, with no avail. I decided to see an acupuncturist before going on personal -- I went through 3 months of sessions and became pregnant -- I'm ready again to get pregnant and I'll see my acupuncturist before my OB GYN!

Acupuncture has helped me clear my skin condition whereas skin doctor just gave me stuff to put on it and it never cleared up completely. I couldn't believe that acupuncture could do this. It's a miracle. It was originally getting worse -- all over my body -- now it's almost completely gone ...

## **PERCEPTIONS OF ACUPUNCTURISTS AND NON-ACUPUNCTURE PRACTITIONERS**

Sections II (Perceptions of Your Acupuncturist) and V (Perceptions of Non-Acupuncture Health Care Practitioners) of the survey contain identical sets of items – they differ only in terms of who is being rated. In Section II, respondents rated their current acupuncturist on items related to their practice and their individual style. In section V, respondents used the same items to rate the *non-acupuncture* practitioner they had seen *most frequently* in the last three years.

### ***Non-acupuncture practitioners***

Almost half (49%) of the respondents indicated that general or family practice medical doctors were the non-acupuncture practitioners they had seen most frequently in the past three years; another 24% reported having seen some kind of MD specialist most frequently. Thus, 73% of the sample rated a conventional medical doctor in Section V. Another 16% indicated that they had seen their chiropractors most frequently in the past three years, and thus they rated their chiropractors in Section V. Nurse practitioners/physician's assistants and osteopathic doctors comprised 4% and 3% respectively, of the non-acupuncture practitioners rated in Section V.

It is interesting that respondents saw mostly female acupuncturists (81% of practitioners) but mostly male non-acupuncturists (63% were male).

***Perceptions of Acupuncturist and Other Practitioner***

Question 12 reads *Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement, based on your experiences with your acupuncturist.* Question 26 is the same, but refers to experiences with the non-acupuncturist health care practitioner patients reported seeing most often in the past three years. Both questions contain 12 short phrases and ask respondents to mark one of four responses ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree.’ Table 5 shows how many respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the phrases described their acupuncturist (column 1) and their most frequently seen non-acupuncturist practitioner (column 2).<sup>2</sup>

For each item, slightly different numbers of people responded. For the acupuncture ratings, at least 900 people (out of 968) responded to each item. When describing the “other practitioner,” however, some items were frequently left blank. For example, only 732 people responded to the “is very spiritual” item when it referred to a non-acupuncturist. This may mean that the concept of spirituality is not relevant or part of the ‘job description’ for many conventional practitioners (recall that most are rating medical doctors). It is, however, a concept that fits comfortably with acupuncture practitioners.

*Table 5. Percent who “agree” and “strongly agree” with statements about their acupuncturists and the non-acupuncturist practitioner they see most often*

	<b>ACUPUNCTURIST</b>	<b>OTHER PRACTITIONER</b>
	PERCENT WHO AGREE	PERCENT WHO AGREE
Sees me on time for appointments	97	68
Answers my questions clearly and completely	99	86
Really listens to me and tries to understand my concerns	99	81
Gives me advice about ways to stay healthy	98	77
Respects my values	99	86
Is friendly and interested in me personally	100	80
Successfully motivates me to take care of myself	98	69
Helps me feel better about myself as a person	99	61
Spends enough time with me to understand the problem	99	71
Is very spiritual	97	41
Makes visits enjoyable	99	69
Ensures that I’m never afraid or reluctant to say what is really going on with me	99	74

<sup>2</sup> A formatting problem in the final printing of the survey moved the “strongly agree” heading from the first response column to the second for this set of items, so we cannot report “agree” and “strongly agree” separately.

As Table 5 indicates, acupuncture patients hold their acupuncturists in extremely high regard. On the whole, the ratings are also quite high for the non-acupuncture practitioner, although 20% to 30% of the sample indicated that their *non-acupuncturists* did *not*:

- see them on time for appointments,
- really listen and try to understand their concerns,
- give them advice about ways to stay healthy,
- show a friendly personal interest in them,
- motivate them to take care of themselves,
- spend enough time with them to understand the problem,
- make visits enjoyable, or
- ensure that they are never afraid to say what is really going on with them.

In contrast, no more than 2% or 3% disagreed with the statements above when they were rating their acupuncturists. The items with the largest acupuncturist versus “other practitioner” discrepancies highlight the difference between the relationships acupuncturists and non-acupuncturists establish with their patients. For example, while 99% of the respondents said that their acupuncturists helped them feel better about themselves as a person, only 61% said the same about their non-acupuncture health care providers. Respondents were also much more likely to characterize their acupuncturists as being spiritual – although, as noted above, the large number of missing ratings for non-acupuncturists suggest that many either did not know the practitioner well enough to say, or they thought that the spirituality was not relevant to the non-acupuncturists’ practice.

Acupuncture really helps me to deal with the stresses/challenges that life offers to me. It helps me to deal better with people and be more understanding of their points of view. I am forever indebted to the benefits my acupuncturist has brought to me to improve my quality of life, outlook on life and to recognize the need for me to take better care of myself and be more in tune with my body.

My acupuncturist has helped me to take responsibility for my health more than any other healthcare practitioner I've been to. She works on all levels, (mind, body, spirit) is intuitive and compassionate, and very dedicated to her work. I love her!

Encourages me to begin spiritual practice and self-observation skills. Acupuncture has given me a second chance to live, another new life, that was not possible with the Western approach. My current acupuncturist is, for me or my case, a master at her work. She has helped me make changes in my life that I did not know were possible. I have hope now where there was none before.

Acupuncture has given me the necessary support I need to be able to carry on each day. Acupuncture is my tool for dealing with the challenges of pain and fatigue. Acupuncture supports the treatment I get from my rheumatologist. Acupuncture helps me to live a more peaceful and full embodied life!! It has awakened the desire to live each day with hope and to be fully present to my surroundings and to live a more balanced life. Peaceful.

My acupuncture treatments have opened up to me a whole new world, and way of dealing with myself, which is very positive in and of itself. I needed to make progress on my own life journey forward. I was sort of spiritually "stuck." Acupuncture has been very effective in unsticking me!

***Satisfaction with Acupuncturist and Other Practitioner***

Question 14 reads, ***Still thinking of your acupuncturist, please indicate how satisfied you are with each of the following.*** There follows a list of 9 phrases concerning the setting in which health care is delivered. The parallel question concerning the ‘other’ practitioner is Question 28. Table 6 compares respondent satisfaction ratings for both types of practitioner. As before, different numbers of people responded to each item, however, all items were rated by at least 900 respondents.

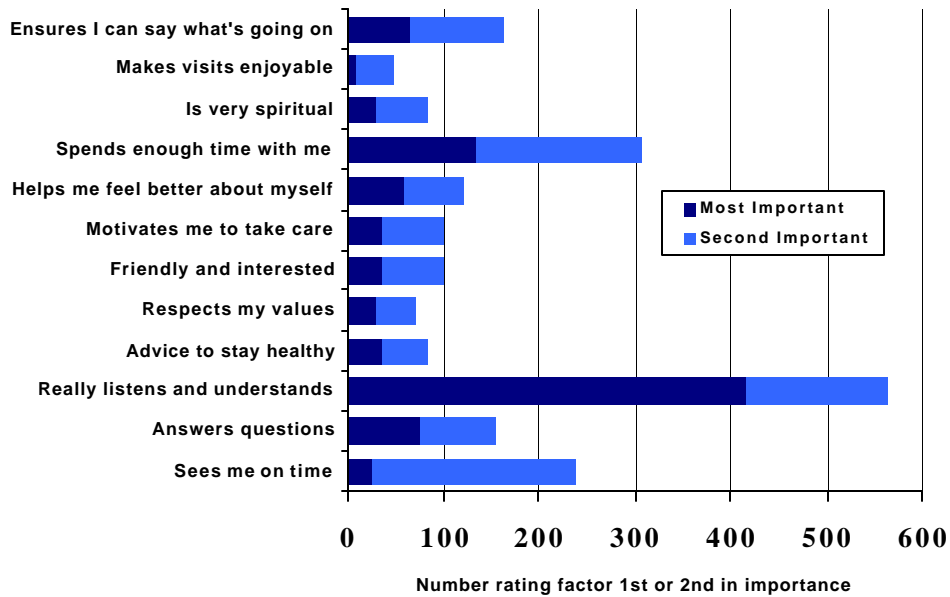
*Table 6. Percent who are “satisfied” and “very satisfied” with aspects of their acupuncturists’ and their non-acupuncturists’ practices*

	<b>ACUPUNCTURIST</b>	<b>OTHER PRACTITIONER</b>
	PERCENT SATISFIED	PERCENT SATISFIED
Amount of time you have with practitioner during visit	99	72
Office location	96	87
Practitioner’s office hours	98	86
Ease of getting appointment	98	71
Length of time in office spent waiting to see practitioner	99	62
Responsiveness of practitioner (returns calls, answers questions)	99	79
Explanations of procedures	99	87
Self-care advice	99	76
Comfort and ambiance of treatment setting	99	82

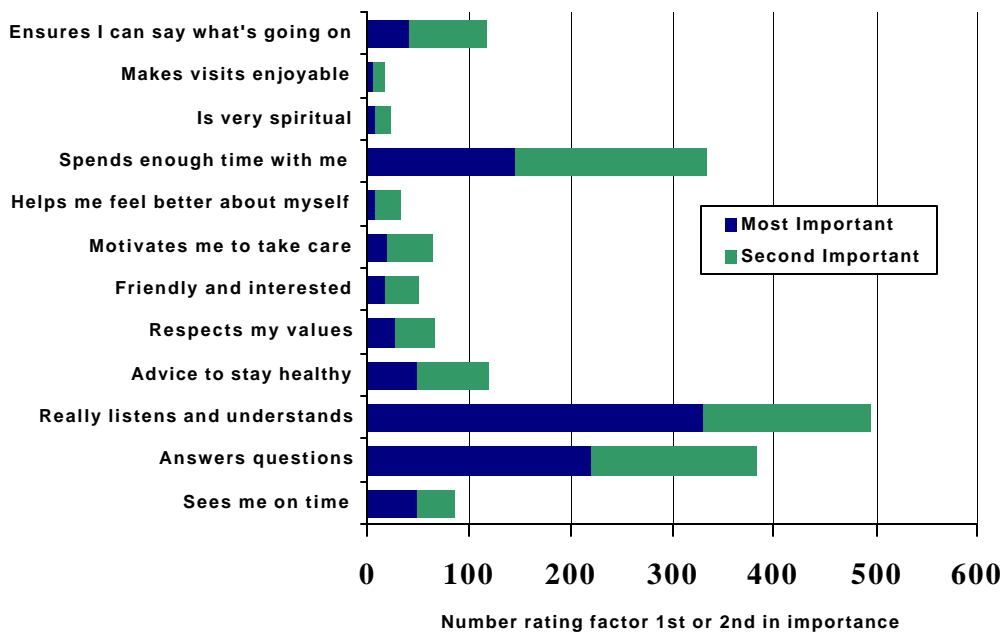
Looking at those who said they were “satisfied” or ”very satisfied” we see again that respondents are very pleased with their acupuncturists. Respondents were less satisfied with the other practitioner they rated, especially the length of time they had to wait before they could see the practitioner, the ease of getting appointments, and the amount of time they had with the practitioner.

The extremely high ratings for acupuncturists are very encouraging; clearly acupuncturists are doing a very good job meeting the needs and expectations of their patients. This fact is confirmed in the open-ended comments and the ratings of the importance of the factors listed in Tables 5 and 6 above. After each question where respondents evaluated different acupuncturist and non-acupuncturist practice dimensions, we asked them to indicate the first and second most important factors from the list. The figures on the next two pages show the results of these importance rating analyses.

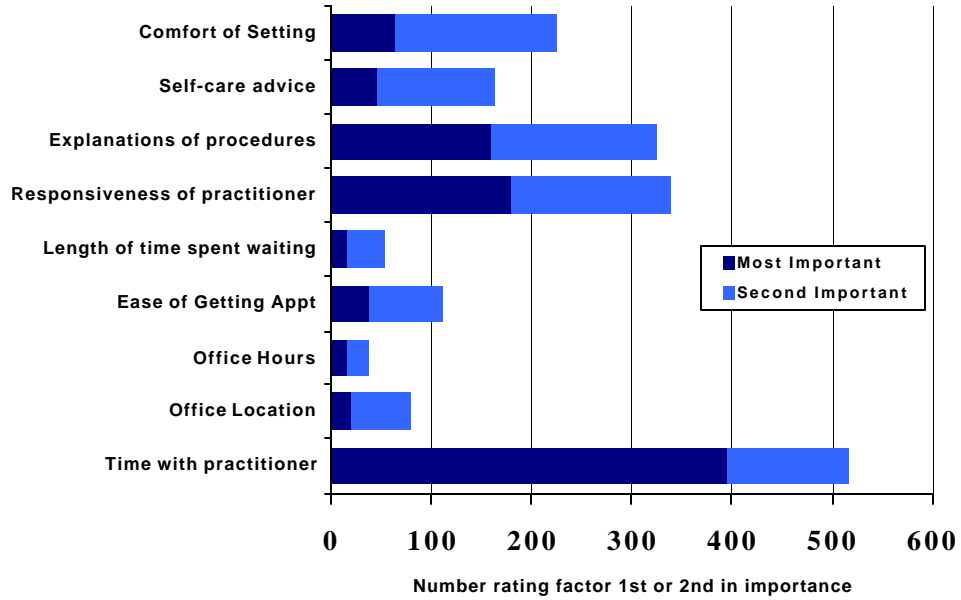
**Perceptions of Acupuncturist:  
Most Important Factors (Agree/Disagree Items)**



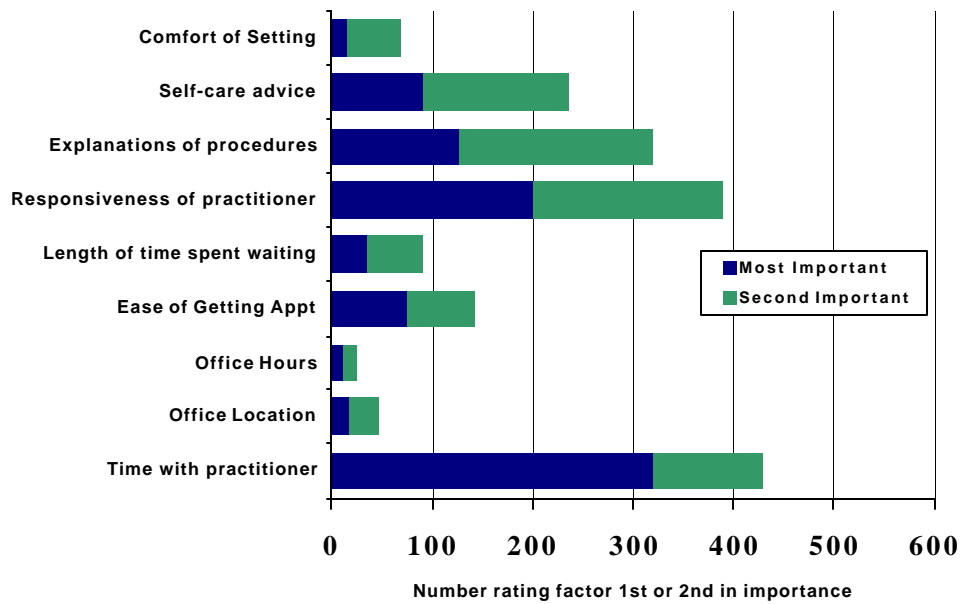
**Perceptions of Other Practitioner:  
Most Important Factors (Agree/Disagree Items)**



**Perceptions of Acupuncturist:  
Most Important Factors (Satisfaction Items)**



**Perceptions of Practitioner:  
Most Important Factors (Satisfaction Items)**



The most important factor in the set of agree-disagree items is the patient's feeling that their practitioner really listens to them and takes the time to understand their concerns. This in an area where acupuncturists excel.

There are two factors that have markedly different importance ratings depending on whether respondents are talking about their acupuncturists or other health care providers (most of whom were MDs). Patients want their medical doctors and other non-acupuncturists to clearly answer their questions, but they place relatively little importance on being seen on time (perhaps they've given up on this expectation?). With respect to their acupuncturists, however, answering questions is not a big issue – more people value being seen on time. It is possible that answering questions is not an issue with acupuncturists because patients feel heard, understood, and cared for by their acupuncturists so they have fewer questions about their treatment.

With respect to the items included in the satisfaction questions, time with the practitioner is the most important factor for both acupuncturists and non-acupuncturists, closely followed by responsiveness of the practitioner and explanations of procedures. It is interesting to note that comfort of the treatment setting is much more important in an acupuncture practice than a biomedical or other kind of practice.

Comments provide an even richer illustration of some of the differences in the way respondents perceive their acupuncturists and other medical professionals.

I had seen four MD's with a vertigo problem that I suffered with for six weeks. My acupuncturist was the only doctor who understood the problem in a holistic sense, fixed the problem, and is helping me to correct the underlying causes.

I very much enjoy taking care of my "whole" person and that is what acupuncture does for me. I look forward to my treatments because I always feel better! I only see an M.D. one time a year and after experiencing my acupuncturists care I have very high expectations of what my MD should provide for me and it's always a disappointment. Basically I just go through the routine of my yearly exam and I'm out of there!

There is no comparison between my acupuncture experiences and my experience with any doctor. I really feel like I am known as a whole being with my acupuncture practitioner -- not just a symptom that needs a quick fix like an antibiotic prescription. I truly feel that my life, on ALL levels, has significantly grown, expanded and improved since I began seeing [name]!

At the age of 55 I have had trouble with weight most of my life. Since being diagnosed with type II diabetes I have had trouble keeping my sugars and weight down. Five weeks ago I started on the protein power diet by the Doctors... At the same time I started acupuncture to help with dieting and stress. The outcome so far is 12 pounds easily lost and a drop of over 100 points in my sugars. I need the acupuncture to keep the emotional strong holds in check.

When I realized I needed surgery, perhaps a hysterectomy to eliminate fibroid tumors, I scheduled the hysterectomy. Not feeling quite right about it. I sought to heal myself with three "alternative means", including more frequent visits to my acupuncturist. (This was BEFORE I had children.) With my acupuncturists wisdom and help, I came to see that I needed to have surgery and chose to have only the

fibroids removed -- a more serious surgery, actually, than the hysterectomy. Anyway, my doctors were amazed at how quickly I healed and recovered my energy. Today, I have two beautiful children. I believe acupuncture tended my spirit, emotions AND body, enabling me to use what Western medicine had to offer my body, while I stayed healthy and recovered quickly in all aspects of my life!

I feel acupuncture has been wonderful and in conjunction with my MD. I tried everything and this is great and I recommend acupuncture to everyone!

## YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH ACUPUNCTURE

In this section we ask about respondents' experiences with acupuncture. First, Question 16 asks patients to indicate how much they agree or disagree with a series of statements about acupuncture. The results are reported below. Note that four questions are stated in the negative, thus a *low* value with "strongly agree" and "agree" is a positive outcome (e.g., "I am too tired after treatments.").

*Table 7. Personal experience with acupuncture*

	Strongly Agree %	Agree %
My acupuncturist is very holistic	66	33
I was afraid of the needles when I began acupuncture.	11	25
I enjoy being left to rest quietly with needles in place.	47	46
The occasional bruises I get from needling don't bother me.	49	46
I feel like a partner with my acupuncturist during treatments.	57	40
I enjoy the immediate feedback I get as my acupuncturist treats me.	65	34
I am conscientious about following my acupuncturist's recommendations for self-care.	31	61
I am too tired after treatments.	1	6
My experiences with needling have been largely pleasant.	46	46
I dislike the taste of Chinese herbs.	14	34
At the end of my treatment session I nearly always feel relaxed.	62	36
I don't like being left alone in the treatment room.	2	4
I feel energized after treatments.	33	54
I find Chinese herbs to be very effective.	32	53

All in all, patients' reported experiences with acupuncture were pleasant. Nearly everyone reported enjoying the process and feeling relaxed afterwards. A few who had concerns or implied criticisms wrote about them in the "Tell Your Own Story" section, and some examples are given below.

I had tried acupuncture with two other people before seeing my present acupuncturist. The treatments were not helpful for my conditions and uncomfortable in several circumstances. I still felt that acupuncture could be helpful with the right practitioner. It's important to convey that just as in any conventional modality, all acupuncturists are not created equal. But with people's bias against or fear of acupuncture, one negative experience could be more damaging to one's views of acupuncture as an effective modality.

My concern is whether my acupuncturist limits the area of where she applies points to exposed body parts (i.e., feet, arms, etc.) as opposed to those on my back which might be more effective or longer lasting. I feel she does this to avoid inconvenience on the patient's behalf.

At first I wasn't really sure what to think of the needles, but I have really been impressed by the fact that I could feel the energy flowing.

I was terrified of needles when I started but had heard acupuncture was effective in dealing with depression/anxiety. I love my acupuncturist so much that while I'm still not thrilled with needles, I continue to go back because of trust and respect.

My intense fear of needles and fear of pain from acupuncture needles prevented me from seeking acupuncture for SEVERAL years. However, after explaining this to my practitioner, she was extremely understanding, sensitive, caring and supportive, and helped me overcome my fears of needles in order to receive the benefits of acupuncture treatments. I am so glad!!!

Although all respondents could name specific complaints for which they received acupuncture (Q 11), this medical practice characteristically results in generalized health ameliorations which patients frequently report, verbally or in writing. Some of these expanded effects were listed as additional possible outcomes of acupuncture treatment in Q 17; responses are reported in Table 8.

*Table 8. Outcomes associated with acupuncture*

Because of acupuncture...	Strongly Agree %	Agree %
I feel better.	71	28
I can work better.	56	42
I have less pain.	56	41
I am more focused.	54	40
I have more energy.	53	42
My mood is more stable.	52	43
I am less susceptible to illness.	49	41
I get along better with others.	48	44

It is clear that not only do acupuncture patients feel better in a variety of ways, they also unequivocally attribute their enhanced well-being and improved ability to function directly to acupuncture.

In Question 18 we asked, *With acupuncture, do you think you have been able to reduce your health care costs?* Table 9 reports the results. Note that the number who answered each section of the question varies, thus the table contains two percentage columns. The first represents the proportion of the whole sample that answered the question with “yes” or “no” – in other words they did not circle the “Not applicable” response or leave the item blank. This percentage provides an indicator of how often the issue was relevant to the sample. The last column reports the proportion, among those who responded to the item, who answered “yes.” This percentage reflects the respondent’s experience of the relationship between the issue and the receipt of acupuncture.

Table 9. *With acupuncture do you think you have been able to reduce your health care costs?*

ISSUE: <i>REDUCE...</i>	PERCENT IN SAMPLE WHO RESPONDED	FREQUENCY OF “YES” ANSWERS	PERCENT OF RESPONDERS WHO SAID “YES”
visits to medical doctors	77	613	82
use of prescription drugs	68	483	73
visits to psychotherapists	47	326	71
coverage demands from insurance or HMO/PPO	45	301	69
visits to physical therapists	44	359	83
avoid surgery	25	138	56
other*	6	39	64

The first percentage column shows that most issues (particularly physician visits and prescription drugs) applied to a large proportion of the respondents. The last column indicates that in every case, a majority of those to whom the issue applied felt that acupuncture had decreased their reliance on conventional health care providers and prescription drugs. This translates into cost savings for individuals and potentially for society at large. It also implies a change in the pattern of health care utilization when acupuncture care is part of the equation.

A number of people commented about their ability to reduce prescription drugs, and more importantly avoid surgery, because of acupuncture.

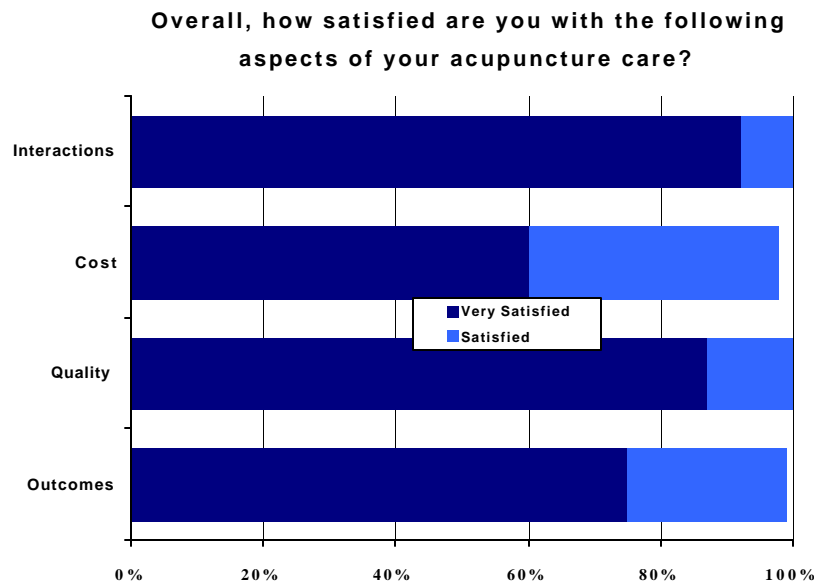
Before starting acupuncture I basically paid very little attention to care of myself. I suffered from depression, almost daily headaches and had been hospitalized once and been numerous times in the ER for asthma and acute asthmatic bronchitis. I was on steroids several times a year. I was seeing an allergist frequently and I believe was on the road to having major lung disease. I was losing time from work and popping fiorinal with codeine and ES Tylenol daily for headaches. Acupuncture treatment has made a major difference in my life. I now have no asthma attacks, no longer see an allergist. Headaches are rare. Most importantly through my work with acupuncturist I have learned ways to contribute to my health and well being. I have taken charge of my diet, exercise, and many lifestyle aspects to keep healthy and recognize and avoid those things that have potential for decreasing my well being and negatively affecting my health.

In August I was diagnosed with a second herniated disk. (I had surgery -- fourth lumbar -- 17 years ago). I was in excruciating pain and hospitalized. Pain lasted six weeks. My neurologist said only surgery would help. My chiropractor wasn't helping me after 3 visits (that insurance wouldn't cover). I decided to see an acupuncturist. Pain completely disappeared after third visit. It's a shame I can't get help from my insurance company (optimum choice) to pay for this! Now I do not need surgery and am pain free!

My gastroenterologist looked me in the eye last year and had no other options for my irritable bowel than to cut out part of my colon. Four sessions of acupuncture greatly reduced bleeding and pain. Now, several sessions later, I hardly realize I have IBD.

Before acupuncture I was very apprehensive about alternative health care, but very frustrated with conventional medicine. I sought acupuncture for migraine headaches. I was getting four migraines a week while taking eight pills a day for prophylaxis treatment. I now take only three pills a day, and hope to be medication free in four to six months. My migraines have all but disappeared, and I feel great. My family and friends and co-workers have all commented on how much I have changed and how relaxed I've become.

We also asked patients to give us an overall indication of their level of satisfaction with four aspects of their acupuncture health care: outcomes, quality of care and services, cost, and interactions with the practitioner (Q20). As indicated in the Figure below, the overall level of satisfaction is extremely high.



The final item in this section (Question 21) asked, *Apart from your current acupuncturist, have you ever used another acupuncturist? If “yes”, why did you stop using that acupuncturist?* Three hundred and seventy-four respondents (39%) said “yes,” they had

used another acupuncturist. There were seven options to explain why they had stopped using that acupuncturist, and respondents could give more than one answer. Table 10 shows the results in descending order.

*Table 10. Apart from your current acupuncturist, have you ever used another acupuncturist? If “yes”, why did you stop using that acupuncturist?*

REASON STOPPED SEEING PRIOR ACUPUNCTURIST	FREQUENCY/374	PERCENT “YES” of 374 who had used another acupuncturist
I/acupuncturist moved away	171	46
I stopped making health progress	74	20
I didn’t like the acupuncturist	72	19
Condition healed; I felt well	41	11
Insurance refused to cover further cost.	23	6
I had a bad reaction & didn’t want more	19	5
I couldn’t get used to the needles	8	2

The single most important reason is benign--the relationship could not continue because either practitioner or patient moved away. The second and third, sixth and seventh reasons refer to characteristics of acupuncture care itself. While the second and third reasons (stopped making progress and didn’t like the acupuncturist) were both reported by close to one-fifth of respondents, the other reasons were of very minor importance. The fourth reason represents what allopathic medicine or insurance companies might term the “best case scenario .And the fifth reason represents the insurance approach to Chinese medicine, which is formulated in terms of limited care of specific “illnesses” rather than on-going preventive care.which is a hallmark of acupuncture care.

## **OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

The first question in this section (Q 22) asked, *Besides your acupuncturist, what types of professional health care specialists have you consulted in the last 12 months?* Respondents were offered 20 specific choices and given three blanks to write in others types. They were also given a box to check if they had not consulted any health care practitioners in the previous 12 months besides their acupuncturist. Of 935 respondents who answered the question, only 24 (3%) reported seeing only an acupuncturist. The remainder saw other practitioners, as shown in Table 11 in descending order of use.

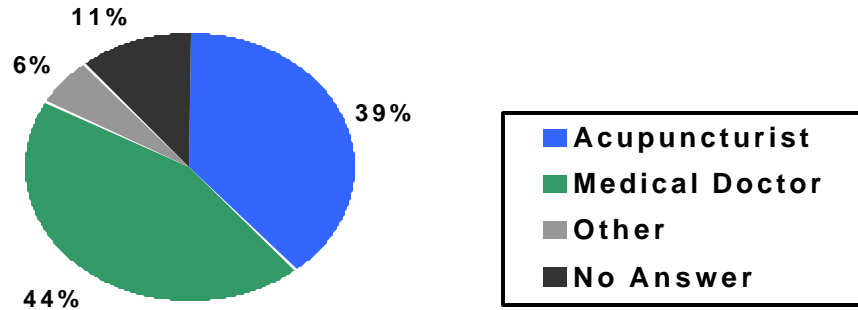
Table 11. Besides your acupuncturist, what types of professional health care specialists have you consulted in the last 12 months?

PRACTITIONER TYPE	FREQUENCY / 935	PERCENT
Medical Doctor (MD)	738	79
Dentist	708	76
Eye Doctor	480	51
Massage or Bodywork Practitioner	404	43
Psychotherapist	228	24
Chiropractic Doctor (DC)	223	24
Physical Therapist	119	13
Nurse Practitioner/Physician's Assistant	118	13
Reiki or other energy therapist	96	10
Podiatrist	84	9
Nutrition Consultant	67	7
Osteopathic Doctor (DO)	61	6
Herbalist	60	6
Homeopathic Practitioner	52	6
Midwife	24	3
Naturopathic Practitioner (ND)	20	2
Shamanic Practitioner	20	2
Hypnotherapist	18	2
Ayurvedic Medicine Practitioner	12	1
Biofeedback Practitioner	10	1
Other	248	26

This table shows the wide range of health care practitioner choices not only available to users in Maryland, but used by them. Clearly, some practitioners are effectively normative--the first six on the list were used by one fourth or more of the respondents. Of these, two are popularly thought of as "alternative"--as acupuncture generally is--though for this population this is perhaps a misnomer. Even the lesser used specialists are significantly used. Another interesting point--even though we offered respondents such a wide list of options, they were able to list very many more, one reason for the large size of the "other" category. A second reason the "other" category is large is that many put MD specialists (e.g., ob/gyn, neurologist) in this category. It is probably fair to say that this is a very health-care-savvy population of users.

To determine whom respondents considered to be their primary health care provider we asked them to circle one response from a list that included only a) acupuncturist, b) medical doctor, and c) another type of practitioner. Interestingly, almost as many (39%) considered their acupuncturists to be their *primary (most important)* health care provider as considered a medical doctor (44%) to be their primary health care provider.

**Who do you consider to be your primary health care provider?**



I find that I run any medical issues by my acupuncturist before I consult with my MD -- I feel she knows me much better, and can make a better recommendation (not always a pill) to address the problem. If I had to choose one healthcare provider, I would stay with acupuncture.

**YOUR OWN STORY**

Near the end of the survey we left nearly half a page blank and asked respondents to use the space to add comments or expand upon their answers to other questions. About half of all respondents did use the space to write “their story” or add personal comments. These comments have been typed verbatim and are provided in a separate document. Some comments have also been included in this report to illustrate key points.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

The final page of the survey requested demographic information from respondents. Demographically, the sample of respondents reflects both the characteristics of the Baltimore-Washington corridor (e.g., extremely highly educated population, high incomes), and patterns that have elsewhere been shown characteristic of acupuncture users (high proportion of female respondents).

As shown in Table 12, survey respondents were mostly in their 40’s and 50’s.

*Table 12. Age Distribution of Respondent Sample*

Ages	Frequency	Percent
Under 20 years	21	2
20-29 years	68	7
30-39 years	162	17
40-49 years	286	30
50-59 years	275	29
60-69 years	87	9
70 years and over	46	5

The large majority of respondents (80%) were also female, and just over half (52%) were married. Twenty-one percent (21%) reported being single, and 13% were partnered but not married. Most (71%) respondents lived in households with two to four people; almost one fourth (23%) lived alone.

The education level in the sample was very high – 29% had completed four years of college, and an additional 47% had had further graduate or professional education. Only 10% had no education beyond high school. Not surprisingly, total family income levels were also quite high (see Table 13). The percentages reported are for those who responded to the question – 10% of the sample left the income question blank.

*Table 13. Total family income of respondents*

Income Level	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$20,000	48	5
\$20,000-\$39,999	145	17
\$40,000-\$59,999	175	20
\$60,000-\$79,999	141	16
\$80,000-\$99,999	112	13
\$100,000-\$119,999	98	11
Over \$120,000	148	17

Question 37 asked respondents to report their employment status, selecting all options that applied. As indicated in Table 14, most respondents were employed full-time.

*Table 14. Employment Status of Respondents*

Employment Status	Frequency	Percent
Full-time employment	516	55
Part-time employment	170	18
Retired	118	12
Homemaker	101	11
Student	86	9
Disabled	51	5
Unemployed	7	1

## **SUMMARY**

In sum, the results of this survey show that acupuncture patients are extremely satisfied with their practitioners, their care, the outcomes of their care, and even the cost of their care. While this population was also relatively pleased with their other healthcare practitioners, the data show that their acupuncture practitioners received superior evaluations in every area.

**APPENDIX A: List of all Insurance Agencies Reported to Cover Acupuncture**

<b>Company</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No Insurance Coverage	739	76.3
Aetna	11	1.1
Alliance PPO	4	.4
Any1Care	1	.1
BlueCross/Blue Shield	120	12.4
Capital Care	1	.1
Care First	5	.5
Cigna	4	.4
Columbia Freestate PPO	1	.1
Core Source	1	.1
EHP	2	.2
GEHA	2	.2
Golden Rule	1	.1
HMO	3	.3
Kaiser	4	.4
MDIPA	1	.1
MED/80	1	.1
MEGA	1	.1
Mail Handlers	4	.4
MAMSI	12	12
Managed Care	1	.1
NCPPO	5	.5
New England	2	.2
PCHS	1	.1
Prudential Healthcare	6	.6
PPN	1	.1
Point of Service	3	.3
PPO	20	2.0
SAI Medical	1	.1
Unicare	1	.1
United Health	2	.2
Wilse & Assoc.	3	.3
Workman's Comp	1	.1
World Bank	1	.1

## **APPENDIX B: Coding of conditions and health concerns**

In creating categories from the open-ended responses provided to Question 11 (List up to four conditions for which you are seeking or have sought treatment from your acupuncturist) we used the following coding decisions.

**Responses coded as Back Pain:** "back", "back pain", "back ache", "lower back", "mid back", "disk pain", "disk", "disc", "neck & back".

**Responses coded as Pain:** "knees", "knee", "right knee", "knee pain", "ankle", "ankle pain", "foot pain", "heel pain", "neck pain", "rib pain", "pain", "side pain", "skel pain", "body pain", "elbow pain", "spinal pain", "chest", "chest pain", "gyn pain", "groin pain", "leg pain", "finger pain", "hips" hip pain", "joint pain", "breast pain", "arm pain", "wrist pain", "muscle pain", "muscles", "muscle ache", "muscles"

**Responses coded as Fatigue:** "fatigue", "tiredness", "exhaustion", "tired", "lethargy", "low energy", "malaise", "energy".

**Responses coded as Well Being:** "wholeness", "whole being", "health", "healthy", "whole health", "whole self", "balance", "wellness", "wholeness", "well-being", "spiritual", "spirit", "self-improve", "well being", "overall health", "health maint", "health", "self-care", "self care", "openness", "serenity", "peace", "meditate", "healing", "calming".

**Responses coded as Mood:** "mood", "mood swings", "moods", "mood swing", "despair", "unhappy", "unhappiness", "grief", "frustration", "irritability", "sadness", "temperament", "emotional", "uneasiness", "restless", "unhappy", "uneasiness", "restless", "depression".

**Responses coded as Female:** "menstruation", "PMS", "pms", "menopause", "menstruation", "PMS", "periods", "amenorrhea", "hot flashes", "perimenopaus", "hormones", "ovulation", "hot flashes".

**Responses coded as Gastrointestinal:** "digestion", "digestive", "acid reflux", "heartburn", "reflux", "indigestion", "colon", "colitis", "IBS", "bowel", "gastrointest", "intestinal", "nausea", "colon pain".

**Responses coded as Stress:** "tense", "tension", "anxiety", "anxious", "nervous", "nervousness", "stress".